

Daily Needs

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Date: 01 November 1989

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[0 : 00] And if you have a white card, and if you don't have one, there's some on the book table at the back. If you have a white card, you'll see that Luke 11 is the sort of basic thing we're going to go through between now and Christmas, and it's mostly about prayer.

And the New Testament is fairly hard on prayer. You will remember these two characters here. Who went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, prayed thus with himself.

I don't want Pentecostals to take that personally. He prayed thus with himself, I thank God that I'm not like other men.

I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess. And mostly I'm grateful that I'm not like that crumb over there. The fellow over here is the publican who says, God be merciful to me, a sinner, and his prayer is over.

And so the New Testament has this terrible caricature of how badly wrong prayer can go. In the beginning of this chapter 11, the disciples turn to Jesus and say, Lord, teach us to pray.

[1 : 31] I think that there comes a time in your life when you specifically want to learn how to pray, and you recognize or come to recognize that you don't know how to pray.

I would be prepared to contend, and you can debate with me, that in fact everybody does pray.

They perhaps don't know how they do it, but they find themselves in a situation where there is, at least from time to time, the awareness of another reality that they want to be in touch with.

And how they describe that other reality theologically, or what they come to think of it, or how they come to define it, can lead to all sorts of gross things.

But there is a sense in which everybody prays, or has that sense of something or someone else, some other reality beside themselves.

Well, the New Testament talks about cupboard Christians. That is, you don't come out of the cupboard to pray, you go into the cupboard to pray, that it's a fairly secret activity of the heart.

[2 : 49] And you know that in Matthew it says that there are certain people who love to pray on the street corners, or in the synagogue, and they're mostly Anglican clergymen, who are really better at it than most people.

I mean, on the street corner and stuff like that. But the reality is that the consciousness that is at the basis of prayer is the consciousness of God.

And when I first, when I was, I mean, I was 18 or 19 years old before I ever heard anybody pray without a prayer book. It just had never happened.

And for someone to sit down beside me, and the dreadful possibility occurred to me even from then that someone was going to ask me to pray, and I just about, you know, ran because it was such an unusual experience.

And I still think that it's very difficult to pray in a group because you're very conscious of the group and sometimes not very conscious of God.

[4 : 09] And how you get that focus on God himself so that you can pray unselfconsciously to him is something that I think causes the New Testament to warn you that things can go badly wrong when you're praying.

And that you've got to be pretty careful about that. You know, when there was a rally, an abortion rally here in the front of the art gallery, a pro-life rally, and the CBC and the CTV covered it, you know, and they just had to turn the camera on a guy who was praying very intensely.

And without a word, they just ridiculed the whole project just by one shot like that, you know. And I don't know whether he was real or what, but you see it's very dangerous, this business of praying, because you become so conscious of other people.

And the idea of praying in front of a camera, a hard, hard thing. So you've got to be very helpful to people in this business of prayer.

And you've got to spend time alone. The thing about it that I think is probably important is that it's virtually a non-activity, isn't it?

[5 : 38] And when you live among activists all the time to urge that they spend a lot of time doing nothing, which is pretty close to what you're doing when you're praying, as far as the usual definition of activity goes, it's hard to know how you can spend a lot of time doing nothing, you know, if you are a very active person.

So spinning wheels or telling beads or keeping count or something is helpful, but it probably doesn't have anything to do with prayer. And so hard to find out.

And so it becomes a very intriguing question that chapter 11 of Luke tries to answer. And it opens with this passage that we have just had read for us, where the disciples, seeing the disciples of John the Baptist praying, they were favorably impressed by that and said, I don't know what they're doing, but we want to know how to do it.

So Lord, teach us to pray. And so the Lord went to work to teach them to pray. And the record of what he did with them is contained here in these verses.

I don't know whether the brethren are still sticky about this or not, but when I first met them and they got used to the idea that it was possible within the sovereignty of God that somebody who was an Anglican and used a prayer book could be a Christian.

[7 : 20] You're on to that now, aren't you? All right. Well, the thing that...

No, I really am messed up because I don't know where I was going when that happened. But what they... I suggested to them that the Lord's Prayer was written in a book and perhaps that might suggest another line of thought for them.

And it was then that I discovered that what was written in the book was only a pattern for prayer and not a prayer. So you don't say the Lord's Prayer even.

