

Order of Worship for May 15, 2011,

Pre-service Song
Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment

Call to Worship: Psalm 24:1-10 and Prayer

Songs of Worship:

“Prince of Peace”

“All Hail King Jesus”

“O Worship the King”

“Our God Reigns”

Overhead

Song # 103

Song # 104

Song # 372

Offering and Offertory

Special Music:

Message: “The Second Petition” (Matthew 6:5-13)
By Pastor Bronson

Closing Song: “The Battle Belongs to the Lord” Song # 732

Parting Word of Grace

Vespers
A study in Hebrews 9
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm in the Library

“The Prayer Closet”

May 15, 2011

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”
(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **The Nelsons, EFCA church planters in the Philippines:** that by the Spirit’s anointing the gospel will dispel the teachings of both traditional Catholicism and Islam, winning many converts to Christianity; that strong church leaders will grow up amongst the Philipinos; that the Lord will protect the Nelsons’ physical, mental and spiritual health
2. **President Obama:** the Lord will preserve the President and his family in good health and safety; the Spirit will give the gift of wisdom for effective governance; he will see the needs of humanity according to the wisdom and truth of the revealed Word of God
3. **OCS Board, staff and faculty:** they will sense the Spirit’s guidance during the transitional period over the next few months; they will have a deepened sense of commitment to and the great worth of the school as a ministry; they will know of the congregation’s affirmation of the school as a ministry of the church
4. **Military Personnel of the Week: SPC Rebecca Wagenaar** (sister of Pam Cervantes):
5. **Young Adult of the Week: Lisa Gaston at California State University, Chico:**

We continue in our study today of the Lord’s prayer. We will come to the second petition. You can check out where this in the scriptures, it is in Matthew 6:5-13. The second petition is “Thy Kingdom Come.”

When the apostle Paul was in the city of Athens, he noticed there was an altar. The altar was to “The Unknown God”. Just to be safe, the Greeks would offer sacrifices on that altar. After all, you never knew what other god there might be who, if ignored or dishonored, might make trouble for the city. Characteristically pagans approach their gods in the hopes of either buying favor or buying off trouble. How different it is for you and for me to approach our God. *“Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who made us and we are His. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates – what does it say folks? – Enter His gates with thanksgiving.”* Enter His gates already knowing we are blessed of the Lord. *“...and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name.”*

We are using the Lord’s Prayer to help us to know how to approach our God. We are using the Lord’s Prayer to help shape our own prayer lives. We want the Word of God to come in and make its imprint, if you will, upon our hearts, and its imprint upon our minds, so that the thoughts of our minds and the intentions of our hearts are in agreement with the God we worship. We do not want to be pagans who approach our God with the hope of buying Him off, or getting what we want. We want to approach our God as if He was God. When we enter God’s presence, the Psalmist is indicating, we should enter it with thanksgiving, and we should enter His presence with the intention to bless Him.

When asked, Jesus said we are to approach God by saying, *“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed is your name.”* We talked about this last week. I am going to summarize the two points that I made and make a third. What does it mean to hallow? To hallow something is to commit yourself to an exclusive devotion. There is no other. The minute I say, “Hallowed is your name”, I am saying every other name is gone. There is but one name: the name of my God. [To hallow] is to venerate; it is to adore. We sang that earlier. It should be the expression of our hearts, the action of our lives. All that we do in every aspect of our daily walk we should consciously desire that it would be something we could lift up and say, “Father, here, I give this to You.”

