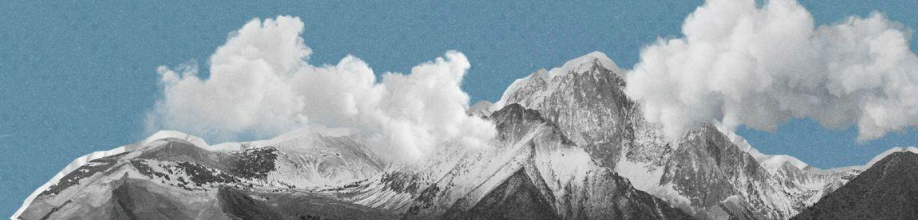


# THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



## **Matthew 6:5-13**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**2/11/2024**

We are going to Matthew 6 today.

If you were here last week, you know that this section of the Sermon on the Mount is a section where Jesus is telling us not to do things like give, pray, or fast just for show. Our religion isn't supposed to be a costume, or an act we put on to impress. He is teaching us not to be like the stage actors who do it all for praise from people, but to do these things genuinely, knowing that our Father sees what we do in secret and hears what we pray in secret and will reward us.

And in the section today, Jesus describes the truly genuine way to pray in teaching us the Lord's Prayer.

And He introduces this prayer in verse 5 like this:

**Matthew 6:5–6 [5] “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [6] But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

So don't pray like the religious hypocrites - loving to pray for the sole purpose of being seen and rewarded with the praise of others.

Jesus is not at all shocked by the notion that there are hypocrites in church. He knows there is an awful lot of fake religion out there.

But Jesus isn't cynical. It's not all fake. There aren't any perfectly consistent and obedient people, or churches. None of us fully live in accordance with our beliefs all the time (whether we're Christians or not.) But there are true Christians, true Christian marriages, truly genuine churches, true Christian leaders, true practices of the spiritual disciplines.

Jesus doesn't give an eye roll to all attempts to live out the faith and practice spiritual disciplines just because there are hypocrites out there. He says, "Don't be like the hypocrites" and calls us to something real.

Then he goes on to give another caveat:

**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.**

Here the caution is not to pray like the Gentiles. He says they "heap up empty phrases" - and the greek word for that isn't used anywhere else in any literature anywhere so it's tough to know exactly what it means. But it's the word *battalogo*, which has *logos* is it, or word. And "batta" might just be onomatopoeia - "batta batta batta words." One translator rendered this word as "babbling." So don't just babble in prayer.

And don't think you'll be heard for your many words - polylogia.

We don't get our prayers to God with ecstatic babbling or by going for the triple word score and making our language complex to impress God.

To pray that way is to demonstrate a wrong view of God - He knows all things and you aren't informing Him of anything. So don't think that if you don't say it enough or with enough turns of a phrase that He won't be impressed enough to listen.

Don't think that God will be impressed with your words. This is the God who created all things by His words, we aren't going to have Him stand in awe of our many words. God's isn't going to look at us and say, "Wow - this person has amazing words, I better listen." He's got us beat in the "amazing words" department. So it isn't the vocab or the amount of repetition that gets his ear.

Now Jesus isn't prohibiting repeating prayers or saying the same things to God again and again. Because Jesus does that.

**Matthew 26:44 (In Gethsemane) "So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again."<sup>1</sup>**

We can repeat our prayers, we are supposed to cast all of our anxieties on God<sup>2</sup>, and when those anxieties arise, even about the same thing, we cast them on God again. Jesus will teach us in chapter 7 to keep on asking, and seeking, and knocking - we can pray for the same things for decades.

Jesus isn't forbidding all repetition in prayer, he is forbidding mindless repetition, and faithless repetition that thinks that many words make our prayers acceptable to God. I may need to pray it again because I'm anxious

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<sup>1</sup> HT to Stott, John. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Bible Speaks Today Series) (pp. 154-155). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 5:7

about it again, but I don't need to pray it again because if I don't pray it 15 times God won't hear it - that just isn't the case.

Which brings up a question about the Lord's Prayer, in some circles called the "Our Father." Is this a pattern for prayer, or is this a prayer that we repeat word for word? Is Jesus giving us an important outline of the contents of healthy prayers, or is he giving us a prayer to repeat verbatim?

