

Let your kingdom come

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[0 : 00] Well, before we begin, let's come again to our Heavenly Father and ask for his help. Heavenly Father, we pray now that as we look at your words again, would you use that to shape us and indeed shape our very words that we might be able to relate to you in a way that you desire.

And so, Father, please take the words of Scripture today. Please help me to preach clearly and faithfully and in the power of your Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. When you pray.

I don't know if that phrase found in verses 5 and 6 and 7 jumped out at you when you first heard the passage being read just now. It certainly did when I first read the passage again at the beginning of this week.

When you pray. In other words, Jesus is assuming we will pray. And upon hearing that, there's a part of us that says, Yes, Lord, I do want to pray. I know I should pray.

After all, that's what a Christian simply is, isn't it? Someone who relates to God in Christ by the Spirit. Someone who prays. But if I'm honest, there's another part of me that says, Oh, maybe praying can wait.

[1 : 22] Wait till my mind feels less chaotic. Just wait till I catch up with the news or compose myself with the right words. But what usually ends up happening instead is that I don't pray.

And when I consider why that might be the case, the first answer that usually comes to mind is busyness. There are so many things to do. There's so much stuff to get done.

There are so many things calling for my attention. Right here, right now. To spend time in prayer, then, seems impossible.

But upon further reflection, that doesn't seem to get to the heart of the problem. You see, here's an experiment. Try sitting down and being still for 10 minutes.

Don't do anything else. Now, this isn't being still while watching a YouTube video. This isn't being still while listening to the radio. Rather, this is to use the words of the psalmist to be still and know God is God.

[2 : 29] Just you and him alone, getting ready to have a conversation. How does that feel? It's difficult, isn't it?

But why is that? One reason is because being still doesn't seem to accomplish anything. It feels like I'm not doing anything useful. If anything, it feels like a waste of time.

I could be learning a new skill. I could be tidying up. I could be preparing for something. And if we're not being productive, we feel bad. To say that I didn't do anything useful today feels like saying I was a useless person today.

It strikes at our self-worth. And so no wonder praying feels difficult. By its very nature, prayer isn't about productivity.

It isn't about achieving a milestone. It's simply spending time with God. But when so much of our age is driven by utilitarianism, which is just a big word that means doing stuff in as far as it's useful, well, praying just doesn't feel useful or efficient.

[3 : 47] And so we have a utilitarianism problem. Another reason is because when we are still, we begin to feel guilty.

If I have to be still, that means I have to face myself. And I don't like what I see. All my flaws, my faults, my imperfections, my transgressions, my incompetence, my insecurities all come to the surface.

And that feels worse when God is the only other person in the room. The one whom we know as holy, pure, righteous, squeaky clean, uncontaminated by sin, perfect in all his ways.

And suddenly, we feel unqualified to be in his presence. God feels unapproachable. And so even though we're in the same room, he feels like a celebrity who only sits in the VIP section and is surrounded by intimidating bodyguards.

And if that's how prayer feels, well, no wonder we are reluctant to pray. We have an approachability problem. And then quite simply, even when we settle down and try to pray, we find something even more disconcerting.

[5 : 12] We stumble over our words. Our mind goes blank because we're not quite sure what to say. A prayer is asking God, our pastors tell us. But what should we ask for?

What do we want? And is it the same as what we should want? We find that we don't actually know how to pray. And we feel ashamed. Shouldn't I know how to pray by now, we might think?

And the shame of not knowing what to pray for drives us away from prayer. We have a shame problem. And so we don't pray. If we do pray, we often end up performing or babbling, even though we don't intend to.

That's precisely what Jesus warned us against last week. We pray simply to be seen and approved by others, just so that we can be certified as good Christians.

We perform. Or we end up using long-winded phrases, empty jargon, and vain repetitions, because we feel like we need to flatter God with our devout religion in order for him to listen to us.

[6 : 22] We babble. Now Nick has already helpfully unpacked those verses for us last week, and so I won't go over them again. But here's the big question we still have.

We know how we shouldn't pray. But in light of the problems I've just named, how should we pray? How can we pray? And thankfully, Jesus has not left us on our own.

Look at verse 9. This, then, is how you should pray. What blessed relief. Jesus is going to show us. And the opening words in what we now call today the Lord's Prayer is Jesus' way of showing us what lies at the very heart of prayer.

Our Father in Heaven. This, Jesus tells us, is what prayer is really all about. Prayer is simply talking to a loving Father whom we are confident will respond.

