

THE LORD'S PRAYER – PART 1

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Scripture: Matthew 6: 9-13, Luke 11: 2-4

We've been focusing on prayer these last few weeks. We looked at unanswered prayer; then we looked at what it means to pray in the name of Jesus. Today I'd like for us to look at what has been familiarly called 'The Lord's Prayer', and see what we can gain from it as we invite God's Spirit to speak to us.

The Lord's Prayer is found in two passages of scripture, in Matthew 6: 9-13 and then in Luke 11: 2-4.

Matthew 6: 9-13

⁹ *"Pray, then, in this way: Jesus said,*

'Our Father, who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰ *Your kingdom come.*

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ *Give us this day our daily bread.*

¹² *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

¹³ *And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'*

For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."

Luke 11:1-4

It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, when He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples." ² And He said to them, "When you pray, say:

'Father, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ *Give us each day our daily bread.*

⁴ *And forgive us our sins,*

For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And do not lead us into temptation."

Comparisons and Contrasts between the two versions

We can very easily see that the two versions are different. Luke seems quite truncated compared to Matthew's gospel. Matthew's version is more detailed, more liturgical, and was likely tailored towards the Jewish Christians who were familiar with structured prayers and teachings on righteousness. In fact, the Lord's Prayer in Matthew reflects a deep reverence for God that aligns with Jewish thought and teachings from the Torah.

For instance, the opening line "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name," emphasizes the sanctity of God's name, echoing the third commandment in Exodus 27, "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord, Your God." Similarly, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," expresses the Messianic hope deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, where believers anticipated the coming of God's kingdom, as promised in the Old Testament, where the Messiah would reign.

And then, the petition. “Give us this day our daily bread,” would bring back memories of manna that was given to them when God gave them food in the wilderness. “Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors,” ties very much into Jewish understanding of sin as a debt, and the importance of forgiveness which is a central theme in Jewish prayer and worship, particularly during the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. And finally, the request. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” reflects again Jewish teachings.

But in contrast, Luke’s version is shorter and simpler, and reflects very much on Jesus’ teachings, which were reaching out to Gentile audiences, emphasizing direct and accessible communication with God.

Both versions, however, have the same core themes – God’s holiness, His provision, forgiveness, and deliverance. While adapting in length and style to suit their different contexts. Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer is marked by its simplicity, seeming to appeal to a Gentile audience where he excludes phrases like “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and just focuses on a very straightforward approach that resonates with Gentiles who had no understanding of any of the Jewish thought or traditions, or theological concepts. And the prayer also, if you notice, simply begins with ‘Father’, not ‘Our Father’ which is found in Matthew’s gospel.

So, those are some of the differences that are found in these two versions. But for our study meditation today, I’d like us to look at Matthew’s account. So let’s focus on Matthew 6: 9-13. This teaching on prayer is kind of grounded within the Sermon on the Mount, whereas Luke’s was to a particular smaller crowd, disciples and other people who are just following Him.

The Lord’s Prayer basically boils down to two main parts:

1. Focuses on God’s glory and petitions related to that.
2. Centers on our needs and our necessities.

God’s glory and petitions related to that.

This structure teaches us to give God the first place, the supreme place before turning to our own needs and desires. And hear this, beloved, prayer should never be an attempt to bend the will of God to our desires. Never! It should always be an aim to align our wills with God’s desires.

Our Needs.

This addresses three essential human needs and three dimensions of the times in which we live.

- **Present needs:** the request for daily bread brings before God, the immediate, tangible things that we need in life, acknowledging that He is the One who sustains us.
- **Past needs:** the plea for forgiveness. Forgiveness always has to do with something that happened before, not in the present. So we bring our past failings into the presence of God, seeking His mercy and His grace.
- **Future needs:** the request for help in facing temptations that are down the road.

The prayer also brings the fullness of God into our lives. Each petition or each ask actually kind of leans into a different nature of God.

- **The request for daily bread** – reminds us of God as sustainer, that God is the One who gives to us. Psalm 145:15-16 says, *“The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food at the proper time. you open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.”* So, the desire for daily bread reminds us of God, the Father.

- **The plea for forgiveness** draws us to God, the Son – Jesus our Savior, and our Redeemer. Colossians 1:13-14 says, *“For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*
- **The request for help in facing temptation** highlights God, the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, Strengthener, and Guide. Galatians 5:16 says, *“So I say, ‘Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.’”*

So we see that we have a triad of things that we bring to a Triune God – God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, all coming together to meet the needs that we have.