When Jesus says pray *like* this, He is saying pretty clearly that this is the pattern for our prayer, we pray *like this*, not necessarily that we pray this. Saying, "Pray like this" isn't a command to pray these exact words, but to take this as a pattern for prayer.

But, Jesus taught this prayer at another time in

**Luke 11:2 [2] And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come...."**

So in Luke, Jesus says, "**SAY THIS when you pray.**" In Matthew, Jesus says "**PRAY LIKE THIS.**" So it seems that this prayer is both, a prayer to pray verbatim to God, and a pattern for our extemporaneous prayers. It can and should be both. We pray these exact words sometimes, and we use these phrases as the main ideas to bring some structure and guidance to our more extemporaneous prayers.

Now there are probably some people here who think we shouldn't recite a prayer like the Lord's prayer. I was once among you. I thought all prayer should be extemporaneous. If I have a conversation with my wife, if I'm reading what I have to say off of a paper, it doesn't feel like as much of a connection. So we just talk, and prayer is talking to our loving Father.

But in the Lord's Prayer, in the Psalms, and all throughout scripture there are prayers and songs that we are given by God. He's given us prayers to pray.

And we may be very uncomfortable with reading a scripted prayer, but not at all uncomfortable with singing one (our songs are just prescribed musical prayers.) But we should use all the resources for prayer we are given in the scripture.

All that God asks He provides, and when He asks us to pray, he gives us words to pray, patterns for prayer, and hearts that want to pray them. So pray spontaneous, extemporaneous prayers throughout the day, talk to God with no pressure to follow a script. Pray continually, the scriptures tell us. And go to the scriptures for words to pray, especially when you don't know what to say or how to even begin.

And as a church, in our calls to worship, just as we do with the apostles creed, I'd like to start occasionally repeating this prayer - to genuinely pray it to God, to help us memorize it as our pattern, and to obey Jesus when he says, "When you pray say this..."

But when we do, it isn't because we think it's an incantation with magical words. When we do recite the exact words, we don't do so in a superstitious or faithless way, thinking these words are magical or the special words to get our prayers to God. But we pray them, thankful that God has even guided how we pray and hasn't left us on our own.

So we don't want to pray like hypocrites, to impress others. We don't want to pray like those who don't know God, thinking it is the volume of words that will get our prayers to Him.

But instead:

**Matthew 6:9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

Father in heaven.

This actually explains why we pray at all - because He is our Father. We aren't conveying to Him any information He doesn't already have, but our words to Him express a relationship of trust and closeness. You don't always talk to family members to inform them of something new, you often talk for the sake of a relationship.

So we approach God as a Father. But also as our Father in heaven, reminding us that we aren't just talking to a regular buddy. Which makes sense of why He might give us words to pray and a pattern for prayer - we do approach Him reverently.

But the fact that we call Him our Father was paradigm-shifting prayer for the people who heard it.

We've been praying to our Father for a long time, so it doesn't strike us as odd, but in Jesus time it would have been very rare for someone to address the holy exultant God as Father. Jesus calls him Father. And of course that's good for Him to do as the Son of God, but He invites us to similar intimacy with His Father.

Only 14 times in the OT is God called Father, and every time its referring to him as the father of a nation, never in a personal sense. But Jesus calls him "Father" 60 times.

And because our status with God comes from our relationship (we've been made His sons in the Gospel), not from our performance, then our prayers shouldn't be designed to impress God.

Our kids don't have to impress us with flowery language when they have a request. We love them, and they know it, so they can simply come to us in full confidence that we will hear them because they're our kids.

So what we learn here is a fundamental aspect of all prayers: When we pray, we are relating to God as our father, not as our boss. God doesn't fire us when we don't perform. God doesn't reject us when we have been rebellious.

In fact, as a Father, I'll often put extra effort into one of my kids when they've been misbehaving - extra time, extra attention, whatever we need to renew our relationship. My fatherhood is actually kicked into a higher gear when I'm having a problem with one of my kids.

So whether you've been camped out in sin and are returning from it, or whether you've been growing and striving to live for God, understand that you are related to him as your father and your relationship with him is based on grace, not your works.

So Christian, he hears you. And he cares. He's your father.

