

The Pattern of Prayer

Matthew 6:11-15

Please turn in your Bible's to Matthew 6. This morning we are going to look again briefly at the Lord's prayer, and calling it the Lord's prayer it's probably better titled the disciples prayer because this is a prayer that Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray, a pattern of prayer for Christians to use as they pray themselves. The Lord's prayer, or disciple's prayer, is not given to us to pray in a wooden, rote manner, to do so would be to fall into the very traps of hypocrisy and babbling Jesus calls out that we looked at a few weeks ago. Matthew 6:5 says, "*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. 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. 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. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*"

Prayer, as Jesus teaches us, is a matter of approach; I am approaching God. We saw that Jesus teaches us to **approach God exclusively**, to go into my room and shut the door, and this is not necessarily to literally go into a room and shut the door but to shut the door by shutting out and forget other people, and having done that to shut out and forget myself. Jesus also teaches us to **approach God engagingly**; to use my mind in prayer, to not come before God with vain repetition, or babbling as Jesus says, but to come to engage with the holy, infinite, all-powerful God of the universe, who not only commands me to pray, but actually wants to hear my prayer to Him. And so Jesus said we are also to **approach God expectantly**; our heavenly Father already knows what we need being the all-knowing One, and so we approach our heavenly Father with the expectation that he will indeed answer our prayers according to His own will.

As Jesus established the heart attitude we are to have as Christians who are regularly coming to God in prayer, he turns His attention to giving us a pattern of prayer that sets our hearts into alignment for God honoring prayer. Jesus warns against hypocritical prayer, the activity of prayer for the glory of men rather than the glory of God; and warns against repetitious, babbling prayer – prayer which thinks because we say a lot God will be compelled to respond. When Jesus gives us the pattern of prayer – part of the power inherent in the Lord's prayer is its simplicity, brevity, and lack of complexity. As Dr. Craig Keener says, "*Effective prayer is not a complex ritual but a simple cry of faith predicated on a secure relationship.*" Why do we not need overly eloquent language because our heavenly Father already knows what we need, why do we not need repetitious babbling, words without end seeking to gain God's attention? because our prayers as Christians and followers of Jesus Christ are not reliant on hoping somehow God will hear us, our prayers are grounded in a secure relationship of union with Jesus Christ. Because we know Christ as Lord and savior, we can come boldly before God knowing He wants to hear us, and wants to answer according to His will.

So Jesus gives us a pattern of prayer that looks to God first and to our needs second; that looks to He, before We. We looked at the first part of the Lord's prayer, again better said the Disciple's prayer last week, and I want to simply review where our friend Saji took us. Verse 9, Jesus says, "*Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name*". In prayer, we first **recognize the Father**. We recognize that we are to have an **affectionate intimacy** with our heavenly Father – because of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ, God is our Father, we have been adopted as His sons and daughters, are sons and daughters of the King. And God is not only our Father, he is our father in Heaven, which reminds us that we have a **respectful dependence** on our heavenly Father, we come to Him intimately, but He is also the ruling God of the universe. And this then leads us to the first petition the first request we make of our heavenly Father, hallow – praise, glorify, sanctify your own name Father, make your name great in our world; which reminds us of the **majestic awe** our relationship with God produces, especially as we come before Him in prayer.

In verse 10, we saw that we make two other petitions, asking God to do for Himself what only He can do; we pray for a **realization of the Father's kingship**, your kingdom come, we pray, on earth as it is in heaven. In this prayer we are praying for God's kingdom to come in full, as **God's kingdom has invaded history in the coming of the person of Jesus Christ**. In Jesus' first public preaching, He announces that the invasion of God's kingdom has

begun, Matthew 4:17, “*Repent*”, Jesus says, turn from your sin, turn to the savior, why? “... *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” God’s kingdom rule is here.

The third prayer request we make to He before we ever get to we, is to not only pray that God’s kingdom would come, but also that God’s will is done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Having recognized our Father, and realized His kingship, we saw last week we need to then **reorder our priorities**. As Christians, **as kingdom disciples, our lives are exemplify the reign of God now**. It’s not enough to give lip service to God’s kingdom reign our lives should reflect that kingdom reign. If we are going to pray for God’s will to be done we need to be willing to be the conduits through which God’s will gets done. If I am praying for God’s will to be done but am unwilling to obey and live as God has said in His word, how am I any different from the hypocrite or babler condemned earlier?

Jesus’ giving us this pattern to prayer is no mere trite prayer that we pray, nor is it simply something to say from memory without truly thinking of the implications. It’s no accident that Jesus teaches His followers to focus on the He before we ever come to We. If I am going to pray to my heavenly Father, which I am commanded to do, I have to set my heart, my attitude, and my mind right. If I am going to pray for God’s kingdom to come, then my kingdom needs go. If I am going to seriously pray for God’s will to be done in my life, then my will needs to bend to His and no the other way around. This pattern of prayer, this disciple’s prayer is a dangerous prayer, because it cuts to the very core of our sinful pride and arrogance and self-sufficiency and self-centeredness. When we focus on He first, focus on God as Father, King, and Lord, then and only then are His people prepared to come as We.

