

Matthew 6:7-15

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[0:00] Good evening.

Welcome. Welcome, everybody. It's good to see you all tonight. I guess I'll open this up by praying for us. Lord, you've given us your word.

You've given us instruction on how to live, how to think, how to relate to you. And I just pray that tonight we would continue to dive deeper into that, that in our daily living we would be looking to honor you, to serve you, to love you, to know who you are and how that affects us and how that to be the goal of what we're doing here, to seek you out, to know you as believers, as Christ followers.

And that in that, Lord, we would see your gloriousness, your might, your majesty, your love for us, that we continue to be built up, to be rooted in this word that we cling to.

May it be in our lives, power to us. May it be needful in how we interact with others and in how we grow as a body.

[1:48] And as we talk about prayer tonight, Lord, that we would see something of its richness, not only in form, but in its function as well.

And I pray all these things in Christ's name. Amen. So tonight we turn back to Matthew. We continue in our series on the Sermon in the Mount.

And tonight we're going to be looking at the Lord's Prayer and how that fits into this sermon and how it fits into what Jesus has been teaching us so far. So if you want to pick up with me in verse 7 of chapter 6, Matthew, we'll start reading there.

Amen. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask 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.

[3:10] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others that trespass, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others that trespass, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

And tonight we see how Jesus teaches his disciples to pray. And I guess kind of growing up in the South, I'm not sure how that worked out in the Northeast.

Like, everybody knew the Lord's Prayer. It was said by football teams on Friday nights. It was said at social gatherings. It was used for family prayers. It was used at church and so on and so forth.

So, growing up, I heard it everywhere I went. And yet it lacked little meaning to me. It wasn't of any use in my daily life. It was just kind of something that, if somebody had some kind of moral inkling, they knew the Lord's Prayer, they were Christian, that's what kind of life you just kind of lived.

It was kind of like saying God bless you, like when somebody sneezed. It was just like something that you kind of did, like, flippantly offhand and just kind of culturally became conditioned to say. You just kind of knew the words.

[4:25] You just kind of followed along. And for me, it was just like, I did this without questioning if it had any worth or any value. And kind of looking on that, it's just like, there's so much of a tragedy now.

And what I've been studying and been learning about this prayer, it's just so much richness in these phrases that we can tend to kind of say sometimes just mindlessly.

And this is one of the most perfect and complete prayers that we see throughout the Bible. It's one that Jesus instructs us to pray. It has everything in these six petitions that we need to pray.

And if we think that God is far off, it starts off our Father. If you have any questions about his divinity or his majesty, it says in heaven, it says hallowed be.

If you have any questions about how the Lord provides, he says give us, lead us, deliver us, forgive us. We don't just learn this as some kind of protocol for a prayer we pray.

[5:34] What we see in it is the truth about who God is. And that's why we don't need to babble. We don't need to stand on street corners. Both in Jesus' instruction and in our very doing, these words lead us to God honoring prayer.

But why pray anyway? If God is who he says he is, he's omnipresent, he's omnipresent, he already knows what I'm going to say. And you will see Jesus say here, he says, your Father knows what you need.

But since God is who he said he is, his thoughts is above our thoughts, his ways are above our ways, and we can only go so far in what he's revealed to us.

We can only use what he sets before us. And he's given us this great gift of prayer as a way to communicate with him, to commune with him, to have this fellowship and this relationship with him.

And with that, I've been asking my questions as I search through this is, so like, how do we pray if God knows our needs? How do we pray? Why do we pray if this is the case?

[6:48] And I think as Jesus gives these examples here of this Pharisee and of these pagans, he starts off as, don't Bible like pagans when you pray. And we see here, they heap up many phrases.

They think they'll be heard for their many words. And we see here that their view of prayer, prayer that they're presenting is kind of mindless, it's kind of thoughtless.

And we see here, as he gives us these examples, he's telling us something about that. He's saying God's definition of prayer isn't meaningless. It isn't mechanical. It's not self-centered as the Pharisees were.

prayer is not thoughtless as the pagans practice it. We shouldn't be praying for the approval of people around us. Prayer isn't just judged by how many Christian-sounding words we can use or the length that our prayer goes or by what people around us tend to think when we pray.

And we see Jesus telling them here, their prayer needs to be sincere. It needs to be thoughtful. There has to be some weight behind what we're praying and what we're saying.

