

Text: Matthew 6:9-13

Title: The Model Prayer

Truth: Jesus teaches His followers how to pray.

Date/Location: Sunday May 23, 2021 at FBC

Introduction

Jesus taught in 6:5-8 that God rejects the prayer of hypocrites because what they really want is the recognition of others. They are not truly interested in the honor of God. They appear outwardly religious but are not truly so.

Jesus also taught that God rejects the prayer of heathen (pagans,¹ idolators) because they believe self-effort in repeated religious ritual will earn them notice before God (or “the gods”).

Both are self-centered approaches to prayer. Instead, our prayer must be focused upon and centered upon God Himself. We learned from 6:5-8 that we must work hard to eliminate pride, empty repetition, worldliness, and a low view of God from our prayer lives.

Now in 6:9-13, Jesus gives us a model prayer that shows the way. He says “*You*, therefore, pray like this...” There is a clear contrast here. Jesus has told us, to not be like the hypocrites, and to not be like the heathen: instead, **YOU** are to be different.

The model prayer shows us that our prayers must:

1. Revere God.
2. Focus on God’s priorities.
3. Seek God for physical provision.
4. Ask God for spiritual provision.
5. Recognize God is king over all.

If our prayers do this, and we pray genuinely, that this means that *we* do these things and are marked by these values.

¹ Over one million in the United States subscribe to a religion they call *paganism*. They believe that nature is sacred and that the natural cycle has a spiritual meaning. Humans and animals and plants are all equally part of nature. The term *pagan* applies more generally to those who deny the Christian God and follow other gods.

Not every prayer must have all five elements to be acceptable before God. But in your prayer “program”—or in the prayer program of the church—all these elements should be prominent over the course of time. You are not in sin if your last prayer omitted one of these elements; but if you always omit some elements, then you have a problem. Of course, that problem is easy to resolve. Admit to God that you have lacked in that area and begin to amend your ways.

Note carefully that this prayer is not given as a rote prayer to use in violation of 6:7’s prohibition of vain repetition! It is a model, a general template, that we can use by praying in a similar manner, but with creativity appropriate to the circumstances.

I. Revere God

“Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your Name.”

- A. We must address God honorably in our prayers. He is not a buddy or a mere friend. He is in *Heaven*; we are not. We are speaking to the God who is not only *in* Heaven, but He *created* Heaven, and He is *in charge* of Heaven. We cannot get around this by praying to someone else. Jesus instructs us to address God, does He not? We are not praying to other beings—angels or men or saints, or anything else. We are praying to GOD.
- B. He is our Father—by virtue of creation first of all, and especially because He re-created us in salvation to be conformed the image of Christ by rebirth. He is our spiritual Father, and we can address Him as such (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6, like Jesus did in Mark 14:36).
- C. His name—meaning everything about Him—is to be hallowed. We do not use *hallowed* anymore, except perhaps when we visit a special place and say something like “these hallowed grounds” about a cemetery or a place where famous people once walked. To be hallowed means to be made holy or consecrated; to be greatly honored. “Hallowed be your name” is a wish that God’s name will be held up as holy and be worshipped.

When you pray that God’s name be hallowed, and you mean it, it seems impossible that you could soon thereafter go off and un-

hallow God's name by wicked conduct. Praising God is incompatible with sinning against God.

The fact is that God's name is not respected today by and large. There are a few corners of society that still have an innate respect for God. Hopefully those corners are larger than I think. But many use God's name in swear words, and deny God His rightful place as King, or scoff at the idea of the Creator, or belittle His people. That will not end well.

May God's name be exalted and held in high regard in the here and now, not only in the hereafter.

- D. One thing with the title of this sub-section: reverence is a good word. But the formal title of a minister is "Reverend." That title is bestowed formally when a man is ordained into Christian ministry. But what does *reverend* mean? It is a formal titled or address to a member of the clergy. It derives from Latin and other languages from the idea of a person to be revered or worthy of respect. This is an uncomfortable title for a pastor because the reverend is not the ultimate object of respect. One the one hand, as a minister he should be honored in the sense of appreciated and his teaching followed as long as it matches Scripture. But on the other hand, it is true what Jesus said, "call no man on earth your Father" (Matthew 23:9, the religious sense). This seriously limits the kind of respect that can be given to a human being. The reverend is really the agent that should be directing and helping people to revere God, the real One to be revered. Only God is our Father!

