

The Lord's Prayer

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 July 2015

Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[0 : 0 0] and verse 9 Jesus said 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 and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil going to undertake an almost impossible task right now in the next 25 minutes half an hour

I'm going to try and speak about the Lord's Prayer in its entirety every phrase in it deserves a sermon in itself and yet the prayer is given as a whole to Jesus' disciples it is to be taken as a whole and understood as a whole and so even though it would be right and proper to take even one phrase and to make a sermon out of it it's just as right and just as proper to speak about the whole of the Lord's Prayer I hate to disappoint you or even to shock you but in actual fact this is not the Lord's Prayer it never was and it never will be we call it the Lord's Prayer but not because Jesus actually himself prayed these words how do I know that how can I be so confident about that very easy because it says forgive us our debts

Jesus did not ever and could not ever have prayed that prayer forgive me my debts he didn't have any he was the sinless righteous holy eternal son of God who never ever came short of his divinity Jesus was God and so therefore as God he could never pray that prayer we call it the Lord's Prayer because it was the prayer that the Lord Jesus gave to his disciples as the pattern by which they could pray to God their father if you want an example of the Lord's Prayer the kind of prayer that Jesus himself would have prayed you have to go to a passage like John chapter 17 to find that the Lord's Prayer as we've just read it was a template that was given to the disciples and it appears in the wider context of of prayer what is prayer and like every generation the disciples had all kinds of wrong ideas fed to them about what prayer was and so at the very beginning of the chapter Jesus had to get rid of many of these these wrong ideas for example some people love to pray in the synagogues and at the street corners so that they would be seen of man Jesus saying the moment that your prayer centers around yourself in order for other people to be impressed you're not praying and if you think says Jesus that you're going to impress God by the use of words by the skilled use of diction and vocabulary and grammar you're not praying that's not what prayer is you haven't even begun to discover what prayer is and that's why it alarms me when I hear people saying well I can't pray because I don't have I don't have the right use of English

I'm afraid to pray in the prayer meeting because I can't I can't match the kind of prayer that someone else prays I say to that person please don't think like that because we're praying to God and God is not concerned with how good we are at English or any other language God is spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth and in actual fact people go to a prayer meeting to share in the spirit of prayer not to be impressed by people's fine words that's why we need to learn to be ourselves and to be honest with ourselves and with God and with other people and a prayer meeting is some it's a place where the family of God can come together and where we can where we don't need to worry about our flaws and our deficiencies and even sometimes our wrong theology because we're in this together as God's people gathering together to pour our heart out to him and to plead with him for his blessing and for his mercy and for his guidance and for his instruction and God understands when we come the catechism tells us that prayer is an offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will in the name of Christ with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies much as I agree with that answer

I don't think it actually goes far enough into what prayer actually is prayer is not just a conversation with God that's what it is that is most basic neither is it just asking God even for things agreeable to his will when we're praying we're actually taking part in what Jesus himself this is the marvel of prayer this is where prayer stands out over and against every other activity that we may do in this world prayer is us doing what Jesus does and when Jesus asks us when Jesus says pray then like this what he's doing is something absolutely outstanding he is inviting his disciples to share in the life of the Godhead to share in the conversation that takes place and the communication that takes place between father and son and spirit what is it that the letter to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus to this day right now is doing he says as he is our high priest our great high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us at the right hand of God the Father

[7 : 52] Jesus sits and he makes intercession for us he prays to his Father he always has done before the foundation of the world before the world and the universe was ever there in the Godhead in the confines if I can call it that of the Godhead there was prayer and communication and communion and the creation of humankind was the creation of a being which could take part in that communion and when Jesus came into the world to restore us into fellowship with himself that's exactly what it is fellowship with God the reason I'm so emphatic about that is because we very often in our own minds we've reduced prayer to a shopping list to a ritual to an empty procedure that we go through how sad how tragic when we allow ourselves to lose sight of what prayer is

Jesus is inviting his disciples to take part in his inviting his people today you and I to take part to share in his heavenly life after all we are already part of that heavenly life the apostle Paul tells us that we've been raised together in him we've been ascended to heaven to the father's right hand in him so we are already united to Jesus Christ and we take part in him in that great fellowship that great communion that heavenly communion with God the father so please remember that whenever you set your heart the next time you set your heart and I hope it won't be too long you set your heart to coming to God in prayer I hope it is a daily routine but not just a routine a daily privilege in coming to God in communion and you know of course that in a world full of temptation and sinfulness and I'm not looking beyond myself all kinds of questions arise and doubts and fears arise whenever I think about prayer how do I know

