

"This, then, is how you should pray"

Class 1: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

Structure

- "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.*"¹
- Plan for prayer. Pattern on which to expand
 1. God's glory - God's rule - God's will
 2. Our needs - daily provisions - forgiveness for us and others - protection.

Background

Jewish synagogue prayer used at time of Jesus:

- "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."

Context of instruction

- "Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (Matthew 6:8 NIV11)
- Note: This is *how* you should pray, not this is *what* you should pray.

1. Our Father

- Our
 - Plural throughout. Meant to be pattern for group prayer, not just individual.
 - We are joining all believers collectively every time we pray because we are spiritually connected.
- Father
 - Not unheard of in Judaism, but very rare to address God as Father. Jesus did it all the time: Matthew 11:25; 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 23:34; John 11:41; 12:27, 17:1, John 17:5, 11, 21, 24f).

¹ France, R. T. The Gospel of Matthew. NICNT.

- Reveals Jesus wants and expects same relationship he had with his father for his disciples.
- “Jesus said, “Don’t cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.’”” (John 20:17 MESSAGE)
- Some passages shedding significant light on the importance of the relationship of Jesus with the Father: John 3; Romans 8; Ephesians 2:3; Rom 8:15; Galatians 4:6; John 20:17; 1 John 3:1; Hebrews 12:10; 12:4-11.

2. In heaven

- The heavenlies - plural
- Puts together familiarity (Father) with worship.
- We need blend of the transcendent and the intimate in our times of prayer.

3. Hallowed

- Make holy, treat as holy, reverence, to sanctify, to consider holy.
- “..although it is a prayer that God’s name be hallowed, and therefore presumably a request that God will hallow his own name, it is nevertheless a prayer which, when answered, means that we will hallow God’s name. In other words, Christ’s followers are asking their heavenly Father to act in such a way that they and an increasing number of others will reverence God, glorify him, consider him holy, and acknowledge him.” Carson, 72.
- Treat him as one to be respected
- We are not the centre of this picture - God is in the centre.

4. Be your name

- God himself as revealed to humankind (Deut. 28:58; Isa. 30:27). All of who he is.
- ““The name of the LORD,” ...embodies the power of the Lord. His people find safety in that name (Prov. 18:10). The name of the Lord is to be praised (Ps. 7:17; 135:1; Joel 2:26), called upon (Gen. 12:8; Joel 2:32; Zeph. 3:9), exalted (Isa. 24:15), trusted (Ps. 20:7; Zeph. 3:12), or feared (Ps. 102:15; Isa. 59:19). To speak in the name of the Lord is to speak with his authority (Exod. 5:23; Deut. 18:20; Jer. 30:9).”²
- Our prayer is that God be known for his glory and the transformation of the world

Conclusion

- Questions for discussion:
 - What stands out to you from this verse?
 - How might your prayer life grow because of what this verse teaches you about God, yourself and prayer?
- Suggestion: Pray this verse every day between now and the next class
- Could you send me a short video clip of your thoughts on these verses?
- Please send me any questions you have: malcolm@malcolmcox.org

² Mounce, William D., D. Matthew Smith, and Miles V. Van Pelt, eds. MED.