I suspect they may be right. And because, you know, one of the objections, again, that the New Testament makes is that prayer is by rote and a lot of words.

And that that isn't really what prayer is about. So that what I'd like you to look at today is the possibility of looking at the Lord's Prayer as a pattern prayer.

[8 : 32] And this is the thing I want you to see. I want you to see it in six words. The first word I want you to see is Father. And...

Now, we're used to this. You know, our whole culture tends to think of the fatherhood of God. And I think the whole feminist movement is geared against the ultimate throwing down from that place of prominence the concept of a male God, a father God.

But when the New Testament says our father, it's talking about a very exclusive community. It's not talking about the great male progenitor from whom all life has come.

It's talking very specifically about a God who cannot be known, making himself known in the person of Jesus Christ who related to him as father.

So when you talk about our father, you're talking about you and other Christians and Jesus Christ. And the fatherhood that you're talking about is the fatherhood that has been revealed of that God to the person of Jesus Christ.

[10 : 02] You're sharing in that. So you mean father in a very, very specific way. You're not talking about some great mythological being that lies at the basis of the whole of history.

That's not what you're talking about. You're talking about a God whom you dare to call father only because of Jesus Christ. That's the only way you could call him father.

It's because that's how he's made himself known to you as the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there's something else that builds right into that fact.

And that's something that comes out both in Romans and in Galatians. Where, at the moment that you turn to believe in God, you know, where you move from saying, I don't believe to, I do believe. It's a very heretical statement made earlier in this meeting that it doesn't matter whether you're a believer or not. In the general sense of being warmly welcome, I'm sure that's true.

[11 : 23] But there is a difference. And I hope that you'd be aware of it. The moment at which you move from being one who doesn't believe in God to one who does believe in God, that that experience is signaled in the New Testament as being the moment at which from your heart comes the confession of new birth when you say, Father, for the first time.

And the God whom you have not known and who has been made known to you through Jesus Christ, you recognize to be Father. And you recognize a relationship to Him which now becomes the basis of your life when you move from unbelief to belief and you say to God for the first time, Father.

And you get into lots of trouble with this word because, you know, can a father treat his children the way he's treated my friend?

And we may be resentful. But you see, you only know Him as Father through the way He treats Jesus Christ, the way He relates to Jesus Christ.

And that's why we call Him Father. And we may not understand a whole lot of what He does, but we do understand how He related Himself to Jesus Christ.

[13:07] And that's why we are prepared to believe in Him and to trust Him even when we don't understand what He's doing or why He's doing it. We still say, Father, because of His relationship to Jesus Christ and our knowing Him only through that relationship.

Well, there you are. That's how we start to pray. We use that one word, Father. And of course, it implies a personal relationship. It's not, you're not praying to the ground of being or anything like you are saying to the God who is the creator and sustainer of the universe.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are saying, Father. So, that's pretty much enough for one day, isn't it? You can't, you can't, maybe that's as far as your prayer is going to go for a long time to be able to say that.

Well, there is, in fact, five other words that are contained here and I want to go through them fast with you so you can see how how they work.

There's there's this word which I'm going to use because today is all hallow's day and the this this word which is the the second petition and this which is the center of the third petition and this which is the center of the fourth petition and this which is the center of the fifth petition so that there are five things that you're to do with prayer.

[14:53] There are when Jesus says this is how you're to pray he says get yourself around these realities. The first reality is who is at the center and at the source and at the ground and being of reality it is God and his name is hallowed.

That is that is the great eternal fact. That is the focus of reality that's what I want to be in touch with is that reality that his name be hallowed.

Now something is obviously of great importance to you and you have to you have to work at recognizing this like when you got up this morning and you saw the beautiful beautiful sky and you saw the loveliness snow on the mountains and you saw the trees all in their full splendor and the magnificence of the wine clear air that you breathe and you saw it all and yet you know that it's capable of never being there again today.

