

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 6:5a | Prayer: Approaching God
January 15, 2023

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 6.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

For the past several weeks, the Lord Jesus Christ has been teaching us about two specific things within His Sermon on the Mount:

1. Right living (righteousness)
2. Hypocrisy.

Hypocrites are people who wear masks—they pretend to be somebody they are not.

We learned how hypocrisy is an outward sin to cover up inward sin.

Last week Jesus gave us His first illustration of right living and hypocrisy—money.

LW KEYPOINTS:

1. *Financial hypocrites make a point of giving publicly when they could easily give privately.*
2. *Our giving is an act of worship (because our heart is attached to our wallet).*
3. *We tell our money where to go through a budget.*

The Lord Jesus also taught us how to give away our money.

We applied some systematic Bible skills and learned that Scripture teaches two ways to give financially: 1) Church and 2) Poor.

When you give to your church—you get to decide how much to give—and then give from a joyful heart.

We want not to place anything on the text— but instead pull the truth from it and out of it.

Only when we slow down and search for the details, do we find the treasure.

Studying the Bible is not only about knowledge—it's more about God's revelation.

The Holy Spirit reveals, discloses, and brings to light the grace and truth of His Book.

Many times, as I prepare, I have no idea where the Lord is leading—

Or where He wants me to place the priority and the urgency of His message to us for the week.

I share that with you because today's sermon surprised me.

Many times, in my weekly music meeting with the band, we'll read through the passage, pray through the passage, talk about it and then ask the Lord to reveal the songs He wants us to sing.

We want the music and words that we sing to prepare our hearts for God's Word.

The music is a soundtrack for the Scripture each week—the music helps tell the story of the overall narrative.

It's only recently that I found out that the band is placing bets on whether or not I'll preach through all four verses!

This is one of those days because we're only going to get through the first three words of this text!

So here's the game plan for the next several Sundays.

Read Together

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:5-8 CSB

Matthew 6:5—Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward.

Matthew 6:6— But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:7— When you pray, don't babble like the Gentiles, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words.

Matthew 6:8— Don't be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask him.

And dear friends, these are the very words from the inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 6:5—Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward.

Whenever you pray—

Let's start with a definition of prayer.

There are many definitions, so I will give you three things to think about.

KEYPOINT 1:

Prayer is communion/companionship/fellowship with God.

In other words, prayer is a relationship. It's a two-way conversation.

Genesis 3:8—Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze...

We see God again engaging Adam and Eve's sons—God is trying to lead and correct Cain and build his character.

But Cain is mad at God.

Genesis 4:6—Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent?"

Genesis 4:7—If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." — God is trying to protect Cain.

We see ^{this person} the relationship again between God, Noah and his family.

God sees that the whole world is evil—God is a God of justice, so He decides to administer justice and approaches Noah.

Genesis 6:13—Then God said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with wickedness because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

And then, out of God's mercy, God tells Noah how to build a big ol' boat to save him and his family while Noah preaches to everyone around him to repent.

We continue to see God engage with His people through Abraham.

Genesis 12:1—The Lord said to Abram:

Go from your land,
your relatives,
and your father's house
to the land that I will show you.

Exodus 3:5— "Do not come closer," he said. "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

It's w/ Moses where God makes a distinction in this personal relationship-holiness

Exodus 3:6— Then he continued, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

We also see how ~~God's holiness~~ Moses physically responds to God's holiness.

The New Testament provides more clarity by revealing that God is triune.

God who God is

The NT reveals that this Divine Being called YHWH in the OT has three separate roles, each with their own being and personality—and yet He is still one God.

God is Father, God is the Son, Jesus Christ, and God is Holy Spirit—who is one Divine Being.

We see all three at Jesus' baptism - Mark 1.

And it's in the Gospels where God reveals Himself as a person!

We can now put a face with God's glorious name!

As God
So Jesus came from Heaven to Earth to specifically tell us how to approach God *The Father* and have a relationship with Him.

Notice, we do not approach God on our own terms.

We have several examples of those who did.

The first example comes from when God ordains the priesthood in Leviticus chapter 9.

Aaron and his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were ordained as priests.

Shortly after the ordination, this happens...

2 Samuel 6:5 NLT— *David and all the people of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, singing songs and playing all kinds of musical instruments—lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals.*

So they are celebrating because God is among them.

