

A Prayer for Peace & Justice

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: 07 June 2020

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

It has indeed been a distressing 12 days for us and for our country.

In 2019, nearly two weeks ago, George Floyd, an African-American man from Texas, unemployed due to COVID-19, currently living in Minneapolis, was arrested and for unknown reason held to the ground face down for nearly nine minutes with a police officer's knee in the back of his neck.

The video is devastating. I watched it once. I don't need to watch it again the rest of my life because I'll never forget it. As if the abuse of power and the lack of compassion were not reprehensible enough, the arrogant disregard on the face of Derek Chauvin is simply appalling.

Protests quickly followed in many of our major cities and in every state, and rightly so. One friend told me this week, there may be nothing more American than protesting against the ideal of America.

[1 : 28] America is the land of the free. The country where all men are created equally and treated equally, where the same rights are extended to all.

So the protest pressed on. Because of Floyd's death, Mr. Floyd's death, along with a string of others, seemed to reveal that, again, that whites and blacks in this country are still separate and unequal.

Sadly, while many protests, perhaps most protests, were peaceful, others turned violent. But rioting and looting dominated the streets of many of our major cities.

Bricks thrown, windows broken, cars burned, stores looted, buildings incinerated. More innocent people were hurt.

Protesters, police officers, law-abiding store owners, and more. What do we say? What do I say?

[2 : 32] You know, my job, as you know, is not to give you my thoughts on whatever I desire to speak about. My job is to be constrained by the Word of God.

So what does God say? There's so much, the Lord says, that's relevant today. But I believe what may be most important is for us to get down low and learn how to pray.

For peace. Indeed, for justice. Look with me in Matthew 6. We're going to study the Lord's Prayer this morning. And I trust it will fit with what is going on in our lives.

This is the Lord. He says, 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 have forgiven our debtors.

[3 : 51] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Verse 14. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

This is the Word of God. And I think it fits and helps us this morning as we hopefully will see.

Let me set the context really briefly. If you remember, we're catching Jesus right in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. And it's just called that because he's standing on a mount speaking to people where he lays out the Christian life.

What are the nuts and bolts? What are the core essentials of the Christian life and how to live in this world? And in this section, he's addressing the most traditional ways of seeking God.

Of giving. Of praying. Of fasting. You remember this section. Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. When you fast, wash water on your face so that no one knows. Don't parade it around.

[4 : 53] Well, the same thing is going on when he talks about prayer. He's saying, don't do these things to be seen by others or to show off before others. It wouldn't be popular in our culture.

Do these things to please and honor God who sees in secrets. And in so many ways, these verses get at the heart of what I think we need. What we need right now most will not be seen by others. It will not be documented on social media for everybody to comment. It will not be captured in the headlines. It will not be marched through the streets. What we need most this morning will only be seen by God.

What we need most this morning, we only capture his gaze. Because what we need most this morning is to learn to pray. In a word where we're going, pray as if everything depends upon God. Because it does. Pray as if everything depends upon God. Because it does. So we're going to break this out in three points.

[6 : 01] The first is the invitation. The invitation. Verse 9 tells us how to address God and forms an invitation to God. If you look down there with me, verse 9, that second half or whatever.

Our Father in heaven. How many times have we prayed these prayers? I was raised in a Presbyterian church where we went through this prayer every single Sunday.

I wouldn't mind doing that here. I'm not opposed to that. But this word Father was a household word. It immediately communicated warmth, intimacy, and affection to the original recipients. It was translated Abba in Aramaic. It was used by children to address their fathers. How many times a day was this word spoken in the area around Judea?

We're invited to approach God in this most intimate way as a child would his father. These words are supposed to immediately communicate something profound to us about God's fatherly relationship with us through Jesus Christ.

[7 : 03] I was reading a book several years ago about a bishop, I guess. I'm not really great on the Catholic hierarchy.

But out in L.A. and worked a lot with this guy Gregory Board. Worked a lot with gangs out there. And he tells a story about a friend of his and how he came to understand the fatherly relationship with God.

He said his friend, Bill, years ago, he took a break from work and from ministry to care for his father as he died of cancer. His father had become a frail man dependent upon Bill to do everything for him.

In a role reversal, probably common to you and common to all of us, in which adult children who care for their dying parents, Bill would put his father to bed and read him to sleep.

Exactly as his father had done to him when he was a child. Bill would read some novel and his father would lie there staring at his son smiling. Bill was exhausted from the day's work and would plead with his dad, Look, Dad, here's the idea.

