

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew

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Bible Text: Matthew 6:5-13
Preached On: Sunday, February 26, 2023

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This evening, I do want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Matthew 6. As you're doing so, just as a little bit of a somewhat prelude here for those of you that may be with us for the very first time as far as our Sunday evening services here in person or online, we are very slowly, should I emphasize we are very slowly and strategically walking through the gospel of Matthew because it's more than just one of the accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. I believe that Matthew serves a very critical position not only in scripture but in our lives, because where Matthew is placed at the very beginning of your New Testament, it serves as a transition from the old covenant to the new, it serves from the temple that was on a physical site in Jerusalem to the temple of our bodies being filled with the Holy Spirit, obviously from the Old Testament to the New Testament. So much of what we know of the book of Matthew is transitioning us from the Old Testament concepts into the reality of Jesus Christ and yet ultimately has an incredible amount of foreshadowing of what you and I collectively call the Second Coming. I am convinced that if you can get Matthew, it serves as somewhat of a synopsis of the entirety of Scripture.

Tonight, we continue our study in what we know as the famous Sermon on the Mount. In fact, if you were to ask just a casual survey of people on the street what's the most famous thing Jesus ever taught, most people either Christian or not, will default to the Sermon on the Mount because that's what we are most familiar with. Let me remind you that when Jesus gathered that day with the multitude, there was not a single born again Christian in the audience. What I mean by that is these were people of faith, these were people who brought their sacrifices to the temple, these were those who went to the feasts and the festivals, and Jesus' purpose in the Sermon on the Mount was not to tell them how righteous they were but to show them how unrighteous they were, and that even if it was in one area of their life all of us need a Savior, all of us need Jesus in our life.

As we turn to Matthew 6, chapter 5 was about how we have sinned against our fellow brothers, how we fall short with humanity's relationship. Matthew 6 is more vertical. How can we or how do we "fall short" in our relationship to the Lord? Beginning in verse 5, we're going to read about our prayer life and then in a moment we're going to read one of the most famous passages in all of the Bible. Now some of you think that the screen has a typo and it does not. It sates the Lord's prayer, question mark, and the reason I

placed the question mark there is simply this: this is not the Lord's prayer, this is the Lord teaching the disciples how to pray. In other words, if we were to be strict tonight, what we're about to read is the disciples' prayer. In John 17, we have the Lord's Prayer, because in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Christ, who is the Lord, goes on his face and he calls out to his heavenly Father. And so I know it may just mean a matter of semantics to you, but I think it's important for all of us to note that what we're about to read are not the words that Jesus himself would pray on his behalf, but when his disciples ask him, "How do we pray," he said, "When you pray, pray in this manner."

The second thing I want to call your attention to tonight before we read is this: if there's ever been a portion of scripture that we take for granted, it is this one. In fact, I was a part of a baseball team for multiple years that as a rite, a ritual, and to be honest with you, kind of a rabbit's foot of good luck, I had a coach lead us in this prayer before every game, and I'll be quite honest, it didn't matter if he was sober or not, he could do it. The reason I share that with you is it is such a familiar passage of scripture that oftentimes we take it and there are so many layers of our personal experience, there's so many layers of everything else in our life that rarely, hopefully tonight we'll accomplish this, rarely do we just dig down deep and say, what does this prayer actually say and what does he tell those on that day to actually pray for, and what do those words mean?

So beginning in verse 5, it says,

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Again, some of the most well-known words in all of scripture. So tonight, as I often like to do, I just want to ask some pretty basic simple questions that I think will give us a little insight into what's really underneath the surface of this famous prayer.

To begin with, who is praying? Well, this is obvious not just in the gospel of Matthew but particularly in this passage we have those of the Jewish faith that are in the synagogues. Now I know in just a moment it talks about those who are out on the streets, but understand Jesus is alluding to the Pharisees when he references those individuals, those

that were there before him, those that were seeking him, those that were interested in what he was teaching them, they would regularly go into the synagogue and it was there that they would gather on the Sabbath and they would pray.

