

Matthew 6:9-13 “We Speak to God”

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Date: 30 June 2024

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. You should hear him preach. Thank you, Derek and worship team.

What a beautiful reminder. That song is of what we learned just last Sunday. That God, our loving Father, listens to us.

It's amazing, isn't it? That as we come to him and pray, it puts us in a posture to depend on and receive his grace.

We're going to talk this morning about our speaking to God. If he's listening to us, what about what happens as we come to speak to him?

[1 : 06] Before we do that, through looking at the Lord's Prayer that Derek just sang, I want to start by noticing Jesus' pattern of prayer in his life.

We did that a couple weeks ago with Jesus' use of the Bible. We saw how Jesus approaches the scripture in his life. What about prayer? Is that something we see in Jesus?

Well, yeah. If you read through the gospel accounts of Jesus' life with this in mind, you will begin to see Jesus praying all over the place.

It's such a priority to him that it's a regular practice for him to pull away, to spend time alone with his Father, even when the crowds around want to celebrate him or really need his help, Jesus would withdraw to pray.

It's one of his typical habits. He would withdraw to pray. Luke tells us once Jesus went up on a mountain to pray and continued all night with God.

[2 : 17] Mark tells us that sometimes Jesus woke up very early and went out to pray. Just the two of them. He prays regularly that one time with his Father, just Jesus and his Father.

The one time that directs all his time with everyone else. And especially during times of great significance in his life, prayer is prominent.

We're told Jesus spent time in prayer before his baptism, as he prepared to call his disciples, when he was beginning his public ministry, before he told his disciples of his coming death, when crowds gathered so that he was so busy and so in demand, prayer remained a priority.

In fact, before he endured betrayal and death, he prayed and he specifically asked those who were closest to him to pray for him.

Do you get just a little glimpse of how vital prayer was in the life of Jesus when he walked and talked on this earth? Do you think there's a chance that we might need that time, that conversation with God too?

[3 : 43] If that was needful for Jesus, you'd think it might be important for you and me. You think maybe if we're going to live life the way God has designed us to, as he did, that we might need it even a little bit more than Jesus did?

Paul Miller writes, if you are not praying, then you are quietly confident that time, money, and talent are all you need in life.

You'll always be a little too tired, a little too busy. But if, like Jesus, you realize you can't do life on your own, then no matter how busy, no matter how tired you are, you will find the time to pray.

God has designed humanity to flourish when we walk with him, when we talk with him, when we depend on him.

And Jesus shows us that beautifully, right? And he does it so much that his disciples notice, and then when they come to him, they say, we see this pattern in your life, will you help us to learn relationship with God like this?

[4 : 54] Jesus, teach us to pray. If you need help with prayer, so did his disciples. Let's read what he told them, and then we'll talk about it together.

This is Matthew chapter 6. Jesus teaches them and us how to pray on more than one occasion, but this passage we often call the Lord's Prayer.

Listen to God's holy word. It's given to us to help us relate with him. Wow, what a gift that is, right? What grace that he's going to tell us how to talk to him. Pray then like this. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

[5 : 59] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Let's pray together now. Jesus, would you teach us to pray too?

Not just things about prayer. Would you teach us to pray? By your spirit, would you speak to us now, and would you keep working in us?

That we might come and talk to you, and know you, and live with you, and depend on you more and more. For your glory, we ask it. Amen.

Earlier this week, I sat down to pray, and had a very productive time. It was only about 20 minutes later that I realized I had written a Facebook post about praying.

I had texted a friend to tell him that I would pray for him. I had emailed another friend. I had completed the daily wordle, guest number three.

[7 : 12] Uh-huh, very nice. I had added some items to the grocery list. I had made my to-do list for the day. It was so productive. It is hard for me to understand why people say that setting aside time to pray could possibly be unproductive.

So valuable. Maybe you've had a similar experience to that with prayer, where your mind wanders. Anybody's mind ever wandered while you were praying?

That is so comforting to me. Maybe that you've actually felt a little bit ashamed or embarrassed that God, the God of the universe, is there to listen to you, and you don't even know what to say.