[8 : 15] I read you sleep, all right? I read you fall asleep. Bill's father would apologize and dutifully close his eyes.

But that wouldn't last long. Soon enough, Bill's father would pop one eye open and smile at his son. Bill would catch him again and whine, Come on, Dad.

You know the rules here. The father again would cooperate until he couldn't take it anymore and the other eye would open to catch a glimpse of his son. Bill says, After his father's death, he knew this evening ritual was really a story of a father who couldn't take his eyes off his son.

How much more so God. What's true of Jesus is true of us and this voice breaks through the cloud that comes straight at us. You are my beloved son or daughter with whom I am wonderfully pleased.

That's what it means that Jesus says to approach God as your father. As the father who looks straight at you with delight.

[9 : 24] Maybe he's like the father you never had. Maybe he's like the father you dreamed you would have. Maybe he's like the father who didn't last, who's not around. Or maybe he's the father that you did have. Or your father is like him in so many ways.

But either way, God is your father now. Jesus announces this not to just Jewish people who are in the right family line, but to anybody who would come to him in Jesus Christ.

He says, Regardless of your background, your police record, your missteps, your bank account statement, or the color of your skin, God is your father. In fact, the accent on the original language is your father who is in heaven.

Your father who is in heaven. To the rest of the world, he is Yahweh, the Most High, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. But to you, beloved, he is Father.

This radically alters the way we pray, doesn't it? Radically alters the way we live. Look at verse 7. We don't heap up requests. We'll be pleased before God by our words.

[10:26] And we don't pray because he knows what we need before we ask. We're not going to bring in him information that he doesn't already know. We come to him because he loves us already. And because he already knows all that we need.

And so we pray to our Father who's in heaven. Who welcomes us all the way in. But the address continues. And I just love this.

He says, Our Father in heaven. Now we're supposed to be staggered by the truth that God is our Father. But we're also supposed to be staggered by the truth that God is in heaven. You see the tension in these verses.

God in heaven is our Father. Our Father is in heaven. We're meant to kind of swing between these two things. God in heaven is our Father.

He's for us. He's near us. He knows all our needs. He cannot take his eye off. And yet God our Father is in heaven.

[11:26] He's not like us. He's beyond all imagining. His thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are not our ways. His wisdom is not our wisdom. And this tense combo is meant to draw out our hearts and ground our confidence in prayer.

When life goes sideways, when social media gets loud, when injustices abound, when the wicked prosper, when racism rears its ugly head, we get low.

And remember, our Father is in heaven. He's unlimited in every way. He needs no props or crutches.

And he works on our behalf. Our peace will never come from balancing the scales of justice, but from entrusting our lives to the one who judges justly.

Secondly, adoration. Adoration. This prayer breaks into six requests. The first three focus on God and worshiping and adoring God.

[12:36] And I love these requests because they have nothing to do with you and nothing to do with me. And they flow quite naturally from the invitation, our Father in heaven.

And they remind us that regardless of how things are going in our lives, regardless of what is on our mind, regardless of what is weighing us down, we must start not with ourselves but with God.

Incidentally, this prayer, it's never meant to be a formula, okay? You know, that's the only drawback to saying this every week is it becomes formulaic.

It's meant to be, though, a pattern. So while I can't spend a lot of time on this point of the prayer, that invitation, adoration, and petition is a wonderful pattern for you to emulate in your prayers.

I follow this pattern every day. Any of you, that's nothing I can say about that. All right, point. So he says, hallowed be your name. Hallowed be your name.

[13:39] Your name refers to the Lord. Actually, in our first reading this morning, I will wait for your name. Jewish people were very careful how they spoke about God's name.

And so throughout the Old Testament, they often wouldn't use the name Jehovah. They would just use the name. You are the name. Because I revere you. So those who know your name trust in you.

So the name refers to the Lord. But what does it mean to hallow the Lord's name? That's an odd prayer. Hallowed is a word. It just means sanctify or set apart.

So how is God's name sanctified? How is he who is holy, holy, holy, already sanctified, magnified, glorified by us?

Now, quite obviously, his name cannot be made more holy. His name cannot be made more glorious. But his name is hallowed when our mind and heart sets him apart in highest regard.

[14:40] If you remember my story from last week about when Kim kissed me, you know, a couple weeks after that, I began looking for a ring. I was super nervous about the ring.