What are they praying? The warning is in verse 7: vain repetitions. If you can say a prayer without any conscious thought, it is a vain repetition. In other words, if the words just continuously flow and continuously repeat time after time after time, it is a "vain repetition." Now, this may seem somewhat odd to you, but there are times where people ask me to come pray publicly. They're sometimes large events, civic events, sporting events, and I always find it odd when oftentimes they will call and say if you want to, you can submit to us your prayer in advance so that we have it. I very nicely tell them I can't do that because I haven't prayed it yet, and the reason is because oftentimes when people are called upon, it is a repetitious rote prayer that may be familiar to many that oftentimes people can say the words in the proper order with no matter of heart whatsoever.

Where are they praying? It's not just the synagogue that their intent is so that humanity, other humans, can see them and covet "their relationship with the Lord." The vain repetition isn't just about saying the same words over and over and over again, but it's doing so in such a manner so that people's attention is to them when last time I checked, prayer was supposed to be us communing with the Lord, not showing off for each other.

And then finally, how should they pray? This is the famous meat of the matter. This is the famous Lord's Prayer and here's what I want to do tonight, I want to take every one of the stanzas of the Lord's Prayer and I want to look at it not often how we have learned it, but what did it mean for a group of Jewish people on the other side of the crucifixion who were seeking a real relationship with God and how is Jesus using this prayer not just to show them where they are with him and the Lord at that time, but to help them see their need for a Savior in the Messiah? So tonight I just want to go verse by verse, statement by statement, phrase by phrase.

"Our Father which art in heaven." You do realize that's not a statement that a bunch of us pig-eating Gentiles can make. You say, "What do you mean we cannot make that statement?" The Lord made it very clear all throughout the Old Testament that he had a messianic lineage, that he had a path to the cross, and it was through the Abrahamic covenant. And as you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the 12 tribes all the way through, eventually whom we know as Jesus Christ, you realize that those were the children of God. And there were others, such as Rahab and a host of Gentiles who sought to be a part of the family of God, who then were able to enter in. Why is this important? Because humanity cannot collectively say, "Our Father,"; to claim God as Father you have to be his child, okay? If I had some random kid at Auburn University come up to me and say, "Hey, Dad, you want to buy me lunch?" I'd be like, "Who are you? I'm not your father." In other words, what we discover is this is not a prayer that just anybody can pray. You have to have a relationship with God to be able to say, "I am your child."

Now here's where it gets interesting. You and I, and I jokingly call us collectively pig-eating Gentiles, in the book of Romans 8 it says that when you and I got saved, when we

believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, listen to this analogy, that Jesus adopted us into the family of God. You and I, who are not a part of the Abrahamic lineage, you and I, who are not a part of that "succession," we were not by nature the children of God. In fact, in John 1 beginning in verse 10, but particularly in verse 12, it says that Jesus came unto his own and his own received him not. So when Jesus instructs them when you pray, pray "Our Father," this is not instructions to humanity at large, this is a very specific prayer to those who, at this specific time, were the children of God.