But today I want us to look at the first half of this prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, one earth as it is in heaven.

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN.

When we pray ‘Our Father’, what we are acknowledging is that we have a relationship with God. When we say Father, we are actually assuming the fact that we are His children, sons and daughters of the Most High God.

John 1:12 states, *“yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”* And so, when we say ‘Our Father’, we’re saying: Abba, we come to You, we are Your children. We are Your sons/daughters. And we are coming to You because through the finished work of Calvary, we are able to have this kind of access to You.

Then, even as we talk about the relational aspect of Father, there’s an invitation to intimacy, and invitation to trust and love. It’s more than just words. ‘Our Father who art in heaven.’ When we pause and think about Father, there’s much more that is captured in that one word.

There’s trust; I can depend on Him. There’s an intimate relationship that I have with Him. It’s very much like a child approaching a parent. They emphasize that God is not distant but desires a close relationship with His people.

Then the use of the word ‘our’ reminds us that we are part of a community of believers. Our Father. all of us can say together, ‘Our Father’, and mean the very same thing that we have one Father who is listening to all the things that we are saying.

Then, it gives the location – ‘Our Father who is in heaven.’ Even as we begin to think of earthly fathers and how much relationship we have, it kind of takes it away into a different realm altogether. Our Father who is in heaven. It shows God’s transcendence. While Father conveys closeness and intimacy, heaven highlights for us majesty and authority and reverence and awe.

So, when we look at this phrase, ‘Our Father who art in heaven,’ we have a double meaning; there’s an imminence about it in the sense that God comes close to us. he is not far from us. but there is also a transcendence that we never take the imminence and become casual with Him, that we always have reverence and awe for who He is. So, that’s the start. Come close, but make sure that you recognize that God is God. We keep these two perspectives in balance.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

To hallow something means to honor it as holy and sacred or set apart. And in this context, it means recognizing God’s name. Our Father is holy and giving Him the highest honor. This phrase is really an act of worship and a prayer for God’s holiness to be exalted in our lives and throughout the world.

Hallowed be Thy name. we're expressing a desire for God's name to be treated as holy, revered, and honored. It's a declaration of worship and an acknowledgement of God's unique holiness and majesty. It also serves as a commitment to live in ways that reflect and uphold the sanctity of His name.

So you can see, as we look at this first part, it's so full of God. We can never ever come casually before the throne – that we come always understanding that we come into the presence of a holy God, One that we need to come in awe and great reverence. Hallowed be Thy name. I was thinking about the term hallowed. We rarely use it in our every day life. And yet, it is. Hallowed is to honor. We honor teachers. We honor them because they have done something. We respect them for their value, their guidance. We hallow them. We honor them. We respect and honor parents, showing love and obedience and gratitude towards them. We celebrate leaders, we honor them. The role models that we have had, heroes that we have.

But the difference between hallowing and honoring people is that when we do it in an earthly manner, there's a limit to it. But the honor that we need to give to God is limitless. Take all that you think of in terms of honoring somebody, and then take it to infinity times infinity. That's the difference between how we would honor somebody we know and the kind of honor that we need to bring to God.

THY KINGDOM COME AND THY WILL BE DONE.

The kingdom of God was very central to the message of Jesus. He proclaimed it as past, present, and future. When He talked about the past, He spoke about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, that they were part of the kingdom. And then, when He looked at the present, He said "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you. It's right here." And then He talked about a future kingdom. Then they gathered around Him and asked Him, "Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. It will come." There's a present, 'a here and a not here' understanding of the kingdom of God.

So, how do we understand the kingdom of God? We just easily say the kingdom of God is like a society or a community that completely does the will of God, where the will of God is pre-eminent, there is 100% obedience and submission to the will of the King.

This brings us a little closer into what the understanding of the kingdom of God is. 'Thy kingdom come,' which means that we align with the objectives and the will of the king, and then say, 'Thy will be done.' We've heard that phrase so often. it's part of all the things that we do, that God's will must be pre-eminent in our hearts and in our lives. and yet, as I thought about it, sometimes we have different attitudes when we do His will. We might say 'Yes' to Him. But sometimes we come with a defeated sense of resignation. I have nothing else to do. So, okay Lord, I'll do what You want me to do.

