

9 ¶ "Pray, then, in this way: '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.]'¹⁴ "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.¹⁵ "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

In this part of Jesus' sermon He provides us with a model for prayer. He does this to counter what the false external piety and theatrical praying of the day was producing as a result of a man made rather than a God made righteousness.

First of all we must be reminded that any thing that can be a legitimate outward showing of the change that God has wrought within in us can be misused and corrupted from its original intent.

The demands that Jesus makes on us as His people can never be confused with forms of external piety. In other words looking a certain way when worshipping, using a certain voice when praying, giving a certain amount of money, sitting in a particular pew to make it look like you are more interested than others can be mere theater of piety and the reward for that as we have already learned is nothing but the praise of men.

God's true righteousness in us is rewarded by the Father.

The demand for righteousness of Matthew 5 is now complemented in Matthew 6 by the insistence that the righteousness we are to pursue never becomes confused with the theater of piety. There is no room for this kind of showmanship in the kingdom of God. The mask of falsity will appear on the stage of church life from time to time, but when it does we can hope that the truly righteous will see it for what it is and do what is necessary to make sure we in no way give in to the lure of pleasing men rather than pleasing God.

That is how we concluded our study last week.

In today's text we examine the model of prayer that Jesus has given to His people and that model begins with the words, "Our Father".

The entire tone of how we should pray is set forth in this model and with these beginning words. If you have been with us on Wed. evening you know that we have been studying

prayer and the first thing we learned is that all prayer is rooted in God Himself. There is no purpose for prayer if what we pray is not rooted in God himself for He is sovereign and all things that are prayed have their beginning and end not just with God but in God. How appropriate it is for those who are the righteousness of God in Christ to pray to our Father for it is in Him that we live and breath and move and have our being as the children of God.

In this model we see that the first three petitions are put in the terms of God's glory. The petitions are related to your name, your kingdom your will and the next three in terms of our good - our bread, our debts and our debtors.

After this we must pay attention to the use of the word Father in addressing God. This is not a typical form of address for Jews when praying or even talking about God. When God is talked about as a father in the Old Testament Scriptures it is usually as an analogy/a comparison.

For example: Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. (Psalms 103:13) and For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us And Israel does not recognize us. You, O LORD, are our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Your name. (Isaiah 63:16).

But not until Jesus arrives is God ever addressed typically or as a normal trait or attribute as Father.

This would cause some real consternation on behalf of those who thought they were the religious elite, those who were humble before God in the theater of piety. To them this would be presumptuous and being too familiar with God. But for Jesus' people it would be gracious and personal. There is no evidence in any extra-biblical writings of anyone ever using the term Abba/Father to address God.

Each of the gospels contain passages where Jesus does so and it clearly was continued in the early church, and in the New Testament letters by Paul in Romans 8:15 and Gal. 4:6. Throughout the prayer the reference to the Father is I the plural: Our Father, your Father. This is encouragement for the disciples to be praying together and not in isolation. When forgiveness of sins is mentioned Jesus says your Father, and excludes himself. When He speaks of my Father He is relating to His unique Sonship and authority. His instruction our Father is to the disciples.

The early church did not allow non-believers to recite this prayer or to participate in the Lord's Supper. The use of our Father in heaven in our praying when we are praying together reminds us of the sovereignty of God and helps us to prepare ourselves to pray not just according to some formula but to approach God with the truth about who He is. He is our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name. We must have the right mindset when we come to God in prayer. We must see him as the HOLY ONE. We must approach Him with the understanding that His name is who He is. It is who He has revealed himself to be. This is how we must relate to Him He is holy.

Then Jesus teaches us that the kingdom of the Holy One who is our Father, is to be prayed for. This has several dimensions to it.

Jesus, with His incarnation has inaugurated the kingdom of God. The kingdom as God has purposed it throughout human history has begun. This is the rule of God under which there is life. This kingdom never existed until Jesus arrived. People were saved by grace before now, but there was not a kingdom of life as it now exists. The people of Israel were a picture, a physical type of the kingdom that was to come physically and spiritually. The present kingdom is such because God has written His law on the hearts of His kingdom people. It no longer exists on two tables of stone as a summary of the Law and the Prophets and a legal binding document for Israel. Christ's law is engraved on the heart of every true believer. And yet the fullness of the kingdom will not come, it will not be consummated until Christ's return.