This cannot be done, this veneration or adoration, at least it cannot be well done, in ignorance. If we are to hallow the Father’s name, then we need to know what the name is. There was a little confusion about this last week. To know God’s name is not just to know a title. What is necessary is to understand what the title means or what it stands for: who is this that the name presents to me? That is what, of course, we have already begun to reflect upon. Last week I said I would present three names of God. I think that these three names are names that help us approach God correctly. The first name is the name that God Himself gave to Moses in the wilderness when He was giving him the interview as to whether or not he would be willing to go back to Egypt and be the liberator of God’s enslaved people. He said, “I am Yahweh.” When we looked at that [we said] what does the name imply, what is the significance? What it implies, what it means, the word Yahweh means “I am what I am”, and what that means [implies] is “I am in full self-sufficiency. I define who I am; I am answerable to no one. I am God.” There is a further implication of that name. That is that God is able to dispose of whatever He makes in whatever way He wishes. There are two great implications, two inferences from that statement. I repeat these because this is precisely where many people today stumble against God and they say, “Not me; I am not worshiping that kind of God.” The implications are this: because there is nothing but God who can regulate or control God, if God is evil we have no hope. Don’t play games with God. Don’t say, “I want to worship You, but I want to worship a small edition.” There is no such God. God made everything; it is His and He can do with it exactly as He pleases, and you and I had better hope He pleases what is good and is not evil. That is the first inference.

The second inference is that since evil is destructive, is self-destructive – all you have to do is follow the unfolding of evil impulses and fashions. Our culture, by the way, if you have noticed, is in the process of self-destruction. It is pursuing policies, it is advocating principles, it is passing laws the effects of which are to progressively destroy the structure and the foundation of our society. That is no secret; you know that. That is a manifestation of evil. Well now, the fact that there is anything, one; two, the fact that there is a whole lot more good than there is evil, [two] are proof that God is good, and we can take great comfort in that, because He is our only hope. Who sent the Son to die for us? It was the Father, because the Father is infinitely good. That is the first name: when we approach God, that is the God whom we approach.

The second name we talked about last week was given by God to Moses shortly after the Israelites “encouraged” Aaron to make the golden calf. It was a very discouraging time for Moses. He needed some encouragement. He asked to see God’s glory. You can read about this in Exodus 34:6-7. This is what God said to him. It is the description of Himself as The Covenant God. It describes His moral attributes and His moral will. “*The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. . .*” If you could put a period right there you could say, hallelujah! That is good! I need that! That is very good. That encourages me; that helps me know that I stand on hope-filled ground. But that is not all that God said, “*. . .but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and fourth generation.*” This is the God of the covenant. This is the God to whom we pray. This is the God which we must know how to approach. He is the God of mercy, the God of grace, the God of forgiveness, the God of love; He is also the God of exacting judgment. He says explicitly, “I will not clear the guilty.” This God is absolutely trustworthy; but He will not be fooled, He will not be treated lightly by any.

No one reading the Self-description of God can fail to see two things about God’s self-revelation in the Old Testament. First, He is a God of grace. The Old Testament God is a God of grace. Secondly, He is a God of judgment. It is simply not the case that the Old Testament is different than the New. In fact that notion, separating those two, is blasphemous, for it is the denial of the true nature of God and a gross misrepresentation. It is in fact a part of the lie. For notice that what that statement, what separating the two names amounts to, is that God really cannot be trusted for though He says that He forgives people, in fact judgment triumphs over mercy and there is no hope. But there is a question. It is a question which in the course of time in the history of Israel and the writing of the Old Testament emerged more and more prominently. That question is this: “How can we escape our guilt so that we know for sure God forgives us?” That, by the way, is the question answered by the book of Hebrews, which we are studying on Sunday nights.

This leads us to the third name, and I expect nothing but smiles all across the room when you hear the third name. Who knows what the third name is? The third name of God is “Jesus.” Listen to what we are told in John 1:14-18, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John [the Baptist] bore witness about him, and cried out, ‘This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’) And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.*” It is Jesus who finally reveals to us the whole truth about the God whom we approach. Listen to what He says, Jesus himself in John 14:6-10. Jesus is recorded as saying, “*Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.*”

Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.’

Jesus is the third name, and He is the One we approach when we approach this God to pray. We approach this God to worship Him.

There is perfect agreement between Jesus and the Father. You cannot avoid the Father by going to Jesus: sometimes people speak that way. I will avoid the Judge by going to the Savior. O how they misunderstand the relationship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, what is the purpose of Jesus? The purpose of Jesus is to bring you to the Father. That is the purpose.

