

02.22.26: Pray begins with God's position

Title: Kingdom Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 6:9

Main Idea: Prayer begins with God's position.

Intro:

- What does it mean for us to be able to pray to God as "Father"?
- Kingdom Prayer – described as regular, humble, sincere, private, plain in language, confident, and aware
- After Jesus told His disciples how they were not to pray, He offered a positive model for prayer. "Therefore" shows that the model prayer expresses the conclusion of Jesus' previous teaching regarding prayer. The prayer is a direct contrast to the verbosity, self-centeredness, and poor view of God reflected in the praying that Jesus rejected in verses 5-8.
- Lit. *Therefore, you pray like this...* "The present tense of the imperative verb 'pray' indicates that Jesus' followers should pray often and habitually in accord with this model. The insertion of the word "should" in the H/CSB probably softens Jesus' command too much. Jesus commanded His disciples to pray, and so failure to pray is an act of disobedience to the Savior." Quarles, SM.

Remember our main idea about prayer: The prayers of God's people reflect the God of their prayers.

God's position as the recipient of our petitions is described for us in the opening words of our model prayer. Our petitions are meaningless if the recipient is powerless (or disengaged).

Last week: God is near. The "our" is personal, corporate, and exclusive

We noted that the exclusive privilege of calling on God as Father is for those who have been granted status through adoption as sons and daughters and have become heirs—all through faith (Gal 3:26; 4:6-7)

This week: God is concerned.

- He is called "Father"
- *Pater* in the Gk, but many scholars think Jesus probably used the Aramaic, *Abba*
- Jesus' statement here was radical. Jesus' teaching to refer to God as "our Father" was "radical." "Jewish prayers stressed God's sovereignty, lordship, glory, grace, and covenant. On rare occasions the OT refers to God as "Father" [mostly in the context of his establishing and leading them as a nation] but no prophet taught the people to pray to God as "our Father." When Jesus called God "his own Father" some Jews were offended" (Dorani) ...to the point of charging Jesus with blasphemy.

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- What does it mean for us to be able to pray to God as “Father”?
- The significance of addressing God as “our Father” (Quarles, SM)
 - Jesus refers to God as Father x44 in Matt, x38 with personal pronouns
 - The only time used without personal pronouns when Jesus addressed God directly as Father in Jesus’ prayer in Matt 11 and the GC in Matt 28
 - The use of the personal pronouns shows that Jesus did not view God as the Father of all people in general. Instead, God is the Father of Jesus’ followers exclusively.
 - It is this exclusive relationship, confirmed strongly in other places in Matt, that gives Jesus’ followers confidence that He is attentive to their prayers.
- “God’s Fatherhood gives shape, value, and confidence to all our praying.” E.M. Bounds, *The Classic Collection on Prayer*, 350.
- Doriani referring to God as personal Father – “Nothing shapes our prayers more than this word. It explains why prayer is simple and why sinners can approach God with confidence.”
- Doriani refers to prayer as “family speech”
- **ANTHROPOMORPHISMS**, figures of speech, which attribute human forms, acts, and affections to God. – “Nor have these analogies ever been a problem to believers, whether Jews or Christians, who have instinctively known that they must be understood in a metaphorical way. They are intended to highlight certain aspects of God’s character and activity and remind us that he is present with his people in the most intimate and seemingly ordinary aspects of everyday life. He teaches us and protects us in a way which, although it can be illustrated by earthly examples, ultimately goes beyond all human understanding.” NDBT
- God as Father
 - Creator – the source of our existence
 - Protector – He watches over our well-being and is endowed with extra strength to fend off the enemy
 - Provider – ability and resources to work and produce in order to provide
 - The source of wisdom – *Father Knows Best* and “Ask Dad. He knows.” in *It’s a Wonderful Life*
 - Encourager
 - Discipliner
 - Giver of good gifts
 - Provider of an inheritance

The most important word in this prayer...

What does it mean for us to be able to pray to God as “Father”?