You might say, "I can't relate to God as father because i didn't have a good father, now i don't have a concept of a good father. So I won't even use that language." And certainly, having a bad father on earth will shape how you think about your heavenly Father if you're not careful.

But you definitely have a concept of what a good Father is, otherwise you wouldn't know that you had a bad one. How do you know he's bad unless you have a standard of a good father by which you're judging. You know what a good father is, that's why you're mad!

Don't let spiritual psycho-babble ruin your prayer life and convince you you can never really pray like other people or like the Lord taught you to because of real tragedy in your past.

So we pray to God as Father. This also guides us in our prayers. As trinitarians, we believe the Jesus is God, that the Spirit is God, and the Father is God. So we wonder who we address - it isn't wrong to pray to the other persons of the Trinity, God hears, but the pattern the Lord gave us is to pray to the Father.

### **hallowed be your name.**

Hallowed means “thought of as holy” or “reverenced.”

And a person's name was closely associated with who they were, more so than in our day. If you say, “I'm going to make a name for myself” in this field or that, you are seeking to be recognized for your brilliance in that area. You are wanting who you are to be known.

The first order of business in this prayer is expressing a desire for God's name to be hallowed, or held in honor. This is a prayer that the God of the Bible and all that He is and has done would be held in high honor by those who pray.

This means we are not just praying to a generic God, but God who has a name and reputation, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Who has acted in history, who has expressed His will in the commandments, who has called for specific obedience to that will, and who has worked to redeem His people from their failures.

He's not just any god, but God with a name and a story and a reputation. He's the God of the Bible, which is another reason a good prayer life and a good Bible reading life have to go hand-in-hand, because all of the Bible tells us who this God is that we're speaking to.



So we pray to the Father, the God with a name and a reputation, and our desire in that prayer is that, first and foremost, His name would be lifted up. We want Him to be known and revered and glorified.

So this prayer is God-centered, and the first half of it is a prayer for His glory, for his kingdom to come, his will to be done.

When we pray according to Jesus' model, our prayer is for God to be seen as holy and awesome in our lives and in the world. We are praying for God to cause his word to be believed, his wrath to be feared, his whole self to be glorified, his love to be trusted.

We are praying that God would truly be praised in our lives and in the lives of others.

This means that answers to our prayers will involve the name of God being known and revered.

We pray for our region to change, but an answer to that prayer will not just mean the economy improves and laws are more just and education gets better - it can include all of those things - but all of those things for the name and renown of Jesus.

We pray big prayers for God to do big things in our region in our day, SO THAT you can't tell the story of the Rochester region 50 years from now without sharing the name and renown of Jesus.

So we pray Father, hallowed be your name.

Notice we haven't asked for any stuff yet – most of this prayer is not praying for material needs. That happens in this prayer. But this model is an incredibly God-centered prayer, seeking His name and renown on earth.

And these prayers shape us. If we pray this way, we will begin to live like we've got a huge God that is holy and to be revered and the most important factor in our lives, in our homes, and in our ministries.

And it will make us a church of people that are oriented on the glory of God. We can try so hard to make church the place that attracts people, draws in paying customers, says what the world is demanding we say, increasingly looking for relevance in an age that calls the church irrelevant. But the first order of business is supposed to be exalting the Father.

## **10 Your kingdom come,**

This was a prayer of early Christians. They used to pray, "Maranatha" and "Come Lord Jesus!"

This is a prayer that we pray as we look at the kingdoms of the world and how bad things are and it makes us long for the true king to come and the true kingdom to be fully in place.

And we are to pray for God's kingdom, God's full reign, to come. It has already come in Jesus, because He is the king who came, but it has not yet fully come because He hasn't returned. All of the brokenness in the world is supposed to create in us a longing for a better world, one where there's justice, one where the King is righteous and powerful, the laws are just, hearts are changed so that obedience isn't compelled with force but comes from within. I don't know anyone that isn't going to look at the choices we have on the ballot this November and think, "O God, thy kingdom come!"

We long for his return.

And whether we can pray this way is a good test for us in the good times. Can we mean it from the heart?