Who is Jesus? He is the Lamb of God; He is also the Lion of Judah. Who is Jesus? He is the son of Mary and He is the Son of God. Who is Jesus? He is the carpenter of Nazareth who walked around the hills, and He is the Creator who created the hills He walked on. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Savior; beloved, He is the Judge. The names of God cannot be separated from one another; they are one name. They speak of, describe and bring us to the One God. If we are to properly pray to this God, then we must pray according to His name. If we approach the Father in prayer, Jesus says we must make His name holy. More specifically what He said is, *“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name.”*

Beloved, there is no greater privilege that you and I enjoy than to be able to come into the presence of the Living God. We therefore should take that privilege with the utmost seriousness and sobriety. I have made the distinction between prayers on the fly, prayers on the run, the prayer that just leaps out of you because you suddenly confront a situation and you say, “Uh oh! I need help. God, help me!” But the prayer of which I am speaking now is the kind of prayer when you recognize you are called to set apart from the press of your daily activities, and to seek to know Him and to let His truth pour into you through His Word and by His Spirit. You want to sit in His presence; you want to adore Him; you want your thoughts and desires to be shaped according to His will and purpose. You must pray according to His name.

We are going to transition at this point to the second of the petitions. I have asked Heidi to lead us. This is a great moment to transition musically. So we are going to sing “O How He Loves You and Me.”

O how He loves you and me!	Jesus to Calv’ry did go;
O how He loves you and me!	His love for sinners to show.
He gave His life;	What He did there
What more could He give?	bro’t hope from despair.
O how He loves you;	O how He loves you;
O how He loves me;	O how He loves me;
O how He loves you and me!	O how He loves you and me!

What is the second petition? The second petition is “Thy kingdom come.” You may have noticed this morning we already have sung a number of songs that ask us to reflect upon the character of our Lord and Savior as the coming King. Indeed, that should be our lively anticipation. What are we asking of the Lord when we ask that the kingdom would come? Hallowed be Thy name: let me pray according to Who You really are. “Thy kingdom come.”

Beloved I think we are as easily confused regarding this as the disciples were in Jesus' day. If you were to turn to Acts I:6-8, this is what you would read. *“So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’”* Like the disciples, we want to see Jesus in charge. How many vote for Jesus being the next president of the United States? I think He is the only person who can make sense out of what we have got a mess of! So, naturally, rightly, we pray, “O Lord, come quickly!” Like, yesterday, as soon as possible! We want to see Jesus in charge. I remember the first time when I read in the Bible and it says “He will rule the nations with a rod of iron.” I said, “Yes!” At that time the Soviet Union was still a communist nation; now it is just a big kleptocracy: that means rule by thieves. And I still wouldn't mind seeing a bit of iron wielding around the world here and there.

But reflect for a moment on what Jesus' reply was to His disciples. They said, “Kingdome now?” He said, “Witness now?” We want a king! He said, “I want people who live for me in the world as it is.” So whatever it is we might have in mind when we say “Thy kingdom come”, which is a prayer for now, we mustn't let ourselves slip into the notion that all we have to do is hang on until the kingdom comes, because the king has said, “I have got work for you to do, and I want you to do it.”

Let's go a bit further. Are we to think that because Jesus has acknowledged there is a coming kingdom that we are to be praying for something that is not currently happening? Not at all! There is, of course, a future reality of the kingdom, that for which we wait; there is also a present reality of the kingdom, and it is for this that we pray, and in this kingdom that we live and act. In the Gospels Jesus spoke much about the kingdom as a present reality, one in which we participate. What I invite you to do is to turn to Matthew I3. What we are going to do at this point is one of the hardest things you can do in a sermon. I want to handle the entirety of this chapter with a quick kind of look at and summary of all seven of the parables of the kingdom. Then after 4:00 pm this afternoon. . .! I am going to assume that you are at least somewhat conversant with these parables. I am going to make a few comments about them and then zero in on some specific verses, I3:10-15, because before we can properly understand these parables, we have to understand how they are to be interpreted. We will continue the interpretation and understanding of the parables next week.