The next statement, "Hallowed be thy name." Now this would have been a very interesting statement that the Lord led them in, particularly in light of Exodus 3:14, when we have Moses in days past who's at that famous burning bush. Remember, it is burning, but it's not being consumed. The Lord comes to him and says, "Take your shoes off for you are on holy ground for I'm sending you to Pharaoh to tell him to let my people go." Moses basically says, "This is a great idea. I'm willing to sign up but I don't even know your name. How do I communicate to them who you are? If I say God who has no name sent me, they will laugh, they will scorn, they will mock." And it's that very famous statement where God says, "Tell them I AM WHO I AM." You and I know that word as Yahweh, okay? It is a word that in Hebrew consists of four consonants, there are no vowels in the original Hebrew language, but here's what you need to know that's important: that that name was so sacred to the Jewish people they would not pronounce it out loud. It was never vocalized. And they were so respectful of his name they did not want to be guilty of breaking the commandment, "Do not take the Lord's name in vain." You do realize that phrase is more than just that "curse word" that we often use in our culture. It means to attribute to God something that he never attributed to himself. And so what happened is, over time, they went back in, and by the way, the Hebrew language has all consonants but you verbally pronounce the language and there's only so many ways that you can say consonants back-to-back. For example, I'll just use my name. My name is Jeff, obviously, so think about if there were no vowels in my name, it would just be J-F. There are none of you that would walk up to me and say, "Hey, Jof, how you doing? Hey Jif," peanut butter, not a person, right? "Hey, Juf. Jaf." We know that a human being, even if you dropped the vowels, if you saw a J and an F, you would know their name was Jeff, right? And so when you say the name Yahweh with vowels, it becomes Yehovah or Jehovah, as in Jehovah Jireh, Jehovah Nissi, these phrases we see in the Old Testament. But still the Jewish people so hallowed the name of the Lord that they would rarely speak even the name Jehovah which is where the phrase or the term Adonai comes from. The term Adonai is not a Hebrew word that it can be found in your Bible anywhere. It is the vocal expressed name that those reverent Jews used to refer to God so they do not either A) mispronounce or use his name in vain. Why is this important to the Lord's Prayer? Because when they said "Our Father," you do realize they weren't using the name Yahweh, Jehovah, or even Adonai. It was such a respect for, it was such an endearment of that they were even placing him higher than they had in days before.

It's this third statement where things are going to take a little turn, "Our Father," those that are the children of the promise and the plan, "Hallowed be thy name," we don't even speak your name so as not to mispronounce or to misuse, "Thy kingdom come." Back in 2 Samuel 7:16, he made it very clear that the reign, the rule, and the kingship of who we

know as David would be one that would not only be of that current season, but of a future season as well. In fact, in Psalm 110:1, there's a statement from the mouth of David inspired by the Holy Spirit saying that one day the Lord will come and sit on the throne of David forever. And by the way, Psalm 110:1 is the most quoted verse in your entire New Testament, this concept of a kingdom, this concept of reigning and ruling. Most of you are aware that the reason that the Pharisees primarily miss Jesus is because they wanted an earthly king, not a heavenly Father. And so when he said when you pray, pray thy kingdom come, this prayer, what we know as the Lord's Prayer is actually a prayer about one day Jesus Christ himself descending from the heavens, setting foot on the earth and reigning over all of the earth.

Now the next statement is where things really take a right hand turn. "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Now let me confess oftentimes and I'm guilty of this, you read these words, this famous Lord's Prayer, and you say, "God, everything's working in heaven. I'd really like things to work on earth. That'd be great." Isn't that how we usually approach it. But when it says as it is in heaven, thy will be done on earth. Last time I checked and I check pretty regularly, heaven has no sin, heaven has no error, heaven is a place of purity, holiness and the reign of God. What you and I see on a regular daily basis is nothing of the heavens and everything of the earth.

Why is this important? Because in Matthew 19:28 and 29, we see the word "regeneration" in the Bible. By the way, the word "regeneration, to be born again, to make new," is actually only used twice in your entire New Testament. It's found here in Matthew 19. It's also found in Titus 3:5, which says that we are regenerated by the Spirit of God, that we are made new, we are born again. But in Matthew 19 when it speaks of the regeneration, it speaks of the prophetic concept in scripture that one day God is going to burn everything up that we currently know and see and he's going to start all over again.

So I want you to understand what Jesus told them to pray. He said, "Our father which is in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Do you know what Jesus was telling them to pray? That, "God, at your will and in your way would you take everything that we have built, would you take everything that we've constructed, would you take everything that is here and would you replace it with your governance and your reign of holiness and purity?" This is a pretty powerful prayer. In our context today, do you know what Jesus was teaching them? That when you pray, pray for the Second Coming. Pray for the end to come. Pray for the regeneration. Pray for the Lord to come and to set up and to establish himself and his reign.