As we consider that question, we must address x2 ways that the enemy has corrupted and even stolen this concept – that God is our Father –

1. **Dismantling the idea of father and fatherhood**

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- Some go out of their way to note that God is not gendered and thus is not to be understood as such.
- “The rise of feminist thinking within the Christian church has inevitably led to calls for God to be addressed as ‘Mother’ or ‘Parent’ as well as, or instead of, Father. This is the result of a series of misunderstandings. According to the biblical revelation this address to God is a gracious privilege announced by God himself, not some human theory about him which is open to revision. Moreover, the character of God revealed in Scripture is not simply masculine, for the biblical images are of one who cares, pities, cherishes and protects, not of a chauvinistic deity. And it is his love that is supremely evident in our invitation to call him our Father.” NDT
- It is important to remember that:
 - First the very idea of father comes from God. IOW we would not even have the concept of father if God had not created men to get married to women and become fathers of children. Every bit of that is God's conception and created order for humans to flourish.
 - Second, God created men to become fathers knowing that He would reveal himself to us as a “Father” God very well could have revealed himself as mother, there was nothing at all compelling him to do otherwise. Yet, God is self-revealed to us as Father.
 - Third, God using “father” as a metaphor for his relationship to us in no way diminishes the importance of mothers. I would actually argue in fact that the challenge until very recently has not been anyone questioning the importance of mothers, who have been viewed as almost always essential. Fathers on the other hand have been seen as optional, a sort of throw-away extra, a non-necessity in our culture for too long, like the extra buns in package of hot dog buns. Thanks George Banks!
- “In his personhood, God is clearly ‘masculine’, although the Bible is careful to point out that both men and women have been created in his image (Gen. 1:27). In himself, God is beyond the limitations of human gender or sexuality, but that does not mean that his masculinity is purely conventional. Female deities were common in the ancient world, and there is no *a priori* reason why the God of the Bible should not have revealed himself in a female form. Had gender been completely irrelevant, there might have been a mixture of usage in Scripture, or even a third form created specially for him. As it is, his masculinity is consistently maintained, even if he is sometimes credited with apparently ‘female’ characteristics, such as the ability to give birth (Ps. 2:7; Heb. 1:5).” NDBT

2. Destroying our experience of fatherhood

- Some people come up against a real struggle here. For some folks never knew of a father who filled this bill; Their father was either checked out, absent, or worse—abusive and the exact opposite of this. The problem here is so bad that I

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have heard and read arguments from some who call for the church to get rid of all family language and talk of God as Father. To this I would say two things

- First, we must always get the direction of comparison correct here. No matter how good a human father is, he is never perfect. Even the best of dads with the best of intentions on their best days fall well short of the perfect standard that is God as our heavenly Father. So, we must always filter our relationship with our earthly father through our relationship with our heavenly Father and not the other way around.
- Second, to the fathers in the room, both present and future—the comparison, at least in the early years, is inescapable. Your children with inevitably start out at least in some ways with a comparison of God to you. The call here is not to perfection. The call is to faithfulness to be the father God has called you to be in order to be able to point them to the Father that you can never be!

What does it mean for us to be able to pray to God as “Father”?

God is concerned about our physical needs

- Protector and provider
- Matt 6:
- Providing is so connected to fatherhood that Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica and said that a man who failed to provide for his family was worse than an unbeliever

God is concerned that we walk in wisdom

- He has not left us to fend for ourselves
- James 1:5 ⁵Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.
- James 3: 13-17 ¹³Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct he should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't boast and deny the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense.
- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
- Whole section of the bible dedicated to wisdom

God is concerned about our spiritual needs

- Sanctification
 - Heb 12:7-11 ⁷Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? ⁸But if you are without discipline—which all receive—then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we had human fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn't we submit even more to the Father

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of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness. ¹¹No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

- God's concerns for our best interests go way beyond our comfort and ease – preparing the road for the child vs preparing the child for the road
- Salvation
 - Luke 15 – Prodigal Son
- Inheritance

Conclusion:

- The picture that we have of God as Father is of one who is overwhelmingly concerned with the well-being of his children. We have a word for this, for what it means to be concerned more for the well-being of others than even ourselves – love! **God is love.** And this love is often revealed in the way that a father's love is poured out on his children.
- ***What does it mean for us to be able to pray to God as "Father"? EVERYTHING!***