That's the way we sometimes come, like Jonah. Jonah's reluctance. God told him to go to Nineveh. He bought a ticket and decided to go to Tarshish. Then finally, he's brought back and he does what God wants him to do. But his heart is not in it. It's a defeated Jonah. He comes and says, "Okay, I tried to get away from You. You brought me back here, so I'll speak this message You've given me, and then, I'm done." And sometimes, we too fall into that category. We just throw up our hands and say, "Okay, I guess this is what You want me to do. I'll do it. but I'm here kicking and screaming."

And then, there's a sense of bitter resentment as well. there's bitterness that creeps in and resentment when God wants or asks us to do something. Sometimes that bitterness is what harms us

so much. We carry the resentment for a long time. As I've said before: When you don't deal with resentment, it leads to anger. When you don't deal with anger, it leads to hatred. When you don't deal with hatred, it leads to bitterness. And bitterness is the most debilitating thing that you can carry because it's like rust. It eats from the inside. The strongest steel will break because of rust from the inside. And it starts with resentment. And sometimes, we carry resentment towards God because of something that He has made us do, or wants us to do. We need to be so careful.

But here's the thing. God still works. Look at Jonah. A classic example of bitterness. As you read through Jonah – the first part and you say "Okay. God caught him, brought him back to Nineveh, and he had to preach." But then in chapter 4, you read why he didn't want to go. He says to God, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That You will ask for repentance, they will repent, and You will forgive." Jonah didn't want forgiveness for the people of Nineveh. He wanted them to perish. Then, when he went and preached, they all repented. So he goes and sits under this tree, and he's so angry with God. "Exactly what I thought You would do, You did." Bitterness, resentment. And yet, in both of these areas, God worked.

Our will, as an act in alignment with God, works. Where do we lose out? We lose out on the joy and the peace that comes with being in the center of His will. That's what we lose. God's will still happens, but we are the losers. The best way when we are called to do His will is to come before Him with loving trust; to accept His will with loving trust.

The Bible is filled with examples of people who submitted to God with that kind of trust, with love, knowing that He had the best for them.

- Mary, the classic example. "I am the Lord's servant. May Your word to me be fulfilled."
- Abraham offering Isaac. God asked for this, I will do it willingly.
- Jesus in Gethsemane. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.

So, we come before Him and say, "Lord, this is Your will. I will do it willingly." Why do we do it willingly? Because there are two things that always inform us about God.

- 1) God is all wise. He knows everything that you're going through. He knows what you're going to face. And when He tells you to do something, you can bet everything that it is the best possible path for you. It may not be an easy path, but it will be the best path for you. God's will will always enhance you.
- 2) He's a loving God. Everything that He does for us comes out of a heart of love.

Those two things, beloved, must always underlay His request to do His will. And undergird us when we say "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." It will be done, Lord, with great joy. The psalmist says, "I delight to do Your will." That's the place that we need to land when it comes to this. I delight to do Your will because I know that You are a good God. I know that You want the best for me, and I will embrace it fully, Lord. not with resentment, not with bitterness, not with a hardened heart, but with great joy so that I can be completely in this beautiful place of being under your will.

3 QUESTIONS IN CLOSING.

1. Do you approach God as a dear Father?

When you pray, do you really go to Him with that kind of a loving relationship and say, "Abba, here I am," knowing that He welcomes you, knowing that He loves you, knowing that He's listening to you? Or do prayers just get thrown at Him? Don't forget Lord, that I've got this. Please help me with this. Bless me. Do we go to Him as a dear loving Father?

2. Do we still approach Him with awe and reverence?

Or, like the old saying goes, has familiarity brought contempt? Is it now just a casual thing as we look to Him, as we talk to Him? Have we lost the awe that must always accompany us when we enter the throne room? He invites us to come confidently, but we must never forget that we are coming to a holy God.

3. Are you fully accepting His will in your life today?

Maybe this morning, you've come here and you've been struggling with something that the Lord has laid upon your heart. You know at the back of your mind, that this is what God wants, and yet there are other considerations that are coming up and saying, "No, don't do that. It's going to be a difficult road. It's going to be touch. You're going to go through all kinds of different situations that won't help." And yet, you know it is the will of God. I wonder today whether just hearing that God is a loving God, and God is an all-wise God, that you can say, "I'm going to take that leap of faith, Abba. I'm going to let Your will be mine today."

Let's pray.

Amen.