As we get to the last part of this famous prayer, here's what's interesting: everything that Jesus tells them to pray for is actually something that you see spoken of and revealed in our New Testament regarding what we call the last days or the end times. In other words, can I get the cart before the horse? The Lord's Prayer didn't have anything to do with the cross. It has everything to do with the return. It's not about the First Coming, it's about what we know as the Second Coming. Very famous statement, "Give us this day our daily bread." Now I know oftentimes we pray that, "God, give me today what I need

today," but I want you to think about if you're a Jewish individual who goes to the synagogue to worship, the feasts, the festivals, on the other side of what we know as the Passion event or the cross, what did this phrase mean, "Give us this day our daily bread"? It would have taken them back to the book of Exodus 16 when they wandered in the wilderness, they had no access to any means of food by regular means, and what did the Lord do? The Lord brought supernatural nourishment, what we call manna. The Bible calls it angel food. I don't find it odd at all that the description in the Bible of angel's food really sounds like a doughnut, but that's a whole other question because it's described as round, somewhere between white and brown and very sweet to the taste, and if you got too much for today, it would spoil for tomorrow and they didn't have microwaves back then where you can zap it for seven seconds just in case you needed the recipe. But nonetheless, this was God's giving their daily bread.

Here's what's interesting. You and I have a perspective that obviously they did not. In the book of Revelation 12, there is a depiction, there's a description of this elongated war that we refer to as spiritual beginning with the Israelites and the Jewish people all the way back in the book of Genesis, all throughout time until the end of days. And there in Revelation 12, beginning at verse 10, it describes the people of God in a time period that Jesus Christ in Matthew 24 referred to as the Great Tribulation. Wandering, running, from whom we know as the Antichrist. And it says for 3 1/2 years as they are wandering, as they're running from that God supernaturally feeds them again. It's interesting that when he said, "Give us this day our daily bread," it wasn't just a reflection of what he had done in Exodus, in light of tonight it was also a projection of what's going to happen in Revelation.

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." You know, that word "as" is critical there. Understand that as you walk through what we know as the Sermon on the Mount, as you go forward into the book of Revelation and you see that time period that it's projected in this phrase about daily bread, one of the things that you discover is that prior to the cross, prior to the empty tomb, that if you defrauded another, you defrauded the Lord. And one of the beautiful things that you and I have and we'll conclude with this in a moment, is that because we are redeemed, because we are saved, because we have the Holy Spirit within us, according to book of Ephesians, you and I are sealed unto the day of redemption. You realize that none of Jesus' audience would have been sealed unto the day of redemption, and when he said pray this prayer, "Give us our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive others," it will not be much further in the Lord's Prayer where the Lord will give this instruction or in the Sermon on the Mount, if while you're praying you have a fault with another brother, go and make that fault right and then come back. Why? Because before the cross and before the empty tomb, if you had defrauded each other, you had defrauded God.

And now for the statement that may be the most controversial of the Lord's Prayer, and probably the most asked of me throughout the years on a little thing that we do on Wednesday nights, "And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Now from our perspective tonight, you're like what, why would that statement even come out of Jesus' mouth because in James 1:13, it says that God tempts no man to sin. So why would

Jesus instruct them when you pray, pray that we, this is to the Father, that we will not be led into temptation? I know that time is short this evening, but if you don't mind turn a few pages to the right to the book of 2 Thessalonians. I want to show you a fascinating passage of scripture, 2 Thessalonians 2. It's kind of one of those texts that not only describes but really summarizes a character who's very famous in the Bible, we refer to him as the Antichrist, the book of Revelation calls him the beast. Here in 2 Thessalonians, he's the man of lawlessness. He is the man of sin. He is the son of perdition. But what is happening here in 2 Thessalonians 2 is the Lord is communicating that there is coming a day where not only will he call his children up to be with him, those that are deceased and those are alive who will be with him forevermore, but there's one who is going to come on the scene. This is the same one who I referred to early in Revelation 12 who is seeking out the lives of the Jewish people that God supernaturally feeds.