II. Focus on God's Priorities

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

- A. God's priority is that His kingdom would rule over the earth and that His will would be done on the earth. Is that *your* priority?
- B. This is not code language for "may many more people get saved." That is a good prayer too, do not get me wrong. It is not asking for an abstract "rule" of God to come upon people's hearts. To ask God's kingdom to come is not the same as these things. You must know what this means when you pray it. You are asking for the

worldwide King to come and establish His worldwide kingdom on the earth with all of its governmental, societal, spiritual, and economic aspects. You are asking Him to abolish all governments that pretend to His throne. You are asking for something to come that is big, not small; universal, not just individual; future, not present. You are asking for Daniel 2:44-45 to be fulfilled. It is not fulfilled yet, but it shall be in the future. If the kingdom were here, we would not be praying for it to come, for why would you pray for what you already have?

- C. The priority of God in the future is the kingdom. God's present priority is that His prescribed will would happen in the here and now. In Heaven, there is no sin, no things that are outside of God's will. But here those things exist aplenty. It is our role to ask that what pleases God will be done here. Awaiting the fulfillment of this "in the sky someday" is not sufficient. We are to participate in the asking and doing of holiness right now. Our priorities should mirror or follow God's priorities.
- D. A friend put it this way: "I am saying that all the extravagant things we want and have are spiritual distractions. We invest our time, and a lot of money and resources. The disparity is that we do not do the same thing in our faith, at an equal level, with the same passion, desire, and financial commitment. We do not invest in our faith and furthering the Lord's word like we do for our "things." Very few do. I am not saying your <whatever thing you like> is all bad, I'm just saying the Bible is clear on material things, coveting and worshipping two gods, one of those gods being money." Think of God's priorities, dear friends!

III. Seek God for Physical Provision

Give us this day our daily bread.

- A. We need food and water to live. There are no two ways around it. Without water, life expires in just a few days. Without food, we expire in a few weeks. God provides those things for us.
- B. We ought to ask God to provide our provision today. The act of *asking* God is pleasing to Him. It shows that we seriously recognize that we are completely dependent upon God for our food, our

wealth, our ability to work and get food, and everything else. That comes to the forefront if you become ill or the breadwinner in your home becomes incapacitated. If you just “assume” or “presume” upon God’s goodness, you are not walking in holiness.

- C. Sustenance is not automatic or a “right.” Everyone else is *not* required to cater to our whims and wishes, for example if we are lazy. Did you realize that? In God’s economy, we do not have an automatic right to eat. We must do something productive to grow or make food, or to trade for it, as 2 Thess. 3:10 says. Of course, if we are disabled, then we ought to be helped, and family is the first stop for such help. But if we are able bodied, there is no free ride in God’s economy.
- D. We also ought to thank God every time He provides food for us. God does not have to give us three squares a day as if He owes us anything. He chooses to do so out of his abundance and his grace—for those who are His followers as well as those who are not. Remember, just a small number of days without food and you are *done*.

IV. Ask God for Spiritual Provision

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

- A. Forgiveness. There are very clearly two parts of this:
 - 1. We ask God to forgive us. What are we asking to be forgiven? All the major English translations have “debts” but this can be misunderstood as a financial thing. The word *debts* can also refer to obligations in a moral sense. That is clearly the right understanding here—Jesus is talking about sin as debt. We cannot pray to have our credit card bill erased! Sin causes a debt to God, against Whom the sin is done, and Who requires a penalty because of His holiness.

God is ready and willing to forgive. He is faithful to the work of Christ (1 John 1:9) to cleanse His people of all their sins and to do so continuously, as well as not hold their sin against them.
 - 2. We forgive others. Question: Do we? Have we? This means that we do not hold the sin against the person anymore. We are not

obligating them to somehow make restitution on the spiritual level. Obviously, they, if repentant, should automatically make any restitution that can be made, but there are many sins that simply cannot be fixed or reversed.

The interesting thing about this phrase is that it is connected to the previous by the word “as.” This is a comparative word that means we are asking God to forgive us in the same manner or to the same extent that we forgive others who have sinned against us. We can illustrate this from the Bible this with Matthew 18:21-35.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

B. Deliverance from Temptation. A couple of years ago there was a bit of a kerfuffle about this part of the prayer. According to USA Today, June 6, 2019: “Pope Francis reportedly approved changes to the wording of the Lord's Prayer, also known as the Our Father.