And I wanted to find the perfect ring to communicate my love for her. You know, isn't that pleasant and romantic? Eventually, I did find the perfect ring. And picking up the ring was totally exhilarating. Not just because I was, you know, it took all my life savings to buy this ring. But it felt like I was holding dynamite. You know, I was like, where did I put this in my pocket? You know, I was holding it tightly.

So fearful, white knuckled. Trying to be very careful not to lose it or misplace it. I lived with 11 guys, you know, so I had to be worried about that. So I hid it in a very special spot in my room.

The ring became very valuable to me. I invested all my money, like I said. But more than that, I wanted to take this ring to communicate my love for Kim.

[15 : 41] I set it apart. In a much more profound way, God wants his name to be set apart in our hearts and lives. Because of what it signifies.

It signifies our reverence and respect for God himself. God desires for us to hold him in highest regard as the most lovely, good, right, true, desirable, glorious person in the universe.

God desires for us to live before him in uncalculable wonder. And wonderfully, it's our prayer. It's not a command.

It is something we're commanded to do. But it's not something we do or something we can do. It's something only God can do. John Piper says it well. He says, The most important prayer, which he says in this verse, is that the most important person in the universe do the most important act in the universe.

That is, set apart God in our hearts. It's a prayer that God would be honored above all. It's a prayer that confronts our self-absorbed culture.

[16 : 52] How much thought has been given to the honor of God this week? How many columns have been written on the dishonor to the Lord of one image bearer of God killing another image bearer of God?

You know, in our race for justice, I wonder if we miss the greatest injustice. How about us? Are we quick to pray?

Are we quick to grieve the dishonor of God? Or have we been quick to form our opinion, to share our thoughts on racism and white privilege and you name it?

This request is first for a reason. It's meant to dethrone every other concern from first place. It's meant to change us.

Every other concern no longer takes prominence. Martin Lloyd-Jones says it like this. This petition is a burning desire that the whole world may bow before God in adoration, in reverence, in praise, in worship, in honor, and in thanksgiving.

[18 : 10] Is that our supreme desire? Is that the thing that is always uppermost in our minds whenever we pray to God? It is the first one because it's most important.

Then he continues, let your kingdom come. This request flows quite naturally again from the previous. If the Lord is the most lovely, good, right, true, desirable, glorious person in the universe, why is his name not hallowed?

Why is his generosity not celebrated? Because of sin. Because of the passions of the flesh.

Because of the kingdom of darkness. The need to make this request gets right at the heart of the human problem. Sin. We should want to honor God above all, but we want honor for ourselves.

We should want the justice of God above all, but we want justice for ourselves. We want to be the center of the universe. Now, you may say, I don't claim to be the center of the universe or any attempt to be, but let me ask you, when you look at your high school yearbook, sorry, homeschoolers, or perhaps when you look at your latest family reunion picture, what face do you look at first?

[19 : 31] Whose hair do you notice has fallen out? Or how about when you get into an argument? A big one. One of those World War III arguments. One of those one in ten years arguments.

And you go away steaming, replaying all you wish you had said and all you wanted to have said and all the comebacks you should have uttered. Who wins? I've lost a lot of arguments, but never in my head.

Or as one of my friends likes to say when I make too many suggestions about where to eat or where to do this or that, my other friends would understand what he means by that. He says, oh, oh, oh, how selfish of me. Let's do everything you want to do.

I want to be the center of the universe. And so do you. The essence of sin is not breaking a rule, but rejecting God's rule and making yourself first.

Making your desires, your dreams, your priorities, your prayers, your opinions, your hurt, your feelings first. What this means is that the real evil of racism is not the injustice done to others.

[20 : 36] The real evil of racism is humans arrogantly elevating themselves above God and other image bearers because of the color of their skin.

Sin is the real evil of racism and this attempt to dethrone God. And obviously it gives way to prejudice, foolishness, anger, envy, hatred, madness, disorder, chaos.

I saw this week, I read this week one article describing the riots out in California. I don't remember which sound. And he just, the article wrote very almost heavenly wisdom in his statement.

He said, it's as if madness is always brimming below the surface. It's as if madness is always brimming below the surface.

As soon as the police pull back, madness erupts. That's the truth of God's word. We have a haunted house within our hearts.

[21 : 37] We have madness within our hearts. As Ecclesiastes says, sin is our greatest problem, our greatest enemy, and it's always lurking below the surface. And so we should pray, let your kingdom come.