And it makes you not want to pray again. You don't like that awkward feeling. Well, Jesus is here to help people like us. But one thing before we talk about what to say in prayer, I don't want you to get the impression this morning that you've got to get it right.

I want you to know you don't have to know what to say. God isn't waiting for you to push the right button on the machine to get the right Coke that you want.

[8 : 32] There's no pressure to get it right. You remember this image from last week? I want you to remember what your Father is like.

Your heavenly Father welcomes you into his presence, right? Jesus, the Son, prays for you. God, the Holy Spirit, the Bible tells us, is interceding for you with groans that words cannot express, so that when you don't know how to pray, he helps you.

You just come and be with God, okay? I hope you're finding some time for that, this summer in particular, as we talk about that one time, just the two of you, that directs all your time with everyone else.

the whole Trinity is eager to be with you, not to give your prayers a grade, but to give the prayer grace.

Don't forget that. That is so good. Our hearts need to know that, and so as God invites us into prayer here this morning, Jesus gives us a model for prayer so that we're not stuck without help.

[9 : 54] Words that can be used directly themselves, we do that sometimes, or they can be used to direct our own words as we talk to God. So let's look at it together.

Our Father in heaven. We've talked about how vital it is to relish that relationship last week. That's what brings us into prayer, right?

Is that God is our Father. We can call Jesus' Father our Father. He's listening in love. Then what does Jesus teach us to talk to Him about?

First, hallowed be your name. What does that mean? We don't often talk that way. It's not hollow, like empty.

It's not Halloween, as I thought it was for a while while I was a kid, okay? Kids, if this word confuses you when we pray the Lord's Prayer, but it makes you think of Halloween, then I want you to think about it this way.

[10:59] Halloween means you get candy, right? Are we clear on this? Halloween means you get candy. Hallowed means God gets glory, okay?

Halloween means you get candy. Hallowed means God gets glory. That's what we're praying for. It's that He would be the one. Who He is gets the most weight, is the most worshipped in all of the world.

Holy, holy, holy, we sang earlier. God, You are utterly perfect. You are completely beyond us. You are more awesome than we can imagine. See, just contemplate that for a minute, because it will remind you that you don't have to have anything particular on your list to spend time talking to God, because God Himself is more worthy of being talked about than anyone else ever.

Jesus directs our hearts to start there, focusing on His greatness, His majesty, His worth, praying about that, as we often do at the start of our services, right?

[12:15] Praising God. Just start your prayer in praising God for who He is. You can think of part of God's character to praise Him for a passage of Scripture may spark a meditation for you on an aspect of who God is or something you read about Him doing.

But I want us to actually practice praying like this, the Lord's Prayer this morning. So this is gonna be a little bit awkward, maybe, because we're gonna pray several times during this sermon. You need to know if you feel awkward. I had several other ideas that would have made you feel way more awkward, and I'm not doing those. So just be thankful. Thank you.

For now, why don't you pick one of the things off this list about our God? You're certainly welcome to come up with one of your own.

What about who God is or what He has done do you want to celebrate Him for? Pick one of these, write down your own. Just so you know, those of you who get tightly wound, they're all right answers.

[13:27] Okay? You're not gonna pick the wrong one. Write something down there in your bulletin if that's helpful to you. Let's practice what it feels like to pray led by the Lord's Prayer.

I'll start and give you a few seconds to pray to talk to God in your heart about what you praise Him for. Father, there is no God besides you who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders.

You alone, God, are worthy of our praise. May your glory fill the whole earth. May every heart in this room, in this city, in this world, praise your name.

Hear your people now as we praise you. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Next, as we walk through the Lord's Prayer, is yet another Godward, God-focused petition. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[15:05] Before we turn our focus to our needs, we pray for God's kingdom priorities. We seek first His kingdom as Jesus says it later in this chapter.

That is part of the reason, by the way, that we structure our prayer guide each week. You can see it there in your bulletin. Many of you get it in your email. With kingdom priorities and our mission and our core commitments before our specific needs are listed.