[8:08] They're not just a list of things that we're just kind of throwing out there. Some translations use the thing vain repetition. And as you kind of look at that, like, we may think of, like, repetition, like, should we be repeating the same things over here?

But I guess here, the emphasis seems to be on the vain part of it. Because we look at Paul's famous words in 2 Corinthians, where he says, three times I've pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

And we see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. And we see what Mark says about that. And about this account. And he says, he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

And true prayer isn't chance. It isn't elevator pitches. It's not defined by its length or its articulation, but by its sincerity and its thoughtfulness.

And that brings us to our next point. If we were to pray sincere and thoughtfully, we have to know who we're praying to. And in this passage, Jesus makes a point to refer to God as the Father.

[9:18] He says, your Father. He says, our Father. And that's the link he makes here. And if we were to pray, as God knows our needs, we need to pray to him as Father.

And that removes some of that impersonalness that we kind of can get into. It removes that kind of genie mentality that God is just there to give us what we want. We're just coming to him with our three wishes, and that's it.

But we can rejoice in the fact that God is there. He's here us. He's using this term Father, which should be a reality in our lives, to draw us to him. And it should draw up in our minds the image of a protector and a provider.

Father. And he's not just an invisible force that stands between us and the things that we desire to gain through prayer. And the term Father, it isn't figurative.

It isn't symbolic of something. But in our lives, it should be a reality. And it exists in the truth of who God revealed himself to be.

[10:28] And we see that. And we see him revealing himself and more and more through the New Testament and through the Old Testament as he brings up this fatherly imagery of him shepherding and caring and providing for his people.

And as we look on that, we see Jesus extensively speaking of this unity he has with the Father. Especially we see that in the Gospel of John. And here in his fatherhood we can be comforted.

We can be assured that we can come to him in prayer. Yet at the same time he's holy. And Jesus makes mention of that all in his first line.

He says, Our Father in heaven. So he makes this claim, this assertion that not only is God our Father but he's in heaven.

He's sacred. He's set apart from us. And so his name should be hallowed. And Martin Lord Jones defines this hollowing, this hollowing the name of God as sanctifying, as revering, to make deep, to make and to keep holy.

[11:47] And this term not only refers to God as some type of name but this phrase where he says, Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name.

Your name representing all who God is and has revealed himself to be. And to simply put it, to say that God is, his name is to be made holy, it says that all that God is and revealed himself to be is to be more than just highly regarded, it's to be kept sacred, it's to be something that we should stand in awe of, something we should just treasure up in our hearts and to remember every time we pray.

And Jesus shows us here how all the characteristics of God are Mary, like in his divinity and in his perfect nature and his love and his mercy, like all these things come together, come together in the Father.

Like he's not just judge, he's not just all these other things, he's Father as well and that's something that we need to keep in our minds and we see Jesus here pointing that out first and foremost as he instructs his disciples to pray.

And as we continue to talk about this fatherly characteristic of a God and how this theme just continues to run throughout the whole Bible, it talks about, it talks about in the sense that we've been adopted, that we've been made citizens in heaven, that we've been transferred from one kingdom to another.

[13:27] in all that, we see something coming about, we see change coming about, we see heart change, we see, we see our affections changing, we see our desires changing, we see everything about us just fundamentally changing as we, as we take on this new image in Christ.

in Colossians says, our minds should be set on things above and it also says where Christ is, when Christ our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory, with Christ our life.

When Christ our life appears, our life being hid in Christ, us being a part of him. With that in mind, pray like this, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And as we look at God, the Father, we also look at another aspect of him being king, him being sovereign, him ruling over everything. And we know as he comes, that's a far more better kingdom than that's here on earth.

And as we look at Ephesians, as Paul talks about this kingdom of, as Paul talks about this kingdom of darkness, as he talks about these rulers and cosmic powers, things ruling here on earth.

[15:01] And then we look at our own government that doesn't run so efficiently all the time. And as Jesus is telling us to pray here, it's not because the Father's going to come and throw off all these things, things.

But there is something long-term that we are looking at, something to come in the future that's being made manifest now as well. And we ought to, and in this, we're to pray for God's fame to be made known, for him, his fame to increase in all the earth as his kingdom comes.

And we ought to watch and to pray for this king who's coming as we think about Christ's second coming. As we, as he, as we think about this kingdom coming and his will being done and how perfectly in heaven God's will, will is done.

And we are to desire that here on earth. We are to desire that same will that's being done in heaven to be done here on earth. And we were just to stop here.