We should pray, let your kingdom come. What do we mean by this is we pray, Lord, be Lord of my life. Be Lord of my emotions, my decisions, my thoughts, my commitments.

Lord, don't let my kingdom come. Let your kingdom come. And we pray for God to be Lord of others' lives. We pray for the gospel to go forth.

This is really a prayer for the gospel to go forth throughout the whole world, that arrogant police officers would be humbled, that self-infatuated high schoolers would be set free, that guilty child abusers would find forgiveness, that the gospel would go forth, that God would not give justice, but that he would give mercy as his kingdom advances.

That's our prayer. We pray for God to be Lord of all. We continue to pray wonderfully. At the end of Revelation, he's saying, the spirit and the bride say, come. The spirit and the bride say, come. What are they praying?

[22 : 50] Let the kingdom come in full. It'll be something we pray until the end. And down after that, you will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Again, this flows naturally. Once he's Lord of our lives, we desire his will to be our will. We desire everything in our lives to be done in accordance with it.

How is the will of God done in heaven? Perfectly. Everyone in heaven honors him, follows him, fears him. Everyone in heaven obeys his will.

And so we pray this prayer. We endeavor to do what pleases God, and we leave our lives in the hands of God.

In so many ways, this is a prayer like Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Deliver me, God. Deliver me. Yet nevertheless, not my will, but yours.

[23 : 50] We bow. Pray as if everything depends on God because it does. Point three, petition. Petition. Each of these three requests address all our needs for daily life.

These requests are so sweeping, so broad. They're everything we could actually need. I was reading this week, and one commentator said that.

I'm like, yeah, right. You know? But immediately, as I was studying in these verses, it's all there. Verse 11.

Give us this day our daily bread. Give us this day our daily bread. This request is meant to produce daily dependence upon God to provide. Daily dependence upon God to provide.

I love the order of this. Jesus teaches us to pray, our Father in heaven, and then he teaches us to pray all these great, wonderful, majestic, amazing prayers, and then he turns immediately to our physical, earthly needs.

[24 : 58] As C.S. Lewis says, God loves matter. There's no spiritual and secular distinction in the Lord. So he turns to what we feel we need most.

Give us today our daily bread. Give us this day our daily bread. Today or this day is meant to imply we're to pray this every day. Bread, as my grandfather used to say, is the staff of life.

It's not merely give us food, Lord, though it does include that. I've never seen the righteous go hungry, as David promised.

It includes all of our daily, physical, earthly needs. With these we should be content, Hebrews 13 tells us. Give us this day our daily bread.

Daily points to just what we need today. It's hard not to think of the Israelites wandering through the wilderness with a cloud to lead them by day and a pillar of fire by night and manna to satisfy them in the mornings.

[26 : 09] Forty years, daily provision. The Lord only gives what they needed each day. At the end, he says, even your shoes didn't wear out after 40 years.

Life, I think what's going on here is life beats us down. We grow tired. We become exhausted. The future seems dark and certain.

So we take control. But we must not. Trouble comes each day, but grace does too.

Mercies are new each morning. Sufficient for the day of its trouble, as Paul called the Corinthians, we were utterly burdened, not so that we would lash out or throw it off, so that we'd stop relying on ourselves and on God who raises the dead.

Point two, or whatever, second verse in this little chapter, this section. Forgive us, verse 12, forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

[27 : 18] Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. The request is meant to produce in us a daily dependence on God to forgive, a quickness to forgive, a willingness to absorb wrong because of Jesus Christ.

Jesus pictures us in the marketplace. That's what these words come from. In the market we buy and sell and trade. We go into debt to others, and others go into debt to us.

They make us pay our debts, and we make them pay their debts. But the work of Jesus turns this whole business upside down. Jesus says he forgives debt. He forgives what we owe.

The creditor is Jesus, and he forgives that debt. And we, too, are to forgive the debt of others. You know, in one of the most vivid parables about this, Christ tells a story about a man who was forgiven a 10,000-talent debt and quickly punished his servant who could not pay him for a hundred denarii debt.

The difference between the sum of money could not be more exaggerated. But the man's problem was not his unkindness. The man's problem was not even making his servant pay.

[28 : 31] The man's biggest problem was forgetting how much he had been forgiven. The man's biggest problem was forgetting how much he had been forgiven.

Forgiveness is hard, and it's so hard because it's even harder to truly believe we have a great debt before God. When someone sins against us, we often get stuck thinking, I could never do that. I'm not like that. I don't act that way. I don't respond that way. We're getting consumed with these, he's so this or she's so that.

