

A Father's Prayer

Scripture Text: Matthew 6:5-15

Introduction

Last week, we talked about what is truly necessary. What is it that we must do? There are many things that we are supposed to do, but the one thing that we are created to do is to have a relationship with God and to glorify Him in all that we do. Therefore, we should choose to spend time with Jesus and savor the moments we have with Him. We do that by spending time reading, studying, learning, and meditating on God's written Word. Another way to spend time with God is through prayer. Prayer is important not only because God told us to do it, but because prayer is the *practice of the presence of God*. When we pray, we come into the presence of God. If we are to have a relationship with God, *we must pray*. We should make the necessary time to spend with the Lord. That time is far more important than any other time we spend. If you do not like spending time with God, what do you think you will be doing in heaven for all eternity?

Jesus Teaches Us How to Pray

Right in the middle of the most famous sermon of all, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about prayer. Many call this passage the Lord's Prayers. Others call it the Disciple's Prayer, as it is a kind of a prayer every disciple ought to pray. For today, I would like to consider this a Father's Prayer. It can be a prayer for every father to pray. It is also a prayer to God the Father. Before the actual prayer, Jesus instructed His disciples to pray like people who mean it. We should not pray like hypocrites who pray to be seen and heard. When we pray, we ought to not act like we are praying. When we pray, we ought to really pray, we ought to pray to God as if we are *really* praying to God. We want to speak to Him. We want to tell God what concerns we have. Our motivation is important. The why is important. Something else Jesus said is that God already knows what we need even before we ask Him. We do not pray to inform God about what is going on in our lives. He already knows. Look at the following.

Matthew 6:7-8 ⁷ *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.* ⁸ *Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

When we pray, we ought to pray like we are having a conversation. We should not use the same words again and again. Some people have a habit of repeating themselves in the same conversation for no good reason. That is not how we should pray. God does not forget what you just said. But, Jesus also showed us how to address God. He referred to God as either "your Father" or "Our Father". What is the difference in praying to "our Lord" or "our God" as opposed to praying to "our Father"? It is not that we should not address God as Lord or as God, but praying to God as "our Father" conveys the idea of kinship — that we are His children. Just as we should think of our earthly fathers in this way, praying to God as "Our Father" conveys the authority, warmth, and intimacy

of a loving father's care. This is a way we should pray to our Heavenly Father. The following are some specific petitions that Jesus mentioned in the prayer.

A Father Should be Honored

The first thing we see in this prayer has to with honor. Honor means to treat someone with the proper respect due to the person and their role. Fathers are worthy of honor. In fact, one of the Ten Commandments is to "honor your father and mother". God has given fathers an enormous responsibility to lead and to care for their families. God, who is our Father in Heaven, should also be honored. Notice how Jesus began the prayer.

Matthew 6:9 *Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."*

First, we see in this verse that Jesus gives us a *model* for prayer. Notice that Jesus did not say "Pray this prayer", but rather, "Pray like this." He did not mean for us to always pray these exact words, although we can if we pray them with sincerity. What Jesus gives us is an example of *how to pray*. This model prayer shows us the way in which we should pray and the types of things we ought to pray. In the very first statement, Jesus shows us to whom we should pray and how to pray to Him: *Our Father in heaven*. God is our heavenly Father. Our prayers to God ought to be intimate in the way we address God, just as our conversations with our earthly fathers would be intimate. Also, like our earthly fathers deserve honor and respect, even more so, does God our Father deserve honor and respect. The words "hallowed be your name" means that we should treat God's name as holy and with reverence. Another way to think about this is that God should be honored above all else. He should be honored above our earthly fathers, mothers, other family, and anyone else. God the Father should be honored above all.

A Father Leads His Family

Fathers are the servant-leaders of their family. God has given them the responsibility to lead their families. A father will lead his family, either through what he does or what he does not do. When I was growing up, my dad was the decision maker. Not all of his decisions were good, but when my dad made up his mind, that was what was going to happen. He was king of the castle. God leads us, too, although God's leadership is far higher and far better than our earthly fathers. God is King and His will reigns supreme. The question is this: Do we want God to lead us, or do we want to lead God where we want to go? The next part in this prayer has to do with God's kingdom and God's will.

Matthew 6:10 *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

When we pray, we often pray to tell God what is on our mind. We often pray to God when we have a need, a concern, a decision, or need Him to do something. Oftentimes, we pray to impress upon God what we want. We may pray like this, "Lord, if you would only give me this, or do that for me, then I will do..." If God is King, and this is His kingdom, then it stands to reason that He is the One leading us. Sin is usurping God's authority. Sin is saying, "I am god". Therefore, prayer is about God's will being done, not

our will being done. The thing is this, when our will is God's will, we will have our will. Just as God's will is perfectly experienced in heaven, Jesus prayed that it will be experienced on earth. Our prayer should be, "Father, make your will be done on this earth, in my life, in my family, in this church, regardless of what I want."