I'm really praying how do I know I'm praying for the right things how do I know that God is listening to my prayer how often we start off in prayer and we're distracted by many of these thoughts and before you know it you're doing something else because you've been hijacked by some tempting thought that's come in and taking your mind and your heart away from prayer well prayer I'm glad to say doesn't depend on our strength of faith or our resolve prayer depends upon the father's love for his children and the reason that we are praying to God through the Lord Jesus Christ is because God has invited and has created a way and has indeed commanded us to come to him so then what is the Lord's prayer what can I gain from the Lord I want you to notice first of all that the Lord's prayer is a unit the first thing

I want you to notice is that every element in the Lord's prayer is connected with the previous one our father who is in heaven hallowed be your name there's a connection with the father in heaven and his name being holy and his kingdom coming and his will being done and on earth as it is in heaven and our daily bread all of it is linked together the second thing I'd like you to notice is that it reveals something every element reveals something about God prayer is as much a discovery as it is us asking for what we need or for what we want in this prayer we discover that God is our father if we come to him by faith in Jesus Christ he is our father and we have a right to call him that we discover that God is exalted in heaven whatever that means again a sermon in itself we discover afresh that his name is holy it is other it's awesome it is majestic splendid we discover that he has a kingdom and that he has a purpose for his kingdom on this world in this world we discover that God is our provider the provider of everything that we need on a day to day basis we discover that he is able and willing to forgive all our sins in Jesus Christ we discover also that we have a responsibility to forgive others and we discover also that God is able to protect us against the evil one all of these elements they reveal something of God to us but likewise thirdly all of these elements they help us to discover something about ourselves and they deeply challenge the way we think and the way we live so in every phrase it's like looking into a mirror when we speak about the exalted holiness of God the otherness of God which one of us doesn't tremble because immediately we're made to see our own sinfulness just like

Isaiah when he saw the Lord as we read high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple and the angels calling out holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty what was the response what was the first thing that Isaiah discovered he discovered how utterly filthy he was he said woe is me for I am undone I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips mine eyes have seen the Lord have you ever have you ever wondered why the Lord's prayer doesn't begin with asking forgiveness have you ever wondered why forgiveness comes halfway through the prayer after all if our sins have separated us from God and if our sin is the barrier between us and God God then surely that's the first thing that needs to be taken care of what's the point in praying if there's still a separation no says

[14 : 53] Jesus because unless you see God for what he is you will never discover that forgiveness the request for forgiveness is only after we discover the greatness and the majesty and the holiness of God we discover about ourselves that God is the God's purpose for this world is to fulfill his kingdom is to extend his kingdom and to bring people to faith in himself we discover about ourselves that we are dependent day by day on what he provides for us in terms of our food and our health and our strength and our clothing and our homes and our work and everything else that we do and that we need we discover also that in temptation that we need that we are completely incapable without him of wrestling successfully with the evil one so in all of these things we discover

God and we discover ourselves but we don't start off with ourselves it's really important that we understand that the Lord's prayer has to necessarily begin with God himself with his being with his location with his majesty and his glory and his holiness his otherness because naturally as sinful human beings whenever we think of prayer we start off with ourselves don't we we think what do I need what's going on in my life what's troubling me what am I worried about what am I concerned about and we think of prayer as a way of bringing all of these things to God well it is but it doesn't start there it starts not with me but with

God it starts with me having to stop and to gaze upon the being the living and the true God who I am now approaching and it's as I gaze at his sovereignty then I realize that he is able to provide everything that I need it's as I gaze at his the fact that he knows everything in the world he knows my needs that's what Jesus says in this very passage he knows our needs before we even ask then there is nothing even what I don't think of I don't need to be troubled about because because God knows everything that we need before we even ask so what do we what what then are we what can we what can we extract and glean from the

Lord's prayer if we take just very briefly every element from it we discover first of all that even in the very first word our that we are not an island that we are not that we although we are individual beings that we're coming as part of the body of God's people all over the world it's our father in heaven and we discover also that we are able to come to God as our father in heaven personally within that relationship that God has created for us in the Lord Jesus Christ in which we have been adopted into his family if I was to ask you today do you believe in God then the likelihood is that you probably do but then the conversation who knows where it might go because for you God may simply be a force or he may simply be some kind of arbitrary power or influence for many people in the world

God represents the powers in this world or the beauty in this world and they have this vague perception of what God is but that's very different from the God of the Bible who is the creator of the heavens and the earth but he is the personal creator we are here because God wants us to be here he decided it was an act of his volition that we should be in existence in the first place and he created humankind in order to enjoy fellowship with himself we have that capacity to know God to know not just that there is a God but to know him personally and he's made that possible for us by reconciling us to himself in Jesus Christ would you like to know God personally this morning are you really satisfied with God just as a force as an impersonal power