Now, beginning, what are the seven parables? You should know these and you should be looking at your Bibles. Some of these should be familiar to you even if you haven't studied them in this particular context. “The Sower and the Seed” or “The Parable of the Four Soils”: are you familiar with that? Notice that this particular parable has two sections. Jesus gives the parable in verses 1-9 and then in verses 18-23 He explains the parable. We will want to be able to appreciate both of those. Second parable: “The Wheat and the Tares”. Third parable: “Mustard Seed”. Fourth parable: “Leaven”. Fifth parable: “Treasure”. Sixth parable: “Pearl”. The last: “The Net”. Those are the seven parables. Notice that He each time says, “This is the kingdom of God, or this is the kingdom of heaven is. . .” We will come back; don't feel like you have to quickly write them all down. What I want now to do now is go back through them and say what is the central teaching, what is the main point in any one of these parables?

Looking at the parable of “The Sower”, surely it is the faithfulness and the fruitfulness of God’s Word. Jesus explained this parable in verses 18-23 to the disciples. The main idea here is that the kingdom of heaven is present now on earth as God’s Word. That Word is specifically designed to be fruitful. Notice that in the four soils there is only one that receives a compliment, it is the one that bears multiple fruit. So the Word is the presence of ruling power of God, the kingship of God and its purpose is that we would be fruitful.

What of the second parable? This is the parable of “The Weeds” or “The Wheat and the Tares”. The main idea here is that kingdom of heaven presently on earth is deliberately sown with false and fruitless people. Do you read that there? Right? Farmer says, “I sowed my seed, good seed, and then who came in the night and sowed the other kind? Yeah!” So we have a very startling picture here of the people of God, a sown field, under attack by somebody planting fruitless people in the midst of the field. The main idea is that the true seed bears fruit regardless.

“Mustard Seed”: Through the years two interlocking main points have been drawn from this parable. First the obvious: the kingdom is progressive. It starts small and grows big. That’s pretty good! The other is that the kingdom is designed not only to start small and grow big, but is designed to have adequate room to welcome every kind of bird upon the face of the earth. This is an anticipation of the world wide spread of the gospel, incorporating every people nation and tongue, so that all might come together and worship the Lord who is God.

The parable of “The Leaven”: this is like the mustard seed, but with this difference. Here the kingdom starts little and grows large by transforming everything that it touches: the leaven in the lump of bread. Here the main message is that the ruling presence of the Word of God is capable of transforming the world around it. That, by the way, is what I challenged this congregation to do since I came here. What is our world? By and large, it is Oroville. If I could – I don’t make deals with God because that is a dangerous thing to do – I would love to stay here until Oroville is a thoroughly transformed city reflecting the glory of God. How would that be folks? Is it possible? Yes, it is possible.

The next two are going to come together. You probably recognize them. They are so similar that you wonder why Jesus didn’t recognize the redundancy! But He told them both. “The Parable of the Hidden Treasure” and “The Parable of the Great Pearl”: these are so similar. Both of them make the same point. Being under the authority of the Word of God, having the indwelling presence and power of the Word of God, is worth everything else you’ve got, everything, just to be under the authority and have the indwelling presence and power of the Word of God.

Then the last of the parables is very similar to the one about the wheat and tares. The point of the parable appears to be like that of the wheat and the tares, a parable regarding the end of the age or judgment. The main point here has to do with our attitudes within the people of God, within the church. Notice, who is accepted in the net? Everybody! It is totally non-discriminatory. You just throw out the net! If you were going to act out the meaning of this parable we would say, “The whole congregation is going to stand out here on the bluffs [above the highway], and we are going to have big nets, and we are going to capture every single car that goes up or down Olive Highway, regardless, and we are going to dump them out in here [in the sanctuary]. Now is when the test of the parable occurs. Are we prepared to treat them as God treats us? That is the test.

The other day I was out with mad man Joel Cook. How many of you have seen that little red “car”, a generous word “car”? We were turning [into the church driveway] and we were first in the lane. Then somebody came up in one of those cool, brand new Ford something or others: a Fusion. [It was] sparkly white with silver trim. Then behind him was somebody driving something worse than Joel’s “car”. Then behind him was somebody in something worse than that! Full speed and he never noticed and he ran into the back of the first car, and then into the back of the second car. And by the grace of God Joel saw it happening, released the brake and hit the accelerator, and we just had a little bump: and I continued talking! The reason I mention this is the drivers of the last two cars... They would never come in this building. If they did, I don’t know how we would receive them. But they drive up and down the road, and if we were to cast our nets, we would catch them too.