So in praying for the kingdom to come, Jesus is instructing the disciples to pray that the evidences of the present kingdom will be manifested in the life of the church as it extends beyond the day of Pentecost and beyond the city of Jerusalem and beyond Samaria and into the whole world. It is a prayer to taste the kingdom now knowing that the fullness of it is yet to come and that it will come in all of its glory when Christ appears to resurrect His own and then bring final judgement at the second resurrection.

The Jews were looking for the kingdom. Jesus said the kingdom has come and it will be extended as far and for as long as God wants it to be and then it will come in its final fullness.

Then Jesus instructs to pray for God's will to be done and that will is described by Paul as being good, pleasing and perfect in Romans 12:2. We pray for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This has several dimensions to it.

The first is that His will be done now on earth as it is now being done in heaven. God's will encompasses that which He demands and that which He determines to bring about in salvation history. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Matthew 7:21. He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." Matthew 26:42

So, for the will of God to be done requires moral obedience and the bringing to pass of certain events such as the cross. This is the present extension of the kingdom.

The second is that His will be fully accomplished on the earth as it is now being accomplished in heaven. This is praying for the consummation of the kingdom.

And third that the will of God will be accomplished in the same way as it is now accomplished in heaven.

This third dimension of the will of God in relating to the kingdom means that there will no longer be a need for discussing who is and who is not righteous. There will be no need to discuss murder, envy, lust, divorce, face slapping and so on for then, in the consummated kingdom, all the matters of the heart will be right for God, there will be no more theater of piety, no more hypocrisy and all that should be done will be done freely, openly and spontaneously in a way that is God honoring and God pleasing.

And so these first three petitions that point us directly to God by way of God's name, God's kingdom and God's will are asking God that his people will hallow his name, submit to his reign and do his will. It is the church praying for the church to be God's true people.

The last three petitions request things for ourselves.

'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.]¹⁴ "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.¹⁵ "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

The first is for bread, which in Jesus day meant for all our food, a basic need. It could also mean all the basic needs for life. The idea of daily is for today, for one day at a time. Dr. D. A. Carson says, “the prayer is for our needs not our greeds”.

This is significant in a culture where the possibility of losing a few days work due to illness could be devastating. In that day you were paid a daily wage. No work no money. No salary, no sick days, no health benefits, no paid vacation, no personal days or maternity leave. It is still this way in many places including the USA.

So, Jesus is teaching that His disciples live one day at a time in absolute dependence on God recognizing that our ability to work and the necessities that come from working or however else they may be obtained are good gifts from God. Work does not have to be enjoyable. It may be hard, tedious or any number of other things. But it is still the means that provides God’s daily blessings for His people. All good things come from the hand of God’s providence and sometimes the package it is wrapped in is not as attractive as it is at other times.

And here we must note as we continue, that these three” us” petitions are all joined together by the word and. They do not stand independently as the first three did.

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.

These three requests are fundamentals of spiritual living.

Bread is basic sustenance. But if we are to survive spiritually we must depend on God for our bread, we must seek forgiveness for sin and forgive sin and we must be delivered from temptation or we will be starving to death spiritually.

When we sin against God we are in debt in one of two ways. We have either committed sin or have omitted doing something and that is sin.(He who knows what is the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin)

We first pray to God to forgive **our** sins. Why? Because we are to progress from forgiveness to forgiving. Any one that sins against God in any way and then believes that after repenting that they are forgiven and then is not willing to forgive sin against them, may only be a person who is an actor in the theater of piety.

John Stott writes: "Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offence against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling. If on the other hand we have an exaggerated view of the offences of others, it proves that we have minimized our own".

In other words, if you believe the sin someone has committed against you is greater than the sin you have committed against God, you don't have an understanding of "our Father, hallowed be thy name".