A Father Cares for His Family

Fathers take care of their families. This is part of the role and responsibility God has placed on them. Growing up, I did not appreciate this very much, neither my dad taking care of me or that he was fulfilling his God-given responsibility. I focused much more on getting other things, things not needed, and staying out of trouble. Some fathers do not take care of their families like they should, but our Father in heaven does. One of the petitions in Jesus' prayer has to do with God taking care of us. Look at the following.

Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread,

While this part of the prayer focuses on asking God for bread, the intent is asking for all of our physical needs. The point seems to be that we ought to pray for the immediate day-to-day necessities. We should ask God to continue providing our daily needs. We should recognize that God provides everything we need and we should acknowledge our daily dependence upon Him. This petition is similar to one in Proverbs 30.

Proverbs 30:8-9 ⁸ Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, ⁹ lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

We need God more than we need food or anything else. We also need to rely upon Him to provide what we need. Do you trust your Heavenly Father to provide what you need?

A Father Forgives

Children can do many things to grieve their parents. They disobey. They rebel. They say and do hurtful things. I have done many things to grieve my parents. As much as I am sorry that I hurt my parents, I am grateful that they were forgiving. When I did wrong, they forgave me. The same is true for our Heavenly Father. He forgives our sin.

Matthew 6:12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

This request shows that even authentic disciples still have their faults, which need to be dealt with on a daily basis. Our Father in heaven has truly forgiven us. He has demonstrated His great love and mercy in sending His only begotten Son for us. Even those who turned their back and were considered enemies of Him, He expunges their record through the blood of Jesus Christ. However, we do not stop sinning when we confess Jesus as Lord. Sanctification is a process. While sin in a believer's life does not jeopardize his or her salvation and standing with God, sin does hinder our relationship

with God. This is a prayer that our personal fellowship with God our Father will be restored when fellowship has been hindered by sin. Our Heavenly Father is like the father of the prodigal son who, when he saw his lost son from a distance, ran out to him. He forgave his son's sin and welcomed him into the family. Like a loving, earthly father, God forgives the most egregious sin and welcomes us back into His family. And those who have received such forgiveness from God our Father, should be so moved with gratitude toward God that they eagerly forgive those who sin against them.

A Father Keeps His Family Safe

Fathers take care of their families. Fathers will protect their families. Not all fathers do this, or do this perfectly. In fact, our earthly fathers will fail at times. This is why we should pray for these men. God has given them a tremendous responsibility to lead, to care for, and to protect their families. We should pray that God will give our earthly fathers wisdom and strength to lead. In addition, the last petition of Jesus' model prayer shows us how we should ask for God's help, not for our earthly fathers (although we should pray for them as well), but for ourselves. The help we should ask our Heavenly Father to give is very specific. Look at the following verse.

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

This last request in the prayer is stated in two different ways. Negatively, it says "don't let us yield to temptation", and positively it says "rescue us from the evil one". That may be an odd thing to say, to ask God to not lead us into temptation. Why would God ever lead us to be tempted to sin? If we take Jesus' wilderness experience where the Holy Spirit led Him into a time of testing (Matthew 4:1), this petition should be understood not so much as one for God not to lead us into temptation, but for God to deliver us from Satan so that we do not yield to temptation. Since sin hinders our relationship with our Heavenly Father, and since we should love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and since we want His will (not our will) to be done, therefore, we should pray that our Father in heaven will help us in those difficult circumstances that would tempt us to sin. However, the best protection from sin and temptation is to turn to God and to depend on His direction. That is the safest place to be.

Conclusion

In closing, Jesus' example of prayer shows us how to pray, not what to pray. It shows us how to honor God and whose will we should want. It also gives us a model for asking for the important things, like our daily needs, forgiveness, and for God to help us not yield to temptation. In all of this, though, this model prayer shows us that God is our Heavenly Father. He desires a relationship with us. Even when our earthly fathers fail to be all that they should be, we have a Father in heaven who is always there, always cares, and always desires us to be with Him. Therefore, Happy Father's Day to our earthly fathers. Let us thank God for these men and pray for them. They have a big responsibility and need God's wisdom and guidance. More importantly, Happy Father's Day to our Heavenly Father. Every day belongs to Him. Let us honor Him above all else. Amen!