Pastor Warren Wiersbe said, the purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but I'm so sorry, sweet girl.

That hurts and those pews are hard and we love you so much. Ow, I could hear it up here. Wiersbe said, the purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth.

For that to happen, our hearts need to be reshaped, don't they? Because whose wills are we most naturally focused on? Well, mine. So we pray, God, in my heart, please reign as king that I might live according to your will, not my own.

[16:22] God, in Huntsville, please reign as king that we might be gracious neighbors in a peaceful community. God, in this country and around the world, please reign as king so that we would cling to your truth and seek justice for the mistreated and obey your word and everything.

There's a lot to pray for. So yes, God is king over all for sure, but where could the evidence of his reign be increasingly true and apparent?

Where do we long to see it more? Do you see how this is no passive meditation in a closet? This prayer is an act of war, isn't it?

War against the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness, over any other kingdom. The devil trembles when we pray, when we battle against him by appealing not to our own strength but to the

king of heaven to push back the gates of hell in our hearts and our lives.

That's why prayer is the work of the kingdom because it appeals to the king, right? To the strong one, the one whose kingdom is eternal, the one whose will is perfect.

[17 : 41] It says, that's what we want. That's what we're after, Satan. God will have his way and his will in this world. So let me ask you this question as you consider these next petitions talking to God about them.

In whose life? In what place? In what situation do you long for peace and justice and Jesus to reign?

Maybe it's a neighbor whose heart you're praying for. Maybe it's a conflict at work that you long to see resolved and fairly.

Maybe it's an international injustice that you want to see remedied. Write something down there. Let's pray together again.

Father, I read just this week of many Christians being martyred in Nigeria. I saw videos of their worshipping you amidst the rubble of church buildings burned down.

[18 : 52] I pray, Father, for your protection on them. You are the king of the nation. It is so evident that your kingdom has come in their hearts. Might it come in the hearts of their enemies who attack them as well?

Bring peace in Israel, in Ukraine, in Sudan. Father, give your people right here at Southwood as we've talked about the Bible recently, a renewed zeal not only to read but also to obey your will in your word.

Hear us now as we pray for your kingdom to come. to be continued to be enough love.

Thank you. Amen.

Amen. This next way to talk to God, building a little bit of a list for us here as we go to him, and it's one we know well, right?

[20 : 11] Give us this day our daily bread. God, please help me pass this test. I didn't study as much as I should have. God, please help me find a job to support my family.

God, please help me get out of this mess I'm in. I'll never do it again. Just help me this one time. Finally, we get to our list, right? He does want to hear it.

In all of these, we're acknowledging what is always true that we don't always recognize. Our need, our dependence upon God.

See, God already knows what we need before we ask him, Jesus says. But he wants to hear our hearts. Something's going on in our hearts.

This is teaching our hearts to come to him, to trust him, to depend upon him because our king is on the throne of grace, right?

[21 : 20] Give us our daily bread. It's saying everything. Every breath, God, is from you, which honestly may be a bit harder for us to feel today in our society than in Jesus' day in a largely agrarian society.

We have bread in the pantry for many days. Most of us, food in the fridge for weeks.

Most of us feel we can eat today without consciously asking for God's help. And that's something to be thankful for.

But it's also something to be careful about because Jesus reminds us that our life, our breath, even our food, is a gift of God's grace.

We can't forget that. We dare not forget that. Kids, that is why many Christians pray before every meal. It reminds us to stop and reflect that everything we have is from God, right?

[22 : 29] So you can help us remember that. You can sometimes learn to pray right there as you thank God for your food. I want us to notice in particular one thing about this petition.

It's the communal nature of this prayer. Give us this day our daily bread.

You may not be wondering where your next meal will come from, but some of God's children are.

You may not be wondering whether your church building will be burned down tomorrow, but some of God's children are.

You may not be worried and anxious wondering if your loved one will go home to Jesus tomorrow, but some of God's children are.

And we are together dependent upon God. In fact, we should be praying together.

[23 : 31] This is words that God's people would say to give us our daily bread. We should be praying together for one another in one another's presence, in grace groups, in worship services, in

hallways, wherever it is.