2 Samuel 6:6 NLT— *But when they arrived at the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out his hand and steadied the Ark of God.*

In other words, when the oxen stumbled, the Ark of God was about to fall off the cart and hit the ground.

Uzzah reacts and prevents that from happening—by touching the Ark.

Uzzah touches the very presence of God.

2 Samuel 6:7 NLT— *Then the Lord's anger was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him dead because of this. So Uzzah died right there beside the Ark of God.*

And we think, wow! It looks like God overreacted.

One commentator says it this way—*It would have been better for the Holy Ark of God to touch the dirt, because the dirt was holier than Uzzah.*

Dear friends, we struggle with comprehending God's holy holiness.

We are inept in our humanness in knowing the holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin.

KEYPOINT: #4

What makes prayer, prayer— is that God is the one to whom you are speaking.

Isaiah 6:3 NLT— They were calling out to each other,
 "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's Armies!
 The whole earth is filled with his glory!"

Holiness implies absolute moral purity. Holiness means otherness / set apart

God's holiness is triune because God Himself is triune as Father, Son, and Spirit.

God is radically different than us.

This kind of holiness separates God from and above His creation.

Isaiah 6:4 NLT— Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke.

This scene is terrifying.

It's picturesque of Mount Sinai when God introduces Himself to the Israelites.

Isaiah 6:5 NLT— Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies."

Isaiah sees God and confesses His sin.

He confesses that He is not clean and pure— and should not be in the presence of The Lord God Almighty.

We fast forward to the book of Revelation, and Jesus gives the apostle John a peak into the throne room of Heaven, similar to Isaiah.

However, Scripture reveals a clearer picture of what's taking place.

This is what John sees.

He refers to this sevenfold representation of the Holy Spirit—as characteristics of God: wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, reverence, and deity.

Revelation 4:6— Something like a sea of glass, similar to crystal, was also before the throne. Four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back were around the throne on each side.

Revelation 4:7— The first living creature was like a lion; the second living creature was like an ox; the third living creature had a face like a man; and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

Revelation 4:8a— Each of the four living creatures had six wings; they were covered with eyes around and inside.

These creatures were covered with eyes—nothing gets past them.

They see everything happening around God’s throne—in other words, they are God’s perfect war machines.

They could be the seraphim that are mentioned in Isaiah's account - they say something similar

Revelation 4:8b—Day and night they never stop, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was (past), who is (present), and who is to come (future).

Revelation 4:9— Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the one seated on the throne, the one who lives forever and ever,

Revelation 4:10— the twenty-four elders fall down before the one seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne and say,

physical posture

God begins the conversation by asking this question:

+ **Job 38:2 NLT**—*Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words?*

+ **Job 38:3**—*Brace yourself like a man,*

Pause— how big a lump was in Job's throat at that moment?

How deep was the pit in his stomach?

*because I have some questions for you,
and you must answer them.*

+ **Job 38:4**— *“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Tell me, if you know so much.*

+ **Job 38:5**—*Who determined its dimensions
and stretched out the surveying line?*

+ **Job 38:6**— *What supports its foundations,
and who laid its cornerstone?*

+ **Job 38:12**— *“Have you ever commanded the morning to appear
and caused the dawn to rise in the east?”*

+ **Job 38:13**— *Have you made daylight spread to the ends of the earth,
to bring an end to the night's wickedness?*

+ **Job 38:18**— *Do you realize the extent of the earth?
Tell me about it if you know!*

+ **Job 42:3**— You asked, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?' It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me.

+ **Job 42:5**— I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes.

+ **Job 42:6**— I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."

Now, aren't you glad Job had that conversation with God and not you?

So I'd like to ask my question again—*Can anyone walk into the presence of God through prayer and start talking ^{to} Him and asking for stuff?*—No.
AT

So who can?

Who has the privilege of praying?

In other words—who has the privilege of entering the throne room of God and standing in His presence spiritually?

Scripture tells us...

+ **Hebrews 10:19**—...we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus
How?

PREACH:

Dear friends, the only way to pray—and for your prayers to be heard by the One True Living God—is through blood stained cross and the empty grave.

There is no other way.

Some people think that only one way to God is unfair.

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