

Sunday, June 21, 2020

Bible Study **Matthew 6:9-13**

READ Matthew 6:5-15 and Luke 11:1-13

Luke (*Luke 11:1-13*) tells us that prior to giving this model prayer, the disciples had asked Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray . . .” (*Luke 11:1*). Matthew then tells us that Jesus first instructed them on how **not** to pray (*Matthew 6:5-8*). The Jews were well practiced in prayer. Their prayers were highly formalized, rarely if ever extemporaneous, and they had prayers for literally each and every occasion in life. There were set times of prayer (9AM, Noon, and 3PM) and set places for prayer (like the temple or the synagogue). The most pious among them could make sure that he was seen when the hour struck any or all of the special times. These formalized prayers tended to be long. It was taught that the longer the prayer, the more certain a person could be that God heard him.

These forms of prayer that were intended to impress people and attract notice were exactly the forms that Jesus taught us not to do. He essentially tells us that these ways of praying get no higher than the ceiling. Pastor and Bible teacher William Barclay wrote “when a person begins to think more of how he is praying than of what [and to whom] he is praying, his prayer dies upon his lips.”

For Jesus there were basically just two rules for prayer. **First**, all true prayer must be offered to God. The key failure He saw in the people around Him was that they were praying to men, not to God. They were praying to impress those around them; to seem more religious or pious than they truly were. Their prayers were never meant for God to begin with, so their prayers never went to God.

Second, that the God to whom we pray is a God of love more ready to answer our prayer than we are to offer it. Jesus taught us that God does not need to be coaxed, or pestered, or battered into answering our prayers. It is God’s desire to give. Ever since the beginning, our Father in heaven has been giving to us all and more than we need. At the very beginning he created all of this world, and then gave it to us. When we disobeyed him, he gave us a new start outside the garden. Then he gave us his law, and promise after promise after promise . . . until finally he came to us himself and gave us his only son; so that one day through that only son he would be able to give us the entire kingdom!

So, with these two principles in mind Jesus sets down a model prayer made up of six petitions. The first three petitions (*Matthew 6:9-10*) have to do with God and

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the glory of God. The second three (*Matthew 6:11-13*) have to do with our needs and necessities.

God is first recognized for who he is as ruler of the universe and then we bring our needs and desires. **It is only when God is given His proper place that all other things fall into their proper places.** “Our Father in Heaven, Let your name always be held holy; Let your kingdom come; and Let your will be done on earth as in heaven.”

Prayer is never an attempt to bend God’s will to our desires, but is always an exercise in submitting our will and desires to God’s. One could even say that a person cannot truly pray this prayer until their life reflects its attitude. It would be like the prayer of the hypocrites, wouldn’t it? To offer a prayer that recognizes God’s supremacy, while living in a way that does not?

Perhaps this lends to us another understanding of Paul’s admonition to “pray without ceasing” (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*). **The posture of our lives informs and forms the posture of our prayers.** If our lives are oriented toward the knowledge of our indebtedness to our Holy Father in Heaven, then our prayers will also likewise follow that posture. And even more, our very lives can then be offered to God as a living prayer...as an offering...as an endless communion with God. Throughout every second of it we can talk and listen to him. Indeed — Praying without ceasing.

Through the Lord’s prayer Jesus teaches us to bring **ALL** of life to **ALL** of God; and through this prayer we recognize the sovereignty of all of God over all of life.

The thing that the hypocrite of Jesus’ time missed in their formalized prayers of many words prayed out there where people could see them and marvel at their piety, is the fact that we are in need. Did you notice that in Jesus’ model prayer there is no praise given to God for who he is and what he does? Did you notice that there is no thanksgiving offered for who God is and what God does? There are six imperatives in this prayer: Let your name be holy, let your kingdom come, let your will be done, give us our daily bread, forgive us, help us when tempted...

Jesus is teaching us to recognize that we are in need. Just like little children need their father to give them the things necessary for their sustenance and growth, we are God’s children and **NEED** his grace and gifts as well. To say that we need help is probably the hardest thing a human being ever admits. But to admit our failing, sins, and need is where the experience of God’s gifts and grace begin.

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The Lord's Prayer puts us in a posture for receiving the gifts of God. Isn't Jesus right when he tells us that only those that ask, receive; and only those that seek, find; and only those that knock on the door get the door opened to them (*Luke 11:9-10*)?

Therefore, may you ask, seek, and knock — May you pray as our Lord has modeled. And may you experience the good gifts of our Heavenly Father.

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**Questions for Further Reflection**

**Matthew 6:5-15**

Were you taught any prayers as a child? What is one of the earliest prayers you can recall? What's the funniest prayer you've heard a child say?

How does the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees affect their prayers? How does their reward contrast with those who pray sincerely? Are there religious disciplines (prayer, meditation, study, silence, solitude) that are valued in our own circles? How do we sometimes use these to impress people? When used properly, what is the value of religious discipline?

Why do you think Jesus warned his followers to avoid wordiness? What is the relationship between forgiveness and prayer (*see Matthew 18:21-35*)? If the Father knows what we need before we ask, why pray?

**Luke 11:1-13**

What is the motivation of the disciples to ask about prayer at this point? What does the parable in verses 5-8 teach about prayer? How do verses 9-10 relate to the parable? What attitude is implied by 9-10? Do verses 11-13 clarify the intent of 9-10 and the meaning of 5-8? Is there any connection with the teaching of this parable and to the parable in Luke 18:1-8?

What should be the relationship between this prayer and our own prayers? How do you usually pray? Do you have a set time and place? Do you use anything like a psalm or a devotional guide or a hymn to prepare to pray? When you pray, what seems to be the majority of your concern? Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition? Why? In which of these areas would you like to grow?

What is the valuable and "good gift" that God can give (v. 13)? How much do we (you) want that gift?