Now, what do these parables teach about the object of the second petition? Remember I am not teaching the parables today; I am trying to preach about the prayer. For what are we praying and to what are we committing ourselves to desire? Remember, when I make a commitment before God the first thing I am doing is I am saying, “God, change me so that this is what I desire.” I am not saying, “God, put Your hand on me, twist me, turn me, and cast me into the right place.” I am saying, “God put Your hand within me and change me so that I say, “not going there; I’m going here.” So what are we praying for when we pray the second petition, “Thy kingdom come”?

The question is worth asking, especially if we listen to Jesus’ words in verses ten to fifteen. I encourage you to look at these verses while I read them. “...*the disciples came to Jesus and said to him, ‘Why do you speak...in parables?’ And he answered them, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’”* Parables are funny things, at least the parables that Jesus tells. Jesus says that the parables reveal and the parables conceal the kingdom. It takes something specific to understand them. Next week we are going to go back and look at these parables. At this point I just want to talk about what it takes to understand them. In verse fifteen, He says, “If we understand the parables, we will be healed.” We need to understand them, He says, with our hearts. That is something more than our minds. I think that as a first step we must be able to acknowledge that we are in ourselves blind and deaf to the truth, and that in order to understand the parables we must begin by repenting. But look at verse eleven. According to verse eleven, the ability to do this, the ability to hear and to see must be given to us by God. This is the essence of the second petition. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come”, we are worshiping God as the One Who brings the kingdom, for it is God who gives what is necessary for us to understand the Word.

Jesus does not say what is needed for understanding the parables. He doesn’t say what it is that God gives to us. But elsewhere in the New Testament we learn two great truths, two great gifts that God gives for the effective living of the Christian life. The first is stated most clearly by Paul in Romans 1:16-17, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation, to

the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.” In Ephesians 2:8-9 we are told we are saved by faith through grace, and this is the gift of God. The second great gift for understanding the parables and becoming the servant of God is given to us in First Corinthians chapter 13, verse 2, most specifically, but also First John 4:10. Do you remember what Paul says there? “If I have not love, what am I? Nothing!” In first John it is specified: how does love begin in my heart? “*Not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the sin payment, the propitiation for our sins.*” These are the two things we must have if we are to understand the parables. These two things are faith and love. Faith and Love. The second petition is a prayer for God’s transforming power in our hearts. If you ask Him, God will give this to you, for to ask God to change you is according to His will.

Let us pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Thy kingdom come.” How many times, our Father, have those words passed over the lips of men and women upon the face of the earth? How many times have they passed over the lips as the expression of the heart’s desire? We with all who approach you in the name of Jesus and the remembrance of your covenant and in the recognition that Thou art God and there is no other, cry out to You: grant that we, our Father, might have the indwelling presence of the Word as the rule of our life and that we would be in the kingdom and servants of the King, for the glory of your great name and the redemption of many. It is in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. What most often or commonly motivates you to pray? What most often motivates you to speak with your spouse, children, neighbors, friends, classmates or work-mates?

2. When you pray do you tend to think more about what you want to say or more about the One to whom you are speaking? What effect might it have if you thought more about God when you prayed?

3. Do you think meditation on the three names of God given in the messages will be helpful in how you approach God and in your prayer life in general? How might they help? Could they hinder?

4. How do the second and third names complement each other and how do they differ?

5. What is your first thought when someone mentions the kingdom of heaven or of God?

6. Which of the Matthew 13 parables of the kingdom do you find most helpful for living?

7. What do you understand to be the relationship between the churches in the world and the kingdom of heaven in this age?

8. In Matthew 13:10-15, Jesus indicates a person needs something special from God to understand the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. Do you agree these are the gifts of faith and love which God gives us: see Ephesians 2:8-9 and I John 4:10.