But we can only begin to forgive when we become convinced we are our biggest problem and we remember how freely and completely Jesus Christ has forgiven us. Forgiveness is a moment-by-moment.

Forgiveness is never forgetting. Don't believe the lie. You can't forget. Now, we do forget some things as we get older, but that's not the main point of it.

[29 : 35] Forgiveness is moment-by-moment choosing, not forgetting, choosing not to hold the sins of others against us because of Jesus. Forgiveness is moment-by-moment choosing not to hold the sins of others against us because of Jesus.

Do you find forgiveness hard? Why? Why? Has anyone sinned against you more than you've sinned against Jesus Christ? This is the ethic or the way of forgiveness in the Christian life.

Ephesians 4.32 says it. Rightly, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you. It's the way we're supposed to forgive.

The way we've been forgiven is the way we forgive. The way God has chosen to not have any strings attached with us is the way we're supposed to forgive with no strings attached.

No if-onlys. No buts. Completely. Look in verse 14. It says, If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you don't forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses.

[30 : 47] If you don't forgive, you may not be a Christian. Unforgiveness, bitterness, petty scorekeeping, sinful criticism is deeply wicked.

This, this, you know, that verse is not saying you must forgive in order to be forgiven by God. Now it sounds a little bit like that tit-for-tat type of thing. That's not what he's trying to say. He's saying you must forgive to prove you've been forgiven by God.

Because that's what Christians do. They, they forgive. They just forgive. They just bury. I remember one time just being painfully aware that, that my wife, there is a big trash dump in our backyard.

There's a landfill that's a lot bigger than the one in Niota in my backyard. And that's the landfill where God, or where my wife chooses to throw my sin every time I sin against her.

I called her this morning and repented to her while I was preparing this very message. That's where it goes. She chooses to forgive and to throw it. She chooses to cover. She chooses to not treat me as my sins deserve.

[32 : 04] She chooses to treat me graciously because of Jesus Christ. She says, I'm the recipient and it humbles me every single time. And I think this text would ask us, is there anyone we need to forgive?

In the same speech, Jesus says, leave your gift on the altar. Don't make a mockery of my gospel. Is there anyone we need to bury the hatch or hatchet with?

Any skeletons in the closet? Any years of silence and withdrawal that are not pleasing to God?

Now, don't get me wrong.

I know sometimes two spaces gather to this fallen world. Things don't all, they don't go back together like Legos. But is there bitterness and anger and unforgiveness in our hearts?

It must not be for the Christian. And let me clarify this with a few things. Forgiveness doesn't sweep anything under the rug. Forgiveness looks sin and evil in the eye.

[33 : 15] It doesn't turn a blind eye. It doesn't act like something didn't happen. It doesn't call evil good and sin pleasing. In fact, forgiveness works for justice.

Now, I don't know where you are in relation to so much of what's going on this week and some of the issues raised. We likely, if we all sat down at a table, would disagree on what the next step should be for our country, for our president, for our society.

But I think we can agree. I think. On the significant disparities between whites and blacks still in our country.

Now, poverty is not partial to the color of skin. But blacks are arrested more often, charged more often, and given stiffer sentences on record than whites.

And then whites. There are two unemployed blacks for every one unemployed white, basically constant since 1950. Black median income is 62% of whites.

[34 : 35] It was 59% in 1967. It's increasing, but ever so slowly. One in three blacks live below the poverty line versus one in 11 whites.

The median net worth of blacks is 8% of whites. Is it all personal responsibility? In a nationwide study of Medicare patients, white Americans are three times more likely to receive a coronary bypass over blacks than needed.

African American babies die two times more often than white babies. It's four times as many African American mothers die in childbirth compared to white mothers. Is that white privilege?

I don't know. But forgiveness works to correct injustices.

This is a fallen world. Nothing's going to get clean quick. And one of the most powerful tools we have in our arsenal is our homes.

[35 : 51] I believe justice is an important thing, quite obviously. But it's not something that begins out on the streets. It's not something that begins in social media in so many ways.

Our homes are meant to be incubators of kindness and mercy and non-prejudice. There will be places where we cultivate love for other people, for the other.

Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan. We cultivate love for the other, a willingness to listen. And it's incubated in this home, which we believe in. We love it. We fight for it, right?

And there are places where convictions are upheld and where we're taught to stand. Regardless of where you work these things out, I don't really care in one sense. But we must fight to cultivate biblical justice in our hands.

