



Part 38: Jesus and Prayer

Matthew 6:5-15

When we commit ourselves to praying this prayer, it will change our vision of God and our understanding of God's vision for the world.

Jesus begins in verse 9 by saying, "This, then, is how you should pray." We should pray this prayer, from the mouth of Jesus himself, infused with his imagination and way of seeing the world.

Apparently, Jesus thinks the best possible way we can start this prayer, is with this phrase, "Our Father in heaven."

"Our"

There is intention in Jesus using the word "our."
This is counter to our western American individualism.
Throughout all space in time, we are unified in praying the prayer that Jesus taught.

"Father"

This word evokes so many images.

- A father who is patient with us as we grow through the different stages of life
- A father who sits with us in pain
- A dad who knows what we need more than we know for ourselves

And God is the greatest, fullest version of any earthly father there ever was or will be.

"In heaven"

When we hear the phrase "in heaven," we tend to think "out there", "up there".

- The Greek word *ouranos* is better translated as earth, skies, atmosphere.
- God our father is as close as the air around us.

"Hallowed be your name"

Hallowed seems like a weird, ancient word, but it carries the idea of treating something as sacred and ultimate. It is our prayer to make God the most hallowed in our life, and I think Jesus puts this first in the prayer, because it's not our natural inclination.

Anglican priest and theologian D.J. Marotta says "You see the human reality is that we all hallow something. It might be a person, job, image, money, reputation...We all have things in our lives that are of greatest value to us."

But Jesus knows that whatever hallow, whatever we elevate to that prime place, tends to run our life.

So, Jesus tells us bring it back in to focus.

And when we have this clearer, proper vision of who our God is, we get on board with what he's all about, so, we pray the phrase.

"Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven."

Unfortunately for many, Christianity has been turned into a lazy escapism. This prayer is deeply counter to that mindset.

- When Jesus, God himself, enters the scene, John the Baptist proclaims, "The Kingdom of God has come near!"
- The King is here. The kingdom of God is inbreaking anywhere we submit to his reign and rule.
- And the Kingdom looks in part like what we as a church community have spent the last several months talking about.

We experience God's kingdom coming, "wherever love is manifest and conquers hatred and evil. We see it when old grievances are forgiven. We see it when barriers separating people from one another are broken. We see it when people fleeing terror or poverty are made welcome. We see it wherever the mission of Jesus is made real, when good news is proclaimed to the poor, when the captives are set free, and when the blind recover sight. Therefore, those of us who pray "Thy kingdom come" must be willing to tear down barriers, to forgive enemies, to bring good news to the poor, and to liberate the oppressed. When we do this, we not only announce the kingdom, but we also practice for living in it; we not only long for it, but we also begin to enjoy it." – Justo Gonzalez, *Teach us to Pray*

This prayer reminds us there is work to be done.

Praying this can be disruptive.

You may be called to set aside what you desire your day, your week, your year, your life to look like.

Jesus is not asking us to do anything that he has not done himself.

As we pray the words "Your will be done" this our minds are perhaps drawn to our savior on the evening of his death, where he says "not my will, but yours."

When we pray this phrase we remember God's vision for the world, and we are reminded that we are a part of it!

When we commit ourselves to praying this prayer, it will change our vision of God and our understanding of God's vision for the world.

"In a context where many of Matthew's readers (and Jesus's hearers) lived at a subsistence level, the invitation to pray for physical bread and sustenance, with the concomitant implication that God cares and provides, would be relevant and welcomed." – Jeannine Brown

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14-15

"God's merciful forgiveness of the enormous debt incurred by humanity provides the basis as well as the compulsory rationale for forgiven sinners to practice lavish forgiveness for others." – Jeannine Brown

"In either case Jesus is calling his disciples to pray for deliverance from and protection in testing, not proposing that his disciples can avoid tests of their faith." – Craig Keener

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." James 1:13-15

Lord's Prayer Response Activity:

"Our Father in heaven, holy is your name."

- Offer words of praise, thanksgiving and worship to our Holy God.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done."

- Pray using words asking for God's kingdom to breakthrough to our reality.

"Give us today our daily bread."

- Pray for God's provision in our daily existence.

"Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

- Say out loud:
Lord, you have mercy upon all—take away from me my sins, and mercifully kindle in me the fire of your Holy Spirit. Take away from me the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh, a heart to love and adore you, a heart to delight in you, to follow and to enjoy you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

"Deliver us from evil."

- Pray against the evil in the world and the work of the evil one.

Discussion Questions:

1. What has been your experience praying the Lord's prayer?

2. Did you hear anything new or helpful in this sermon?
3. What steps can/will you take to commit to praying this prayer?
4. How do you think this practice will change or better support your understanding of God's vision for the world?

Additional Resource:

Check out the Prayer Practice and P.R.A.Y: <https://greenwoodcc.com/p-r-a-y/>