The next request if not understood properly can make God a liar.

13 'And do not lead us into temptation.

Does God lead me into temptation? Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust James 1:13, 14. Now if this is so, why do we pray for god not to lead us into temptation? Well. It is obvious that it cannot mean temptation as in tempted to sin.

But the greek word *periasmos* can also mean tried or tested.

And this presents another problem. How do I pray not to be tried or tested when Scripture says, Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials James 1:2? If this is so I might pray for strength in the inner man to endure trials as we have learned in our studies on prayer in Ephesians. But to ask God to not bring us to trials seems contradictory to Scripture.

So how do I reconcile this? Consider that Jesus said there will be wars and rumors of wars and yet we are told to pray "for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" 1 Timothy 2:2. Now, there is not a lot of that in the midst of the carnage and atrocities of a war and especially if you are a specific target of ethnic or religious persecution during the war but both are Scriptural facts.

We would not be wrong to pray to not have trials, not in general sense but in foreseeing a particular kind of trial on the horizon. However, if it comes, then we must respond biblically and count it as joy. Why? Simply because our Father who is in heaven and whose name is Holy considers it better for us to go through the trial than not to go through it.

And lastly we are taught to pray to be delivered from evil.

This too can be rather difficult at first glance when we live in an evil world. The world is nothing but wicked and evil and the only way to be truly delivered from it is for us to die and be with Christ. Is that what we are praying for?

O Lord take me now? I do not want to be a part of your expanding kingdom. I do want to trust you for my daily bread any more. I do not want to ask forgiveness for my sins and I am tired of forgiving other people day after day. And I certainly do not want to go through any more trials. So get it over with and get me out of here, "deliver me from evil." Is this what Jesus means?

The evil is most likely the evil one and there is a lot of greek grammar that supports this especially the way the word is used in other verses referring to the evil one.

Matthew has already shown how the devil seeks to influence the godly with great temptation to sin.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" Then the devil *took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and *said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" Again, the devil *took Him to a very high mountain and *showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus *said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" Then the devil *left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him. Matthew 4:1-11.

This prayer recognizes that we are helpless in view of the work of the devil against us but we are to recognize that Jesus has vanquished Satan and therefore we can ask our heavenly Father with confidence to deliver us from the Devil's strength and wiles . Of course the apostle Paul re-teaches this in Ephesians 6 when he tells us to put on the whole armor of God and finally to pray.

Then Jesus reinforces the thought of vs 12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors with '14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.15 "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions

The idea here is that if the community of disciples is going to be effective in their praying, they **must** be a forgiving people. Brethren, Jesus is talking to the whole body of believers. One persons lack of forgiving others can affect the whole church as far as the church, as a whole, is praying for something. Forgiving others is not a personal option it is required of God's people. You have no choice unless you want to starve to death spiritually.

Now let me ask you a question. Do you cultivate a forgiving spirit? Are you cultivating a forgiving spirit in your life? It is necessary for a tested right now. Maybe it is your spouse that you have the hardest time forgiving. You spouse may be the person that you have to forgive the most frequently. But I hope that your spouse isn't the hardest person for you to forgive. But it is entirely possible that there are husbands and wives in here who find the most difficult person in the world to forgive to be their spouse. How are you doing in that area? Are you cultivating forgiveness there? Perhaps it is a child or a parent. Or one who you once counted as friend, or maybe it is a colleague, or, someone in the community which whom you have to work or could it be yes it could - a church member. Ask yourself, how am I doing in that area in forgiveness? Perhaps it will show how far you have to go in really realizing how merciful God has been to you.

Jesus gives us a model for prayer in this text. These are the essentials. This is basic training in God glorifying, God centered prayer. Later on His disciples say "teach us to pray." How ironic. How many times do we have to ask God to teach us to pray when He already has?

The final question then must be, "why am I not praying as Jesus has taught me to pray?" The answer may be, I don't revere God as I should, I don't trust Him as I should, I do not ask forgiveness for sin when I should and I do not forgive others when I should.

What is your answer?