[20 : 17] I don't believe you are and I would wonder if that's the very reason you're here to try and to discover what God is because it's not satisfactory just to believe in any kind of God our longing demands our inward longing demands clarity and simplicity I'm not saying there's no mystery but the Bible the wonder of the Bible is that God discloses himself to us he reveals himself to us and he invites us to come to know him personally as our father in heaven the only person that can truly say these words is a person who believes and who loves and who follows Jesus Christ the only person who has been adopted into the family of God but we're also reminded that God is holy and that

God is other what does holiness mean holiness for many people it's kind of it's all very repulsive and frightening because it reminds us of where we come short and how deficient we are it reminds us of our wrongdoing and our sinfulness but for a Christian holiness is a wonderful word because what it reminds us of is that the God of holiness has come down into this world and has become one of us in order to redeem us to himself and in order to change us but he hasn't stopped being what he always was the holy unchangeable almighty God his holiness to God's people his holiness is utterly compelling and it's what we want to be the reason it makes us uncomfortable as God's people is because there's this tension between what we want to be and what we're not but God is able by his spirit to change us and to make us into the kind of people that he wants us to be and like I said there's a connection between

God's holiness and his kingdom because Jesus moves on to speak about the kingdom of God your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven in many ways the kingdom had already come as when Jesus was born in Bethlehem when he started his ministry in Galilee his kingdom was inaugurated at that point but Jesus in many ways that was only the beginning because the kingdom of God consists of what God is doing in the world through the gospel and when we're praying that prayer we are reminded that God is God's kingdom will come God never asks us to pray for something that he won't do so when we're praying for this we're praying with utter certainty there is no question but that God's kingdom will come there is no question that the gospel will take hold of the lives of people men and women and boys and girls and it asks us it challenges us as to how concerned are we this morning with the spread of the gospel because that's what we're talking about when we're talking about when we're asking that

God's kingdom will come it's asking that our churches may be filled in Scotland in England in Ireland in Wales in the west in the east in the north and in the south we're asking God that God will work in great power as he has done in the past we're asking that God will raise up men and women who go out with the gospel and who spread the gospel and we're challenged ourselves as to what we are doing in order to spread the gospel as a congregation as individuals as whoever we are if we love the Lord Jesus how can we not be concerned with the spread of the gospel how can we not want other people to have what we have how can we sit content knowing that there are millions and billions of people who are going to hell this morning who are lost how can we sit content knowing that we're part of a world that if it doesn't find

God will be destroyed and so this prayer challenges ourselves we're not just asking Lord may your kingdom come may your will be done but do it through someone else we're asking ourselves at the same time what part do I play in supporting the work of the mission of God the purpose of God to bring people to himself now that's a big ask isn't it that's a big ask isn't it it seems almost impossible when I stand here and I talk about full churches when we talk about God pouring out his spirit and when we talk about God touching the lives and hearts of people we don't see much evidence of it I remember I used to listen to a man praying long long time ago in a prayer meeting and he would always pray the same thing he would always quote this exact piece of scripture and there was nobody as passionate in prayer as this particular gentleman was he's passed on now and he would his voice would reach a crescendo when he would say your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven and then he would always say although it looks very unlikely he would always say that he would just be honest

[26 : 49] I think in our hearts we all feel like that don't we when we pray that prayer it looks pretty unlikely but what we're really saying what we're really confessing is that we've lost sight of the power of God after all if God can change me can I trust me he can change anybody when I look at my own heart when you look at your own heart it's only by God's grace his miraculous grace that you're here today you're praising him you're worshipping him you're rejoicing in the Lord you love the Lord because he first loved you how can you account for that is it something you've done no it's not it's what he has done and what he can do for you he can do for others and sometimes it's at the very darkest periods of human history when things look at their bleakest and I don't know how much more bleak things could be in our world and in our society right now

I don't know how much more opposition there could be I'm sure there could be how much more rebellion there could be in the world which we live who knows what God is going to do we need to keep praying your kingdom come your will be done on earth we need to hold our nerve we need to believe that God's kingdom will be fulfilled and his purpose will be fulfilled that's a big ask isn't it it's a huge thing takes huge faith but you notice the contrast between God's kingdom which is massive we're praying for the big things but right away the contrast between that request and the next one my daily bread bread which reminds me deliberately that God is not only concerned about the big issues of the world he's not only concerned about changing the world which he will do one way or the other he's also concerned right now about my daily needs whether I have enough food whether I have enough sustenance my health and my strength and the little circumstances that I feel so reluctant to pray about because I think well

God is so big and so great and so mighty why should he take any concern over a little tiny person like me and surely it's dishonoring to God to concern him with the little worries that I have no it isn't we are to remember that it's God that we're praying to God who is concerned with the big issues but also God who is concerned with every detail in my life is there anything you today haven't taken to the Lord is there something troubling you today and you've lost sleep over it and you're concerned over it and you've wrestled over it you've discussed it with other people and the one thing you haven't done is taken it to the Lord because somehow you feel that well this is just it's too small for him no it isn't if the