Prayer is simply talking to a loving Father whom we are confident will respond. It was common in ancient pagan prayers to list a variety of titles that a God had.

[7 : 38] This was to make sure that he or she heard the prayer, just in case they weren't listening and you just needed to puke them a bit. But Jesus says, with the true God, you never have to worry about that.

After all, even if you are a doctor or a pastor, your children never worry about such titles. If they are happy or they need help, they simply call out, Papa.

They don't call you Dr. Wong or Pastor William. And Jesus says, God is your Papa. So just call him that.

But what sort of father is he? I know that for some, the word father does not have positive connotations. Our human fathers can be too busy to be present, too tired to care, too selfish to listen, too weak to change anything.

I understand. I'm a father and I can be all those things. But what sort of father is God? Well, let Jesus tell us.

[8 : 47] For one thing, he's full of power and authority. Look at Matthew 15, verse 13. Jesus says, speaking of the hypocritical Pharisees, Every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.

In other words, he can execute judgment. He has the authority to do precisely that. But Jesus says that's just the starting point.

That doesn't even begin to sum up who my father is. He's not just the person in charge. He's the guy who cares for his creation with great affection.

In the second half of Matthew 6, which we will come to next week, we'll see that he prepares meals for the birds of the air. He weaves clothing for the grass of the field.

He cares so much that he even knows right now when a bird has fallen to the ground. That's Matthew 10, verses 29 to 30.

[9 : 56] And so if he even cares about the lives of sparrows, how much do you think he cares for us? Well, Jesus tells us again. He cares so much that he even bothers to count the numbers of hairs on our head.

And the kind of father who bothers to count the numbers of hair on your head is the kind of father who loves to give good gifts.

It fits with his character. And that's exactly what Jesus will say later on in the Sermon on the Mount. Just flip one chapter ahead of me to chapter 7, verses 9 to 11.

He gives.

But more than that, he knows how to give. From time to time, we might get a gift from a well-meaning friend or a family member on our birthday that wasn't so great or even appropriate.

[11:15] Maybe a book by an author we dislike, or a household item that we have no use for. But God doesn't just give. He knows how to give exactly the right thing, at the right time, for the right occasion.

He gives good things. And this picture of our Heavenly Father also fits right in with our passage. Look at verse 8.

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Our Father knows what we need before we even ask. And sometimes we look at a verse like this and we ask the theological question.

If God knows, why even pray? Now there's a time and place to ask that question. Absolutely. But sometimes we get so caught up in that question, we overlook the point that this verse is really making.

That we are so known and loved by God that He can tell what we need even better than Google's algorithms can. And unlike Google, whose algorithm is there simply to try to advertise and sell more stuff to you, God knows you as a person in order to be gracious and generous to you.

[12:40] This is the heart of prayer. We're talking to God the Father. This kind of Father.

And He hears us. Not because we're impressive or have proven ourselves worthy of His time. He hears us. Not because we're eloquent or intelligent or we look just fine.

He hears us because He is strong yet kind. He already knows everything about us. Our hearts, thoughts, desires, hopes, fears, temptations, confusions, disobedience.

And Jesus says, Come to Him as your messy, sinful self. Talk to Him. Not just as Jesus' Father, but our Father.

I wonder if you noticed that about the Lord's Prayer. The Father that we've been talking about, of course, is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the good news is that Jesus has come to proclaim.

[13:54] Indeed, the good news of Christianity is that Jesus has come to reveal the Father. But more than that, He invites us to know His Father so that you and I can call Him not just the Father of Jesus, but our Father.

Of course, there are important differences between our sonship and Jesus' sonship. His sonship is by nature and ours is by adoption. And yet, that doesn't change the fundamental fact that He's inviting us to be family.

One of the most interesting things in Matthew's Gospel is that whenever Jesus is talking to His opponents or the devil, not once on such occasions does He ever call God Father.

He just says God. But whenever He addresses the disciples, the vast majority of the time, He refers to God as Father.

It's like He's saying to us, as you become a disciple, as you embrace Jesus' culture, you are in fact gaining the privilege to know God as Father.

[15:06] And so don't let God remain a distant stranger. Come to Jesus and you're coming to the Father. In fact, that's what God as Trinity has always been about.

Look at His actions. God the Son, in the person of Jesus Christ, dies and rises again for us. And then God the Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus so that we can be introduced to God the Father and know Him.