Sometimes things get really comfortable, and we want Jesus to come back, but not until we buy the next house. Not until we've tasted marriage. Not until we've fully lived our lives. We're in a comfortable place where the return of Jesus doesn't hold much promise for us because things seem so good.

If we can't really pray for Jesus to return, we're probably not getting dirty enough in our ministry to other people. The comforts here have numbed us to the longing for a better kingdom.

If you cannot pray for Jesus to come to bring an end to this war we're in, maybe you're not on the front lines. Because as you watch sin wreck lives, and taste the frustration of hearts you are powerless to change and wrongs you are powerless to right, you will long for Christ to return to fix it.

When you're praying, "Your kingdom come," you are praying for God's healing of everything, and to do that you must be around some people and situations who need healing.

And this is an important reminder to us of where our hope is. Our hope is not that we will be able to fix all that's broken in the world, though we fix what we can. Our ultimate hope is in Him and the fix that He brings.

And sometimes the church can be criticized for being so other-worldly in its hopes that we don't do any good here. But being other-worldly in our hopes does a ton of good here.

We know that for a person to be physically healthy, they have to have a strong immune system that can respond to the threats in the environment. It would be impossible to create an environment where diseases aren't present at all. So God has designed us to be able to respond to and cope with the viruses that are in the environment, and that's how we stay healthy -

not by fixing the environment but by being strengthened for the environment.

And nearly every social agency and non-profit aims at fixing something in our environment - poverty, crime, illiteracy - and more power to them! And lets jump in to help as the Lord leads. But the internal work that the Gospel does strengthens us for the environment - and that kind of work is rare and needed. Churches that preach bible and pray strengthen the immune systems of their congregants.

So without apology, we pray with our hopes fixed on the coming of King Jesus.

**10 Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

This is huge. We are to pray that God's desires get done on earth just like they are in heaven.

And when we pray this way, we're committing to two things. We are saying, from the heart:

1) I will know as much of the will of God as I can. I will study the Bible, all of it, to see what God is doing and what he is desiring.

Prayer is not about coming to God with our personal agendas; rather, it is seeking his agenda for our lives. His ways are greater than our ways, and his plan is always better than our plans.

A purpose of prayer is that we would learn the will of God, that our hearts would begin to resonate with it, and that we would ask what he desires and have those prayers answered for his glory.

We can't really say we really want to do God's will but then not study the Bible to find it.

2)I will do his will the best I can.

To really pray "Your will be done", you need to be willing to do his will. You must learn his will, and you must do his will.

To really pray this you really have to have a heart posture that is oriented toward God and wants to change your mind and your actions to line up with what God's will is.

So first, we've been instructed to pray for God's glory - for his name to be hallowed, for his reign to fully come, for what He wants to be done in us and in our world.

Those are the first things we are to pray for, because they should be the first desires of our hearts!

Then, once the greatest desires of our hearts are expressed, we shift to our needs.

## **11 Give us this day our daily bread,**

The first petition for ourselves is a prayer for our necessities.

And notice he doesn't say to pray for our weekly bread. Jesus probably has the story of the Manna in mind here. God's people were wandering in the wilderness with no food to eat, so God gave them manna, which showed up on the ground every morning. And they weren't allowed to keep it overnight or it would rot, they could only gather up enough for that day, and then eat all they gathered. God provided enough for each day, each day.

When Jesus tells us to pray for our daily bread, he is saying we should be people who don't hoard our resources - we should be generous and giving, so that each day we need to pray for more so we can be generous with it.

In Jesus' day, most people were day laborers, who would make enough money during the day to buy food with little chance of saving anything. So they worked today for today's food.

If they missed a day of work, their family could miss a day of eating. One crop failure would mean a major disaster. When they prayed for their daily bread, they must have meant it! It would have been a fervent prayer. And then they'd go to sleep at night saying, "Thanks God, you provided again, WOW!"

They had to live in daily dependence on God. But so often we don't - we have so much saved and prepared that we can trust in the savings, trust in what we have in storage, trust in the dow jones. So we can feel pretty self-sufficient: rich and in need of nothing.

**That's not the shape of the heart that Jesus is trying to form.** He wants a heart that recognizes its daily need for God's provision and one that is thankful to get it.

**12 and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

We'll talk more about this next week as we focus on verse 14.