Lord sent his son to die on the cross for you then he will also take care as God our provider of our daily needs what is it that Paul says he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how shall he not also freely with him give us all all things the little things and the big things so our daily bread it's not just a prayer for food it represents the little elements in our lives that we need to be committing to the Lord on a daily basis our families our decisions our choices big and small asking that God will come into everything every single need don't leave anything out take him into everything that's what it means to live the

Christian life and to make sure that God has invaded every part of it but he's also concerned about our sinfulness and we are too and he's also able to provide that forgiveness in the Lord Jesus Christ and we ask him to forgive us our debts sin is debt that's the way it's presented in the Bible as it's a deficiency on our part the same way as if we spend our money then we get into debt unless there is money coming in unless there is a source of income if we spend then we get further and further into debt people talk about the debt crisis a whole country lies on the brink of disaster right now because of debt billions and billions and tens of billions of euros and a whole country is spiralling into chaos at the moment because of debt and there's this question of who is going to help that country every individual is involved in that we all know what what debt means but the

[32 : 39] Bible tells us that our sin is debt and as we have sinned against God we have accrued a massive deficit to God we are in the red but when God forgives a person's sins he wipes out that debt he writes it off he says all of it has been paid and there's only one source of payment and that's Jesus' death on the cross in which by his sacrifice all our sins have been forgiven if we come to him if we ask him for that forgiveness forgive us our debts is that your prayer today as you consider the barrier the separation that there is between us and God is that our prayer Lord forgive my debts as we also have forgiven our debtors Jesus is not saying that the way to earn God's forgiveness is to make sure that you forgive others who have sinned against you no that's the cart before the horse what he is saying is that the mark of a forgiven life is a life that will forgive others and if you refuse to forgive others then that is a mark that you have not been forgiven if you refuse to contemplate forgiving others and I know

I know the kind of situations that people find themselves in from time to time in which there is serious a serious breach in relationship I know how serious that can be and I know how difficult it must be and yet that's the challenge of the gospel and if you say I can't do it by myself that's fine you can't do it by yourself God has to step in and he has to give you that spirit of forgiveness because if it doesn't happen it will destroy you bitterness destroys a person where forgiveness forgiveness that comes through the gospel through the forgiveness that God has given to us through Jesus it will bring healing and it will bring restoration and life the mark of a forgiven person is that person will forgive others and God is able also to protect us against the evil one against the testings that come from time to time and that we've all experienced and that we all know about the temptations that Jesus himself experienced in the wilderness in which the evil one tried to distract him from the purpose for which he had come into the world to take his mind and his will away from the cross we too will be distracted and tempted in all kinds of ways by the evil one

God is able to protect us and we are able to ask him to give us that protection to lead us not into temptation but to deliver us from the evil one that's a translation of that phrase to deliver us from the evil one we're reminded that we're in a warfare that we go back out this morning into a battleground as God's people where our enemy goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers that's why life can be so excruciating sometimes don't ever don't ever expect an easy life as a Christian a life that is a wrestling a struggling a life which is a warfare and in which only God by his mercy and his love and his greatness can see us through 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 and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil may God place that prayer in our hearts may we may we make use of that template that pattern of prayer and may we discover its priorities and may we discover what God can do in answer to our prayer as we come to him in faith and in obedience let's bow our heads father in heaven we thank you for the fellowship that we can have in the gospel and we pray lord that these priorities will be our priorities we pray that your name will be glorified and hallowed in this world as it is in heaven we pray that your will will be done in this world as people come to embrace

Jesus Christ we pray for our own daily needs and for our protection against the evil one we pray for our forgiveness and we pray for your strengthening of each one of us for we ask in Jesus name amen psalm 145 we're singing the traditional version of the psalms the second version of the psalms on page 445 psalm 145 the second version of the psalm from verse 13 to verse 18 thy kingdom hath none end at all it doth through ages all remain the lord upholdeth all that fall the cast down raiseth up again psalm 145 the second version of the psalm and verse 13 to verse 18 will stand to sing the king thy kingdom hath an end at all it doth through ages all remain the lord who audience h among the saints love of all things

Lord attend and only wait that ye here to live and thou in season do not spend sufficient good than to relieve give our light hand the strong and wide and everything the satisfied that lips and love for your earth abide of thy great liberality the Lord is just in his ways all and holy in his works each one he's near to all that on him come to call in truth on him alone now may the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest on and abide with each one of us both now and always amen now you'll please remember to use the exits which I mentioned at the beginning

[41 : 36] I'm not going to go to for my own