

“Kingdom Come”

Sermon on the Mount Series: Eight Lesson

Matthew 6.5-15

““And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. “This, then, is how you should pray:

“ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

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

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. ’ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6:5–15 NIV11)

Introduction

- We need to learn how to pray (c.f. Lk 11.1ff)
- “you” is plural, implication is about them praying together as much as on their own (perhaps more so).

1. Correcting false ideas about prayer, 6.5-8

- If motives wrong, will not connect with God - which is the point!
- We might all have our ideas about prayer, but here we see Jesus give us some of his key perspectives on prayer.
- It is not:

a. Praying to be seen by people

- Although public prayer is not condemned (see examples of Stephen - Acts 7 - and the parable of the Tax collector and pharisee - Lk18).
- "Jeremias suggests that one who strictly observed the afternoon hour of prayer could deliberately time his movements to bring him to the most public place at the appropriate time!" France, R. T. Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary.

b. Praying to manipulate God

- Many words
 - Repetition not a problem (see Jesus Matt 26.44), nor set prayer (Matt 6.9-13) but mechanical and empty-hearted prayer.
 - Trying to impress God?
 - Many try to impress either men (Matt 6:5), or God? Either are fruitless.
 - Which is my greater temptation? Does it depend on the context?
 - Stop oneself now and again and check whether I am really meaning what I say.
- Many Gentile prayers about the specific words, rather than the heart.

- ‘Gibberish’: not language, but meaningless noise. Cannot bully God into giving me what I want.
- Sincerity is the biggest factor in faithful prayer - being real, honest, humble, freedom from deceit, earnestness.
 - Insincerity - false, flattery, robotic, appearing humble, deceitfulness.
 - How do we keep our sincerity on track? See 1 Tim 1:5, 1 Tim 3:8, Heb 10:22, Acts 2:46. Is it a focus?
- It is:
 - c. Sincere**
 - Room
 - The storeroom, no windows, only lockable room in the house; it represents the least public place.
 - God sees through walls! As well as hearts and actions.
 - Secret
 - Secrecy is key component of good prayer life.
 - Is my public prayer life backed up by my private prayer life? Do they match?
 - Do I shun possibilities of showing off?
 - Key to concentrate on the presence of God instead of audience.
 - “do not be like them” v8: Gentiles, hypocrites etc. Key idea in SOM.
 - Praying to a God who knows what you need and cares - see next point

2. Praying with an accurate view of God, Matt 6.9-10

- [See NOTES at the end for more ideas regarding structure]
- This prayer is an expansion on the practicals of avoiding the errors of hypocrites and Gentiles and praying in a meaningful way to God as Father.
- ‘you’ is emphatic in the Greek, pointing out the contrast.
- ‘you’ is plural throughout. Meant to be pattern for group prayer, not just individual.

A. The Father

- "In Judaism, God was a Father who delighted in meeting the needs of his people; Judaism also recognised that God knew all a person's thoughts. Jesus predicates effective prayer on a relationship of intimacy, not a business partnership model, which was closer to the one followed by ancient paganism." Keener, Craig S. The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament.
- “Father...in heaven”: Puts together familiarity (Father) with worship (in heaven).
- Pray with simplicity. Can be direct with God. Do not need to beat about the bush!
 - Don't overcomplicate something that God has made simple.
- **Ps 18:6-19** - reading such passages helps set the mind and heart right as to who I am praying to before praying.
- Praying with other people - gives insight into God's character etc.
- hallowed: make holy, treat as holy, reverence.
- name: God himself as revealed to humankind (Deut. 28:58; Isa. 30:27). All of who he is.

B. The Kingdom

- “kingdom come”
 - Is coming, will come, has come!
 - More than just an eschatological (end times) prayer, also about the here and now.
 - What does it mean that the kingdom comes? It means God's will being done....
- “your will be done”
 - Happening now in our lives, and will happen ‘globally’ in future.

- More than just an ethical request, also a request for God's will to be done in practical terms.
 - What is that will?
 - Revealed in Jesus
 - Wrongs righted
 - Broken relationship with God put right
 - Salvation for individual human beings
 - Salvation for humankind as families, societies
 - Salvation for the marginalised, oppressed and hurting
 - Salvation for creation
- "on earth as in heaven"
 - A disciple's hope is that God's kingdom will is part of this present age as well as the future one.
 - We want God's rule in our lives now, spreading, and moving towards ultimate fulfilment.
- These requests come before personal need requests because the focus is God and his agenda, not ours.

3. Praying with an open heart towards God, Matt 6.11-15

- "The three clauses of prayer for God's glory are now balanced by three petitions for the disciples' needs." France, R. T. Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary. TNTC
- "give us": Looking to God for provision without anxiety (Matt 6.25ff.).
- Trusting he will provide enough:

a. Physically

- daily
 - a. Daily - daily provision of manna in the wilderness in background?
 - b. Sufficient - just enough for today, i.e. not worried about tomorrow
 - c. Day-by-day - i.e. each day between now and the final 'Day'.

b. Spiritually

- Our forgiveness
 - 'debts': Jewish teaching regarded sins as "debts" before God; the same Aramaic word could be used for both.
- Our strength to forgive others
 - 'have forgiven'
 - It's not that God will forgive *because* we have forgiven others, but that God's forgiveness of us necessarily inspires the same behaviour in us. **Matt 18.21-35.**
 - We need God's strength to forgive because it is hard
- Resist temptation
 - God does not tempt, **Jms 1.13.** 'peirasmos' is better 'testing'.
 - "Parallels with ancient Jewish prayers, and possibly the Aramaic wording behind this verse, suggest that the first line means: "Let us not sin when we are tested"—rather than "Let us not be tested" (cf. Matt 4:1; 26:41 in context; cf. Ps 141:3-4)." Keener, Craig S. The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament.
- deliver us
 - Perhaps the stress is on the vulnerability of a disciple. We are dependent on God for help because we are weak.

- Delivered from the power of evil/from evil
 - 'deliver us' can also mean 'preserve us against'
 - A recognition that really tough times come on individual disciples and the church as a whole.
 - Jesus has recently modelled how to handle such challenges in **Matt 4.1-11**.

EXTRA NOTES:

Pattern of the prayer

"Opening address:

Our Father in heaven

Three clauses about God and his worship:

May your name be held in reverence;

May your kingdom come;

May your will be done,

as in heaven so also on the earth.

Three petitions for our own needs:

Give us today the bread we need for tomorrow.

And forgive us our debts

as we too have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us into testing,

but rescue us from the Evil One."

France, R. T. The Gospel of Matthew. NICNT.

God's glory - God's rule - God's will (vv9-10)

Our needs - daily provisions - forgiveness for us and others - protection (vv11-15)

Jewish synagogue prayer used at time of Jesus (Qaddish):

Exalted and hallowed be his great name

in the world which he created according to his will.

May he let his kingdom rule

in your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime of
the whole house of Israel, speedily and soon.

Praised be his great name from eternity to eternity.

And to this say: Amen.