I want you to read with me in verses 11 and 12, actually, let me go back up to verse 9 just for context sake. It says, "Even him," this is that Antichrist figure, "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Listen to these two verses, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Now I'll be brief for the sake of tonight's time, but one of the great questions of the ages for those of us who are believers in Jesus Christ, when we look at passages like 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 and others that say there is this day coming where those who are dead in Christ and alive in Christ are raised together to be with the Lord, that day where the Bible describes that as a believer you're just walking and going about life and all of a sudden, from a human perspective, "vanish." One of the great questions is how and why will the world fall for it? I mean, what's going to be the explanation? What does it say here? God will send great delusion so they will believe a lie. The lie doesn't come from God. Where does the lie come from? The Antichrist. But God sends great delusion. So here in Matthew 6, now remember, this is really a Second Coming prayer, and when it says, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil," the temptation that is coming forth in the future days of those last days is going to be a temptation to believe the lie of the enemy who, by the way, according to scripture, is the evil one.

So again, what we have here is an incredible saturation of these Second Coming images. Speaking of the Second Coming, notice how the prayer ends, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen." Do you know that's referencing? You and I know it as Revelation 19 where Jesus physically descends, he comes back with his armies behind him and he establishes his reign forevermore.

Now, why is this so important? Tonight is not about taking the Lord's Prayer and pouring cold water all over it. No, no, no. The purpose of tonight is to go back and realize that this very famous prayer that Jesus led these people to pray was about that they would understand and realize not just what their life was that day but what was coming in future days so that they would have guidance and direction in the midst of all that was

happening around them. So let's talk about today. Let's wrap up with us, to quote a famous country song, let's talk about me. Alright, here we go. What's the difference for today? The kingdom is within, and what I mean by that is right now currently and by the way, later this week I will go personally check, but last time I checked, Jesus Christ is not physically sitting on the throne in Jerusalem. I'll be there and I'll check for you just to make sure, but last time I checked, he was not. So where does he reside? Well, we just sang about it tonight, he resides within your heart. The Bible says that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is within. That's why Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again." And Titus 2 says when we pray, when we desire the things of God, we're not praying for his physical return, we're praying for his appearance which calls us home to be with him.

You say, "What does that all mean?" What that means is the Lord's Prayer serves as a beautiful model of how to pray but it is not necessarily our model for what to pray. In other words, when we just take these words, as my old coach used to do before every single game, and we just recite them for the sake of reciting them, we're not realizing why we're saying them, we're just simply saying them. And I would daresay tonight that most of us never realized the Lord's Prayer was about the Second Coming, most of us thought it was about the First Coming. But Jesus is giving them guidance, Jesus is giving them direction, a group of people on the other side of the cross, a group of people on the other side of the resurrection who every season went to the feasts and every season went to the festivals, and he said, "When you gather and when you pray in secret, not like those Pharisees do," basically he said, "When you pray, you pray that the Lord comes back, he comes back in power and that you don't fall for the lies of the evil one but you stay faithful until his coming." Ladies and gentlemen, that is a model prayer that we can pray every single day.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Tonight, as we come to our time of response, you might be that individual, as we saw earlier today, who's never come to the point of confessing their sin and placing their faith in Jesus Christ. We would encourage you to do so tonight. Call on the name of the Lord, the Bible says you will be saved. Maybe tonight you've been a believer for years or even decades and to be quite honest with yourself and before the Lord, you give more attention to the present firestorms of life than the reality of the days that are coming ahead. Maybe tonight's not about initial belief, maybe tonight's about a redirection, a refocusing, realizing that the Lord has a plan that is so much grander and bigger and greater than we could ever imagine. Ultimately, at the end of tonight, the reality of the context that we read is that Jesus is coming back. The question for us is, are we ready?

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you. God, thank you not only that, we have the promise of your word but, God, thank you that you guide us and you direct us and you show us not just the things that were, not just the things that are but, God, you show us the things that are to come. Lord, thank you that you would not only love us enough to save us, but you would care enough about us that you would prepare our hearts and you would show us how to live today in light of your coming tomorrow.

God, help us tonight to render our heart's decision based on how your Spirit moved through your word. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.