Well it is there momentarily but the thing that I think you're aware of is that it is the expression of another reality and when you pass somebody on the street and say good morning what a beautiful day I think implied in that remark what a beautiful day is the recognition that there is something that is or someone who has given us that day there is another reality and that the ephemeral nature of the beauty of this day which can pass away so quickly it expresses another reality and that what we have to do is be in touch with that other reality and that reality is God our heavenly father and we want at the center of our life that his name would be hello that is the really important thing the next thing that you're talking about is kingdom and this is his his rule and his authority and the the fact is you see that that our world is working at building a kingdom but when we pray thy kingdom come we're talking about another kingdom not one we're working together to build but something that God is building among us it's something entirely and basically different and I want to warn you that when you run in to the kingdom builders of this world get out of the way because it's very likely that in the kingdom they're building there ain't going to be no place for you and they'll get around to telling you that sooner or later and so we're not looking for that kind of kingdom we're looking for another kind of kingdom which God is building it's it's that reality which is enveloping our world and to which we want to be extremely sensitive and very much aware so that in the chaos and the confusion and the fatigue and the stress and of our lives we say your kingdom come because this mess I'm in is more than

I can handle and it's not leading anyone and so we pray for that kingdom that other kingdom not any kingdom that man builds but one that God has built and we pray for that for bread we want daily bread we are physical beings the best picture of it in the moment or two I have left is it's the kind of

thing that happens that you become aware of when an earthquake hits San Francisco and nobody has light and nobody has food and nobody has drink and nobody has shelter and all the sort of basic essentials of our physical life are suddenly removed the things we take for granted that they're going to be there suddenly they're gone and you experience a new reality in life as you grope along the 15th floor of a totally dark apartment building and fall down the elevator shaft that's a that's a kind of terrible reality and so when you're praying give us this day our daily bread you know that you are dependent on and sustained by a God who is concerned for your physical being and not for yours only but for the whole world and so you pray

[19 : 39] Lord we are dependent on this that you should give it to us on a day by day basis and we don't want to be caught being thinking that we are doing it ourselves because that can so easily be demonstrated to us if we need it badly so we pray you know give us this day our daily bread and then we ask for forgiveness now we live in a very unforgiving world and we live in a world where forgiveness is practically unknown and the reason it's unknown is it's too expensive people cannot afford to forgive one another and so you can say I'll try harder next time I'll make up to you for what I've done but there can't be any real forgiveness and so when you pray you know forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us you're talking about a whole new world a whole new basis of human relationship a whole new understanding of the relationship between one person and another you're asking for the sky and the moon and all the stars when you ask for forgiveness because forgiveness is too expensive and so we've learned that you know our world is not a forgiving world and you don't want to be put in a place where you're dependent on somebody forgiving you because you can be fairly sure they won't you know that's and that's how we we play the game you know that's why we're very carded that's why we don't let out our secrets because forgiveness is not something that happens and so when you pray that you're praying in a very radical way and you're saying in effect forgive us as we forgive and in fact that's what happens is that as we forgive we are forgiven and you get this process going process which is initiated you see by God choosing at the very point at which he could condemn us rightfully for the crucifixion of Jesus

Christ the point of our condemnation is the point at which we expect God to stand up and say you're done you're finished instead of which he says you're forgiven and that creates a whole radical new reality in your home in your personal life in your associations in every relationship you have there's a whole new possibility which you're to pray for and then the last one is deliver us from evil or from temptation now this is simply because evil is very strong indeed and you need help and the possibility that you think you could face it in your own strength is a possibility I hope you never experience because you can't and that the powers of evil can only be restrained by by God there's a lovely article in the front of in the front of

Western Report this week you know in which some lady tears them apart for their Christian bias you know and say all people need is to be educated if only you will educate people then they will know how to deal with the problems of their sexuality educate them and they'll know how to deal with drugs but you see the life long I mean the history long reality for man is that he knows already what he has to do it's just he can't do it and that that's where we pray father lead us not into temptation so there you have it five hands you see hallow kingdom bread forgiveness temptation I can't do it myself but that's what your prayer is all about that's what your prayer life is all about that's what you build your whole prayer life around and that's what Jesus taught his disciples let me pray and then we'll quit

God and father there there is an awesome simplicity to what Jesus taught his disciples and the problem of praying is not that we don't know the technique but that we have stubborn and rebellious hearts and we ask that that you will give us the grace to hallow your name to seek your kingdom to know we depend on you for bread to forgive because we're forgiven and to recognize the power of evil is only overcome by you and that we can't face it alone help us to work out this reality in the individual circumstances of our lives we ask in the name of your son Jesus Christ Amen