You could probably draw some pretty, pretty logical application from these verses. Don't, don't Bible like pagans. When you pray, just pray about God and what he wants.

[16:21] But we see Christ keep going there. And it doesn't just stop there. It's a little bit more involved. In every religion there, there's prayer, there's meditation, there's, there's all these things.

So, so what separates us Christians? How we count, how can we distinguish ourselves in this? And I believe this in the fact that, that our father's omniscient and knows what we'll ask and yet he still bids us to ask it.

And I hope that, and that resonates in our minds and continues to, to frame how we pray, that God knows the words we'll say, yet he still bids us to speak them. Prayer isn't profitable because we get stuff, it's because we get God, we get to communicate with God.

And, and that's the basis of our, our prayer as Christians. And with that in mind, with that in mind, we get a father who cares about our needs. He encompasses all this in, in our daily bread.

Jesus is telling us to pray for everything we need. And I guess sometimes we have a tendency to, to hyper, hyper spiritualize this and to be like, well, he's just telling us to pray for spiritual food and to pray for spiritual things.

[17:35] And I think we do ourselves a disservice in that and, and we do God a disservice in that because we're, we're not allowing him to provide for everything in us.

I mean, after all, he created us, so, so how couldn't he know that, that we need things here on earth? And I mean, he, he cares as much about a dentist appointment at 1115 on a Tuesday as he does about our Bible reading.

And, and with that, we just, we just need to remember that, that our Father, he cares about it all. He cares about every aspect of our lives. And I think that's what Jesus is driving, driving home in, in these few words that he's put here about give us this day our daily bread as he instructs us to pray.

He, he doesn't mean for this to, to be exhaustive, but for this to be the, kind of the stimulus or the primer that, that gets us to, to come before God and, and to pray.

And Luther reminds us, he says, but our praying, we are instructing ourselves more than him. And so, as we look at how we instruct ourselves and what we pray, we need to make forgiveness a big part of that as he comes to in verse 12.

[18:53] And he says, forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors. And he doesn't just leave it there. He comes back to this point in verses 14 and 15. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly father will forgive you.

But if you not forgive their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses. And he makes forgiveness a big part of this prayer. And we all may say, well, well, yes, forgiveness is a big part of this.

Christ forgave us. Is that like another term we just kind of throw out there is just so easily to say and to, and to repeat? Are we just kind of babbling when we say that?

Do we know how hard like forgiveness can be sometimes and how ingenuine it can sound? I mean, we can just throw out apologies.

People go around all the time just saying, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. We, we see in the media somebody does something and they just come out with this rehearsed statement to tell people they're sorry for, for what they've done.

[20:02] Do we just kind of make it another way to, to say excuse me? My bad. I, I don't even really mean to do that. And even as little kids, like we've all had those instances with sibling, cousin, friend, they needed some parental mediation.

And in that, like your parents, they, they want you to say you're sorry to, they want you to make amends with your, with whoever you're having this, this conflict with. But isn't in the end it's just kind of like forced and, and mumbled and you just say it so you can just go about your day and go back to playing with your Hot Wheels or whatever you were doing.

Is forgiveness like that to us? And, and I guess as, as we continue to, to look at forgiveness, like our forgiveness of new creations should exceed that of what, what culture and, and our religious cliches kind of bring about, like as we look at the, the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, we see that like what we're doing is exceeding what, what, what is going on.

He's saying like their righteousness is exceeding that of the Pharisees, like they're going above and beyond. There's something deeper here to be discovered and to be had and, and that's our, that's your heart changing in this.

and in our forgiveness, like, we, we should be seeing, seeing the depth that we've, we've included and I like that he used that word here, this depth, that this sin that, that we do is a price to pay for it.

[21:42] And that should cause us to, to have mercy on those around us. That should cause us to forgive those around us. And like in the Parables, the Unforgiving Servant, Jesus says, forgive your brother from your heart.

He just doesn't say it, forgive your brother so, so everybody can see what a nice person you are and how you forgive them. He says, forgive them from your heart. And you can't begrudgingly forgive somebody and, from this same tainted and unloving heart, expect God to forgive you.

How can you receive something you're not willing to give? How, how, how can that be? And just as we move through this prayer, just beginning to, to feel the effects and, on our hearts and, and how it draws us to the Father, how it assures us of, of hope to come, how it gives us room to, to ask for what we need, how it gives us reasons to, to search our hearts out, all in this one prayer.

