

Matthew 6:7-15 | ⁷“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. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name.
¹⁰Your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us this day our daily bread,
¹²and forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:9-15 | Church Prayer

Each week we begin our service by praying the Lord’s prayer. It is recorded twice in scripture once in the Gospel of Matthew and again in the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus likely taught this prayer multiple times throughout his ministry and the contexts it is relayed to us in scripture are different. This is a more general public teaching while in Luke the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray and he delivers a version of this same prayer.

In coming together and praying to our God we are living out the reality of who God says we are. We are his people and he is our God. In order to grasp this we need to understand a transition that has been made in the new covenant under Jesus Christ. The Church is the temple of God.

1 Peter 2:5 | you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

God appointed Solomon to build the temple in which he would dwell at the center of Jerusalem. When the temple was constructed Solomon prayed a prayer of dedication. Here he gives us this promise of God.

1 Kings 8:30 And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

We are the temple, the Lord has made this unshakable promise to hear us. How much more is this promise true when we gather together to seek him? The Lord hears us. Our prayers go up as

an aroma to God, these are our spiritual sacrifices which go up in a pleasing aroma to God. We are the people God promises to hear in prayer. So let us pray how he taught us to pray. This morning as we consider corporate prayer we are going to look at our hearts that go into prayer, the story of our people in the prayer.

1. The Heart that goes into prayer

Matthew 6:7-8 | “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. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Before giving us the words of the Lord’s prayer Jesus describes for us the heart required of us as we enter prayer. He tells us to not be like the gentiles heaping up empty phrases thinking that these many words will compel God to hear us. Jesus wants us to clearly understand that prayer is not an incantation, it is not a meditative sound, prayer is not a technique, or a project of summoning or placing ourselves into a particular state of mind.

It is not just that these patterns can make us prone to hypocrisy, which is an issue he addresses elsewhere, praying on street corners to be seen by men will give you just that reward and no other. What Jesus wants us to see and understand is the reality of the relationship we are entering into. You pray because God is there. You are praying to someone and this someone listens. And this someone is your father and he knows what you need before you ask him. Why can we pray this way, because we are the people of God, his chosen people and he gives us the right in his son to approach him as father.

Some of your fathers needed incantations and coaxing. They needed manipulation from a safe distance, a foreordained posture of approach. They saw all your needs as inconveniences and those were your own problem. Not this father. He needs no coaxing or cajoling, no appeasement, he knows what you need and is in no way threatened. Gentile God’s depend on you, that’s not what this relationship is like, your father is one on whom you can depend. So enter with this heart. We are his people.

2. Our Story in the Prayer

Matthew 6:9 | “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed by your name.”

Why do we pray this together as a church, and why has the church prayed this prayer together in our gathering for millennia? All the personal pronouns are plural. Isn’t it strange that there is such thing as plural possessive pronouns. Shouldn’t we all just say “my” at the same time? But it isn’t “my” the prayer is “our.” In this first phrase “our father in heaven” by saying this together you are perfectly hitting your marks on this stage of creation. Vertically you say father. That means you are a son or daughter. He is your father.

He is above you are below. By saying our, you position yourself as siblings to those who say it with you.

The word father describes an intimate and close relational reality. Yet he is in Heaven transcendent and eternally beyond us. Is not the whole gospel in this phrase. He is eternal in the heavens and treats us like sons and daughters. Take your positions. Brothers sisters call your father he is infinite in wonder and perfectly close.

And our first petition is that the Lord's name would be Hallowed. Made holy, honored revered. Where does this petition lie? As with all the petitions in this prayer it seems to lie everywhere all at once. It lies in the hearts of us as we pray it. May we be a people who revere the name of the Lord. It is also a hope for the whole world. May the Lord's name be Holy to all people in all places. That is his desert. We pray it because that is not the way things are now. Our hearts and the hearts of the world are out of sync with who God is.

Matthew 6:10 | Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

As we've positioned ourselves in the story, we see what the goal of the story is here in this petition. In order to understand this we must understand what a kingdom is. A kingdom is the scope of the kings' rule. And here is our hope that Christ would rule all things on earth, just as he does in heaven.

Once again where is this meant to take place. It is here in the hearts of us praying. That God would rule completely in our hearts and we would conform to his rule. That his kingdom would come to this moment in the earth. That the Lord's rule might be expressed in our families, our relationships, our businesses and our governments. That all present things who deny the Lordship of Christ would be humiliated into absolute conformity with the risen Lord who gave himself up for the redemption of the world.

We pray for the certain future in which Christ's rule is made absolute at his second coming.

Notice how the petitions of the church that Jesus teaches us to pray shows us who we are and how to relate to him. He is our father, it is his kingdom we desire, we long for his fatherly rule. The first half of the prayer is a gazing into the transcendent and recognizing the fatherly face of God meeting our gaze. The second half of the prayer we lift up our imminent reality to the transcendent God.

Matthew 6:11 | Give us this day our daily bread,

We are the people who wandered through the wilderness and were given our bread from heaven each day. The Lord dwells eternally in the heavens, you are always just in one day or another. In this day you have needs. Bread is not just bread, it is all your needs. We

come to our father as needy and he is the provider. He will provide all you needs for the day. There is a daily dispensing of the grace of the Lord. His graces are new every morning. Don't worry about tomorrow for tomorrow has enough worries of it own. Ask for daily bread. You'll get it. And how wonderful that the Lord teaches us to pray this. Our father knows what we need.

Matthew 6:12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

The prayer then calls us to request forgiveness from the Lord. Who are we? We are the ones who have sinned against the Lord but we are those who are forgiven by the Lord. Remember we pray this together. We are a people who have been forgiven and because of that we are a people of forgiveness. Forgiveness flows to us from the Lord and therefore forgiveness flows from us to the one another and those who have sinned against us.

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

We understand that the Lord guards our steps and that we are a vulnerable people. We desire to be protected from the temptations of the world. We live in hostile territory and our enemy the devil seeks to capture us in his evil schemes. We need the Lord's deliverance.

We are seeking to become the people of God that God has called us to be in his son. Can you imagine finding your orientation in the story of God without practicing this prayer as a church? This prayer is the one which informs all of our prayers for one another because it gives us our position and identity and reminds us who God is to us.

This is why we must pray this together, and why we must practice gathering together to pray.

Two tips:

One: Come to church and pray with us on Sunday, be in the service on time to pray and lift this up with your heart.

Two: Attend prayer nights with people at your church at the Carrs once a month. This is how we find our place in the story.