What specific needs are you or your church family or your neighbors facing? Write something down that God puts on your heart now.

What's the first need that comes to mind? Pick one off the prayer guide, if you'd like. These needs will change often, right? And there are some of them that may stay on your list for a long, long time. God may keep putting them on your heart. Let's pray for some of them together now. Father, we are your children and we need your help.

Much we need thy tender care. people we love are grieving. Brothers and sisters, we miss this morning our home battling depression.

[24 : 52] Some of our family are hospitalized. Hear us now as we bring the particular needs we know about to you as we admit that you know what we need better than we do ourselves.

you Amen.

One last area to pray about that Jesus gives us here. It's a big one. A couple petitions in the same realm, in the same direction. Father, forgive our debts.

Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from evil. This is another way we pray almost every Sunday in our services, isn't it? Derek mentioned it this morning as we were confessing our sins generally, all of us together, and specifically as we did this morning.

See, it's such a vital part of our relationship with God. That's what Derek was telling us as he invited us into it. This is something that we do all the time. It's at the very heart, foundation, of having a relationship with God.

[26 : 32] Jesus bought our forgiveness with his blood. So he wants us to enjoy it often, to celebrate his forgiveness.

It has been said that Jesus died on the cross is history. That Jesus died for sins is theology. And that Jesus died for my sins is Christianity.

I like that a lot because it means that Christianity is about a relationship with God, a relationship that Jesus has restored me to so that I can be honest and loved.

I can be in the worst about me, can be exposed, and I'll be embraced. I can be a failure and forgiven. We say debts here when we pray the Lord's Prayer.

Many of you know there are other ways to translate some of these, and they're good too. You're not better than other Christians because you say debts and debtors, so let me clear that up for you. But the word debts is helpful, I think, for this reason, in thinking about what do we owe God?

[27 : 52] We owe him perfect obedience, in perfect relationship with him, from perfect motivations, all the time.

So, we confess then sins we do, that we commit, and duties we fail to do, that we omit.

We tell God about words that we shouldn't have spoken, and others we should have, but didn't. We are honest about the thoughts of our minds, and the desires of our hearts that no one else sees, but God knows, doesn't he?

And the more we let that sink in, the more we see the seriousness of our sin, and the danger that sin presents to us, we start to see how serious it is, and we realize it cost Jesus his life to offer us forgiveness.

We realize that sin keeps us from running to God to find life, because we're searching for it everywhere else, looking for other things that will give us life. The more we pray then that God will keep us from it, that he will lead us away from even the temptation to sin, that he'll protect us from Satan and his evil forces.

[29 : 19] Again here, the posture of this prayer is that God is the leader, right? Lead me. He's gonna lead me. Where do I want him to lead me? Because I'm the follower.

I'm the one who's walking after him. Here's how I'd say these petitions simply. Father, help us, strengthen us, deliver us, because we are weak, life is hard, and Satan is real.

We are weak, life is hard, Satan is real. That's what we're admitting to God, right? You can admit those things. The Heidelberg Catechism says the same thing just a lot more eloquently.

By ourselves, we are too weak to hold our own even for a moment. And our sworn enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh never stop attacking us.

And so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong with the strength of your Holy Spirit so that we may not go down to defeat in this spiritual warfare, but may firmly resist our enemies until we finally win the complete victory.

[30 : 32] Friends, you can't handle sin on your own. Quit trying. And, Jesus can absolutely, completely, perfectly, and forever handle sin.

Quit avoiding Him. Run to Jesus with your sin. Delight in confessing to Him. Take your sin to your Savior and delight in what He will do with it.

Think about this question for a minute. What today is keeping you from a close relationship with God or is seeking to draw you away from Him?

Is it sinful desires in your heart? Good things that are tempting distractions from the best things? Is it unforgiveness towards someone else?

Let's take them together to Jesus. Pray with me. Father, Father, we pray with the psalmist that you would search us and know our hearts, that you would test us and know our anxious thoughts, that you would see if there is any wicked way in us, and that you would lead us in the way everlasting.