And if it's doing these things, it's doing what it promised to do. And now as we look at the last petition, we see, we see some of the same goals in mind.

He says, lead us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil. The key to us having a fellowship with God is for us to be away from sin, for us to put off sin, for sin to be put to death.

[23:12] And how can we have that if we're, we're beset by these temptations? And, in some translations it's translated from evil as from the evil one.

And we know we're going to be tested, we know we're going to be tried. And this is, this is not an assurance that, that life is going to be easy. It's not that we're commanding God to take all the bad things out of our life.

But we know there's, there's evil outside of us. There, there's Satan. There's Satan. And, and he isn't for our fellowship with the Father. And we know that there's sin within.

We know that there's, there's, there's sin in our life. We know that there's, those things often don't push us towards stronger fellowship with God or communion with God.

We know those things tend to pull us back. They tend to condemn us. And right here we, in this prayer it says, lead us not into some things, deliver us from evil.

[24:17] We're to, we're supposed to be separating from those things. So, so this relationship with the Father continues to grow and continues to, to thrive. So, so as we pray for, for what we need, as we pray to a God who, who knows what we need, we need to be praying sincerely and, and praying thoughtfully.

We need to know that we're, we're praying to a loving Father. And we need to be simply asking, asking for what we need. And some of you may be, be doubting this whole prayer, prayer thing.

You may have been asking what you need for a long time. You've been, been asking and, and asking and asking with your repetition and, and nothing's happening. But are, are you merely praying for what you need or, or are these things you desire?

Or your expectation has been, been shattered by some bad theology that you, you've picked up on prayer. That you're not mustering up enough faith to get what you want. And either way, we need to start examining ourselves through the, through the lens of scripture and, and discerning what's, what's needful for us.

And we can desire only the best things. We can desire all these good things. But, but outside of God, those things are just stumbling blocks and, and distractions.

[25:45] Outside of knowing the kingdom has come, outside of knowing God's kingdom come, these desires in our mind may be only, the only thing that matter. We may set those things up on pillars, pillars and, and make those things idols.

And that's how our self-declared needs to throne God. That's how he's not, not hollowed in our lives. And we need to know God is close.

Not that he's seemingly close or, or we're experiencing his closeness. We need to grasp that this, this closeness is a reality, is a truth that, that we need to be believing.

And for some, it may be a little bit harder than others. You, you may have never known your father. You may not, particularly have a close relationship with your father. But in light of the gospel and what, and what's that's doing for us, this, this reconciliation that it talks about, this relationship is, it's like no other we should have.

It can only be likened to other things. It can only be likened to marriage. It can only be likened to a shepherd and his sheep. But, it's just so much more in there. prayer. And in this language of father, we, we should be desiring this intimate relationship.

[27:02] And it can only be had through prayer. We only can communicate through God through prayer because that's the only vehicle he's, he's given us to communicate with him. Like he, we can't send him emails, we can't text him, we can't give him phone calls.

Like he's given us this, this, this great gift to dialogue with him. And like, and just finally, let's look at Jesus. Let's, let's look at him and look at the life he lives.

In my intro, I was, I was talking about how his instruction in the Lord's prayer and in our doing and, in our praying these words and, and meditating about these phrases, how that leads us to God honoring prayer.

Let's look, let's look at Jesus' life. And we see from, from the age of 12 up until the ascension, like he lived out all of these things, all of these things in this prayer. We see his life reflecting those things.

And by no means are we that perfect. By no, by no means do, do we have that type of perfection to us to, to live out all these things perfectly. But we can live in a way that our words make, make our prayers meaningful.

[28:12] So, so I'll pray for us. Heavenly Father, as we look to, to commune with you, to have better relationships with you, strong and, and thriving relationships with you, let us neglect, let us not neglect prayer and, and what's to be had in it.

Let us not neglect that, that you've given us such a great gift, you've given us such great instruction. you, you've laid out for us how it looks to, to come before you.

But we know you, you sit on a throne of grace. We, we know that you, you hear our prayers. We know that you desire to, for us to come to you with, with all our needs.

and I pray that our, our hearts would desire that your, your kingdom come, your, your will not only be done in our lives, but in this world.

and that, and that we would just revere you and, and respect you and, and love you and, and cherish who you are and, and all that you say you are and, and how you reveal your, yourself to us on a daily basis, whether it's mundane or in spectacular ways, Lord, but that you would just be hollowed in our lives, and, and in our prayers.

[29:51] I pray all these things in Christ's name. Amen.