And so forgiveness doesn't sweep it under the rug. But forgiveness doesn't take justice into our own hands. It doesn't turn over the tables. It doesn't arrogantly right the wrongs.

[36 : 53] Romans 12 tells us what justice in this world must look like, or one aspect must look like. Romans 12, beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God.

John Piper says this is one of his favorite verses on marriage. Now you think, that's a little odd, Dr. Piper. But what he means, instead of responding in kind with a quick jab real quick, leave it to the wrath of God.

Now don't tell your spouse that, that you're leaving it to the wrath of God. It might not go well that evening. But you get the point, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

There is something to that. Lord, he's yours. You've got to deal with him. Or she's yours. You've got to deal with him. But forgiveness doesn't take justice into its hand. And an eye for an eye makes

both blind.

Forgiveness works, but calmly calls on God to right every wrong. And forgiveness like this is so powerful. Forgive as you've been forgiven. I've sat with couples that have walked through adultery. [37 : 50] Just rampant, nasty adultery. Denial, betrayal at the most painful human level. They say that's top three things.

You can have a child die and second is being betrayed by the sin of adultery. I've sat with couples where the spouse forgave because of Jesus Christ.

Now in that setting, it doesn't look like the scale is that much different. But when they think about what God has done for them and how he's forgiven them, they extend it. And, you know, one of the most powerful examples we had recent memory was by Reverend Anthony Thompson.

The whole nation watched in awe as this Reverend Thompson addressed Dylan Roof, the white supremacist killer who murdered nine black churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina.

Reverend Thompson, whose wife was murdered that day, said he didn't plan to go to the bond hearing. He said his daughter convinced him to go. When I got there, he says, the Lord said, get up. [38 : 57] I have something for you to say. He said he got up and it just came out. Son, I forgive you. I forgive you.

You murdered my wife. But I murdered the Son of God. The prayer continues.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. This request is meant to produce daily dependence on God to endure. What does he mean, lead us not into temptation? Does God tempt anyone?

No. Each person is lured and enticed by their own desire. Does God test us? Yes, but that's not what this is talking about. And I love this prayer. I was studying this week.

What he's saying is, God, don't let me fall into temptation. Don't let me entertain it. Don't let me engage it. Don't let me linger there. Don't let me into temptation. Keep me far away from it.

[40 : 04] Now, that's a prayer we can pray every day. That's a wonderful prayer. Lord, keep me far from entertaining any temptation. Lord, help me to bear fruit, to be pleasing to you, to prosper for your glory.

Pray as if everything depends on God because it does. I recently read a story in conclusion about an artist who perfected the ancient Japanese craft of, and I'm going to mess this up, kintsugi.

Y'all all know, so you can't correct me. Kintsugi. Kintsugi is a traditional way of mending broken pottery. It takes two pieces of broken pottery.

It uses shimmering gold lacquer to glue together fragments of plates and bowls that were otherwise useless. Japanese have been doing this for hundreds of years, and the artist said, and I quote, you have to look at the fractures a long time before you understand what's going on, before there's any hope of healing.

He said generations of artists' families have literally hung on to fragments for hundreds of years. Not despairing, but hoping to see how they're meant to be placed together.

[41 : 37] He continued, kintsugi is not fixing something or just reusing something. It's a repair that creates something new. Something actually unprecedented that is actually far more valuable than the original bowl.

That's our prayer. Not merely for America, but for the whole world that's groaning under sin. What we need most right now will not be seen by others, firstly, but will be seen by God alone in secret. What we need is to learn to pray and pray as if everything depends upon God, because what we need is for God to come and heal, restore, strengthen, forgive, embolden, rescue, restore, and make all things new.

So we pray, let your kingdom come. I don't think there would be a more fitting way for us to conclude than to pray this prayer together. So if you would, go ahead and stand with me, and we will have this on the screen.

And let us pray. Pray then with me. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

[43 : 04] 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 have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen. Father, we do commit ourselves to you. We pray, God, that you would keep us.

We pray that, God, that you would make us a people of prayer that depend on you and lean on you with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And, Lord, we cast the burden of so many of these issues to you.

Lord, we confess and we strive to work and do that which is pleasing in your sight. Nevertheless, we call on you to do what we cannot do.

[44 : 07] To heal, to restore, to forgive, to assure, to strengthen, to satisfy, to comfort, to keep, and to make all things new.

We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com. Amen.