Instead of saying, ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ Catholics will say, ‘Do not let us fall into temptation’...

The pope said he thought the English translation of the prayer was not correct. ‘It is not a good translation because it speaks of a God who induces temptation...I am the one who falls. It’s not him pushing me into temptation to then see how I have fallen.’”

1. The above wording is a bit misleading. The Pope did not change the Lord’s Prayer as if he has authority to do such a thing. That is an alarmist way of saying what happened. What really happened here is that he suggested a change in the standard translation in English to avoid blaming God for our failings when tempted, as if He took us to a sinful place. After all, James 1:13 says that God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone. God does permit trials to come, and does limit those trials so that they will not be too much to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). But it is our own sinful nature that draws us away into sin. Catholic teaching is not right on many things, but it is not wrong on *everything*, and this is one thing that I believe is much ado about nothing.

2. Rather than getting twisted up in knots over this particular translation change, we need to spend time thinking about the meaning of the prayer and what our relationship to sin truly is. What is Jesus saying here? He is telling us to pray about avoiding sin. He is saying that a godly person begs the Father to help him avoid sin because a) God hates sin; b) the believer hates sin; c) sin hurts self and others; d) sin interrupts a happy relationship with God; e) sin leads to death; and f) sin is just bad. It is this attitude about sin that Jesus is telling us to have as we pray. We do not take sin lightly and then go to God and pray a formula for forgiveness as if our sins matter little. They matter a lot, and we do not like them. Ask God to keep your feet from the paths of sin (opposite of Isaiah 59:7). We want to fear God, not sin against God. This is our daily request to God. God, please keep me as far away from circumstances that might lead to sin. Help me in trials not to turn those trials into opportunities for sin.

C. Read the two phrases again—about leading into temptation and delivering us from the evil one. Are these phrases different things altogether, or do they have a connection that means one more powerful thing? The contrastive *but* indicates that delivering from the evil one is probably the most important way that we are not led into temptation. Being delivered from Satan—the evil one—is a provision of God so that we would not sin. Satan loves nothing more than to induce us to fall into iniquity, creating guilt, ruining fellowship with others, damaging or eliminating our effectiveness for God, and so forth. Ask Job (chapters 1-2) and Peter (Luke 22:31-32). Be honest: do you want to be anywhere *near* the roaring lion which is Satan (1 Peter 5:8)?

V. Recognize God is King Over All

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.

A. Most Greek manuscripts contain the last part of the verse about the kingdom, power, and glory. Some manuscripts omit the words, which is why NIV, ESV, NAS, and CSB do not include it. The KJV and NKJV include the phrase, and I include it here for our study.

- B. These words extol God as the ruler of the kingdoms of the world and the one to Whom glory and power belong forever. And this indeed is true. Psalm 103:19, Daniel 4:32, Rev. 11:15 all teach about the kingdoms of men being under the sovereign control of God. Daniel 2:37 says that God gives kingdom, power, and glory to those whom He chooses. This is high worship for our God and King. It reminds us of similar phrasing in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; or Psalm 63:2, Psalm 145:10-11, Matt. 24:30, 2 Thess. 1:9, Heb. 1:3, Jude 25, Rev. 4:11, 5:12-13, 7:12, 15:8, 16:9, 19:1.
- C. Bottom line: God deserves and our worship. He is GOD. Including this idea in your prayer—and meaning it—expresses in concrete terms that you truly do honor God as the King that He is. Jesus is not just a guy who escorts you to Heaven. He is THE King, humanly speaking “under” the Heavenly Father, and He is YOUR King.

Conclusion

Remember the five things your prayers should show about you, that you:

1. Revere God.
2. Focus on God’s priorities.
3. Seek God for physical provision.
4. Ask God for spiritual provision.
5. Recognize God is king over all.

It is interesting to notice that physical provision comes from God and spiritual provision comes from God. It is some people’s idea that when we pray “Your kingdom come” we mean, “help us to bring in the kingdom.” But the Scriptural reality is that we are not going to do that. The kingdom is from God. And even the doing of God’s will on earth is done by God’s power.

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