God hears the prayers of His people, answers the prayers of His people, cares for the prayers of His, precisely because We are His people. And because We are God’s people because of our relationship with Christ, in the second part of this Disciple’s prayer Jesus gives us, we are ready to bring our requests to our heavenly Father. Again in the simplicity that characterized the opening of this prayer, we find further simplicity in what we ask from our heavenly Father. Jesus teaches us to pray give us, forgive us, and deliver us.

Verse 11, “*Give us this day our daily bread*”. In this, the fourth prayer request of the disciple’s prayer, we are taught to ask our heavenly Father for daily bread. Jesus wants us to understand that prayer is an ongoing, everyday part of the life of a Christian. In praying for our daily bread, we come to understand our **dependence on our heavenly father for daily provision**. And I think it is significant that we are not taught to ask merely for bread, but for daily bread and to do so on this day. The story of God feeding the Israelites with manna, daily, as they wandered in the desert with no permanent home, no fields to cultivate, homeless and unemployed if you will, for 40 years, daily they were feed, reminds us that our heavenly Father meets our needs daily, and we are to pray dependently for our daily provisions. And praying this day for our daily bread, also reminds us that **our heavenly Father is not indifferent to our needs**. While Jesus gives u the example of bread, there are of course other needs that we have in our lives. Talk to your heavenly Father about them, make your needs known, He already knows, so we go and we tell Him all the same.

In verse 12, we are given a fifth prayer request as a part of our regular pattern for prayer, “... *forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*”. In coming to our heavenly Father we have a constant need **to be reminded that we always live in need of God’s grace found in Jesus Christ**. As I said a moment ago, it is only We because of He, Christians are sinners redeemed by the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is only because of our union with Him that we can come before our heavenly Father, only because Jesus has made the way that we have access to our heavenly Father. But not only are we to ask our heavenly Father to forgive our debts, to forgive our sin, we do are reminded as we pray that as we have **received God’s gracious forgiveness, we freely give it to others**. Look for a moment at verse 14, Jesus gives commentary on this particular prayer request, and I think He does so because it is often one of the hardest requests for Christians to pray and live out. Verse 14 Jesus says, “*For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*” The point Jesus makes in this commentary and from the prayer is not so much that forgiving is a prior condition of being forgiven, but that forgiveness cannot be a one-way process. Like all God’s gifts it brings responsibility; it must be passed on. To ask for forgiveness on any other basis is hypocrisy.

The final petition of the Lord's prayer, the disciple's prayer, is one of protection, verse 13, "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*" Two principals help us to understand what we are praying here. The first principal is this **Satan tempts to lead us to spiritual death**. The second principal is **God tests to grown us in spiritual life**. God does not 'tempt' men to do evil (Jas 1:13), but God does allow his children to pass through periods of testing. But disciples, aware of their weakness, should not desire such testing, and should pray to be spared exposure to situations in which they are vulnerable. If they do find themselves in such a situation, however, we are to pray to be *delivered from evil*. The stress in both clauses, lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, is on the vulnerability of disciples and our consequent dependence on God for avoiding sin. Jesus is calling disciples to pray for deliverance from and protection in testing, not proposing that disciples can avoid tests of their faith. Whereas God's purpose in testing is to confirm our faith, the evil one's purpose in testing is to weaken it. And it goes without saying we should seek to minimize rather than increase our testing. But when it comes, only God's strength can see us through.

This is the pattern of prayer Jesus gives us, He comes before We, but We comes because of He. How do we apply the pattern of prayer Jesus gives us?

One, **the Lord's Prayer teaches us first and foremost to focus on God and His Sovereignty**. We focus on God because He alone is the one who hears prayer. We are asking God to do for Himself what only He can do, and to do for us what only He can do. We focus on His sovereignty, because we need to be regularly reminded that God and God alone is in control of His universe. We will not understand, we will not know the end from the beginning, but God does, and His plans are for our hope and future.

Second, **the Lord's Prayer is a pattern of essentials for our prayers**. Each of the 6 petitions, give us places to launch from in praying to God. Our Father who art in Heaven Hallowed by thy name – Father God I praise you, I glorify your name, and person. May you be lifted up and praised by all people. Lead us not into temptation, father this thing with my boss at work is really difficult. I know If I just lie or fudge the numbers the pressure will be gone, but Father I want to honor you, help me to honor and glorify you. Friend, if you aren't regularly praying, if you find it a struggle to pray, I encourage you to use the Lord's Prayer as your pattern for prayer. Pray each petition, and then launch off from there in some of the specifics for your life. That's why Jesus taught it to us.

Finally, **the Lord's Prayer is the Christian Disciple's prayer**. This is not Jesus' prayer that we are to simply marvel at. It is for us. Friends, when the Disciples asked Jesus to learn how to pray, this is what He taught them. It is your prayer as a follower of Jesus Christ, it is my prayer as Jesus' disciple to pray these words with the grace and force they convey. Prayer is god's great gift to all of His children, and it is our birthright to come to our heavenly Father in prayer. May we come boldly and often to the throne of our heavenly Father's grace.