And so we are to pray that God would forgive our debts, forgive us our sins.

Confession of sin and asking for forgiveness is a regular and essential part of our prayer lives. This keeps us from living unexamined lives, it keeps us from becoming arrogant in our approach to others because we have to live in regular, daily awareness of our own sin and weakness.

Jesus died to free us from the penalty of our sin, and wants us to know the freedom we have from it. But He never desires that we live a life where sin doesn't matter, where we feel we can live however we desire. He wants us to pray for forgiveness for the debts we just keep racking up.

And notice what our forgiveness from God is connected to: we forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

This will shape our hearts - over and over Jesus connects our request to God that He forgive us with the forgiveness that we grant others. He does this in the story of the man who had debts forgiven but refused to forgive the debts others owed him, and we hear that story and we think, “What a wicked guy!”

But over and over Jesus gives us opportunities to see that I am that guy. That I am the one who loves to go to God to be forgiven but who still holds on to the bitterness, and desire for vengeance, and refuses to forgive others.

By putting this right in our template for prayer, Jesus is forcing the issue that Christians must be gracious and forgiving people. And if they are not, they are demonstrating that they either don't have or don't understand forgiveness before God.

People who gather on Sundays and week after week ask for God's forgiveness must go out to grant forgiveness, otherwise their worship is utter hypocrisy.\* MUCH MORE ON THIS NEXT WEEK

This prayer shapes us.

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

We need to be trusting in God for any kind of moral victory at all. Deliver us from evil! Deliver us from temptation. We are dependent on you for daily bread, but also for daily victory over sin.

This prayer shapes us into people who are actively resisting temptation. We know it is out there, we need God's help with it, we are praying against it. People who pray this way live differently.

And praying like this flows from a belief in the Gospel - not from a desire to impress, not from believing our passion or repetition will catch His attention. But people who believe the Gospel pray like this, and are motivated to keep praying because of what we believe.

### **Our Father**

He has shown his generous fatherhood to us.

**Romans 8:32 "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"**

### **Hallowed by your name**

He cares so much for his own name and character that he sent His son to die so He could be just and the justifier of the ungodly.

### **Your kingdom come**

His kingdom has already come in Jesus. And when He came and gave us a taste of what it will be like, he raised the dead, healed the sick, provided food for the hungry. He showed us how he would fix what is broken, and if we believe in Him, we long for Him to come back and finish that job.

### **Your will be done**

We believe His ways are right.

Belief in who Jesus is and what He is doing motivates us to pray this way.



**Give us this day our daily bread**

Jesus is the bread of life.

**Forgive us**

Jesus forgives!

**Prayer of Confession:**

Adapted from the prayer book, Streams of Mercy, by Barbara Duguid, page 130.

*Father, we may not remember to pray often, and yet we worry about prayer a great deal. We worry about how we sound when we pray and about who is listening. We think about how long we pray and are eager to check it off our list of duties when we are done.*

*We doubt that you hear us or care about us enough to listen to our sorrows. We think that we have to clean ourselves up in order to pray, and we wonder if we disgust you with our sin and weakness. Father, forgive us.*

*Jesus, you prayed perfectly for us, and by your Spirit you make all of our prayers perfectly acceptable to our Father. As our great High Priest, you stand in heaven now, praying for your people and pleading for us. Jesus, thank you.*

*Holy Spirit, you pray on our behalf when we cannot pray, and you teach us to pray. Give us strong desires to come often to the throne of grace in order to receive help in our time of need. We need you many times, each and every day. Remind us to pray, and make us willing and able to cast all our cares on you, remembering that you care for us and are the only refuge for our weary and discouraged souls.*

**Assurance:**

### Hebrews 10:19–22

[19] Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, [20] by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, [21] and since we have a great priest over the house of God, [22] let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (ESV)

#### **Sermon Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Discuss the “pre-amble” to the Lord’s prayer in Matthew 6:5-8. How is the Lord’s prayer different from the prayers of the hypocrites and from the prayers of the pagans?
- 2) How does God being our Father change how we pray?
- 3) What is the “daily bread” we pray for?
- 4) Why do you suppose Jesus has to clarify his statement about forgiveness in verse 14?
- 5) How does the Lord’s prayer factor in to your prayer life?