[31 : 59] Speak to our hearts even now. Let us honestly bring to you what your spirit shows us. We have an amazing day when the psalmist or ■ yum and the psalmist are welcome.

■ our Vasem and our hearts and our son will tomorrow■ Amen. Thank you for helping through this sermon. More interactive than you expected, right?

And I didn't even make you talk out loud. The prayer we use most often concludes with, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Isn't that a beautiful reminder of where this prayer starts? With God's kingdom, God's glory. So, it is a great way to conclude praying, okay?

It makes one understand why it got added to the original text, which we now know it didn't contain. But no worries. I dare say at this point, if you keep your bulletin and the things you've written down this morning and follow the Lord's Prayer each day, you've got plenty to speak to God about in your time with Him. That's my desire for you today, that you would be able, even this afternoon, tomorrow morning when you wake up, to sit down. You don't have to use the Lord's Prayer, but you can and that you'll have lots to talk to God about. Remember to slow down enough to listen to Him too.

He loves to talk with you. This is why we've been providing each week resources for you to have to help you in your time with Jesus personally in these pathways of grace. This is available, of course, online on our website. The QR code is in your bulletin. For those of you like me who aren't familiar with QR codes, there's some hard copies printed in the narthex, if that's more helpful to you.

[34 : 30] But there are several different books here that I love. The first one there will help you let the Bible inspire your prayers even throughout the Scripture. Other places besides the Lord's Prayer, it's been really helpful to me. Some of my favorites up there, there are guides to prayer that help our hearts be directed by God's priorities for our conversations with Him. I grew up, as I was a kid, first learned to pray using the acrostic acts. Have you ever done this one before? Adoration, that's praise, okay? Confession, thanksgiving, supplication, asking for our needs. That's a big word for that. And because some of these words are a bit unfamiliar, I've adapted a version of this for kids that hits the same key themes of the Lord's Prayer we've been talking about this morning.

Kids, when you pray and when you practice talking to God, you can say some very simple, things that I think you can remember, and adults, you're welcome to use them too. Feel free.

There's really these four categories, things you can remember to say when you talk to God, I love you, right? To tell God you love Him. And why? I'm sorry. For what? Tell Him for what?

Thank you. Tell Him what you're thankful for. And please, tell Him what you're asking for. So if you're thinking about talking to God, you can pick any one of those, or you can think of all four of those that I hope are easy for you to remember and things that we talk to God about. I would encourage you if your prayer life, your talking to God needs a shot in the arm, and most of us, if we're honest, that's where we often live, pick just one of these resources and pray that God would use it to rekindle your desire to spend time talking with Him. He loves to do that, okay? He's not trying to run you off. He's trying to welcome you in. So ask Him to help you with that. As we close this morning, most of us close our prayers with, in Jesus' name, amen. And that's great. It's a great way to pray.

I want to make sure we remember what that means. It's not just hanging up the phone. When I pray in Jesus' name, it means that you enjoy relationship with God, not because you're a good prayer, but because Jesus is a good Savior, right? His love for us, His death on the cross, His life everlasting are how we enter into relationship with God. His sacrifice alone enables us to pray to our Father. It's the only way. His grace is cause for endless praise. His costly death makes us hate our sin and confess it to God. His kind kingship is the one we long to see extended. His generous

provision for His people. His generous provision for His people encourages us to ask for what we need. You see, it's about Jesus. Every time you pray in Jesus' name, I want you to rejoice, to give thanks that you stand and you live and you kneel in the grace of Jesus. Amen. Let's pray.

[38 : 34] Father, would you help us as we come to you that we would draw near to you confidently in the name of Jesus.

That we would pray, amen. May it be so because of who you are. We know we can come to you. We confidently ask for you to care for us. We boldly hope in your faithfulness. You are good. And there's nothing more than that truth to encourage our hearts to come to you in prayer. So would you remind us of that?

Would we find you regularly today and this week and every day the rest of our lives hearing us, giving us the joy of speaking to you. We're thankful for it in Jesus' great name. Amen.

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