God did all that so that He can have the pleasure of hearing our prayers. Just dwell on that for a second. You see, if we see prayer as simply about correctly stringing together a set of religious words, even if it's the words of Matthew 6, verses 9-13, we won't get very far.

But if we understand prayer as addressing another person who wants to know us, it changes our prayer lives. Especially when that other person is the King of the Universe.

especially when that other person is our Father in Heaven, who sits on the throne of grace. God the Father is never too busy, too tired, too selfish, or too weak to hear us.

[16:34] And when we see His heart, we find the heart of prayer. And we can pray as we ought to. We can approach Him without shame and not worry we're not doing something useful.

But what are we to pray for? Once again, thankfully, Jesus has not left us on our own. He provides us with a model in the form of six brief petitions.

And what is wonderful is just how flexible it is. On the one hand, if we're not sure what to pray for, we could just literally recite those exact words from verses 9 to 13.

Not so much as mindless repetition, but as a starting point, like a toddler learning an unfamiliar language for the first time. And of course, that's exactly what the Church throughout history or over the world has often done.

On the other hand, we can use these petitions like a template. Giving us a framework for what we should pray for. One commentator says they are like the scaffolding around the tower of prayer.

[17:48] Each of those petitions become like headings of things we could pray for. It's just like the video that we just watched earlier where we pray the Bible. And we can divide these six petitions into two groupings which arise out of God's basic identity as Father.

Because God is the powerful, majestic, all-authoritative King of the universe, we devote ourselves to Him and His Kingdom.

That's the first three petitions. And because God is filled with fatherly care and tender-heartedness towards His children, we naturally depend on Him.

that's the next three petitions. We pray with devotion and we pray in dependence. And did you notice that's actually meant to be the shape of our lives as a whole?

Christians, by definition, are people who are devoted to and depend on God. And so Jesus is not just training us how to pray. He's training us to walk with Him.

[19:01] It's no accident that the Lord's Prayer is literally right at the center of the Sermon on the Mount. For it reveals the heart of an authentic disciple.

And of course, we pray not just as individuals, we're meant to pray as a community. Notice, it's our Father, our daily bread, our depths.

To pray is to walk with God as a disciple of Jesus, but it will also necessarily mean walking alongside others. That's why we bother to have prayer meetings.

And even when we're praying for ourselves, we never should pray in a way that makes it all about me, myself, and I. And so let's look at these petitions for the remainder of our time under these two groupings.

Firstly, we pray with devotion to our Father. We pray with devotion to our Father. Look at verses 9 and 10.

[20:08] 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.

We'll look at each line in turn, but first I want you to notice that these three petitions are really making the same request from slightly different angles. It's a prayer asking for God's rule to be acknowledged everywhere on this earth.

It's a prayer longing for God's renown to be made known wherever we are. It's basically saying, God, your rule and your renown are already realities in the heavenly realm.

So make what is already reality in heaven a reality on earth. We pray this not because God isn't already king, but we pray this because the reign of King Jesus has yet to be acknowledged and fully expressed in all of creation, which still lies in sinful brokenness.

And so what we also notice is that the first three petitions are future-oriented. It's a prayer asking for God to bring in his new creation as he has promised.

[21:26] It's a prayer calling on God to reverse the effects of the fall. It's a prayer for God's mission to come to completion. Fundamentally, this is a God-centered request, not one centered on us.

We can see this in our first petition. Hallowed be your name. God's name is God himself as he truly is. It's his revelation of himself.

And so his name is already holy. So this isn't a request that his name be made holy, which is what hallowed typically means.

Instead, it's to pray that God may be treated as he really is, that he is not despised or ignored or thought of as just a human being but with superpowers.

No, he's bigger than that. In the Old Testament, Israel frequently gave God a bad name. Both their bad behavior and their weak standing made them a laughingstock amongst the nations.

[22 : 36] And in the book of Ezekiel especially, God promised that he would honor his name both in judgment and in salvation so that all would know who he really is.

Look at Ezekiel 36 22-23 for instance on your screens. Therefore, say to the Israelites, this is what the Sovereign Lord says, it is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I'm going to do these things, that is judgment and salvation, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone.

I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, whom I am proof holy through you before their eyes.

And that's really that petition in an Old Testament light. And Jesus is really casting a light, not so much on our outward conduct, but on our hopes, desires, and affections.

He's causing us to ask ourselves, what do we want above all else? Is it for God's name to be lifted high above all? Or is it something else?

[24 : 04] Well, that will shape our prayers. Take our prayers for the current pandemic. Do we simply pray for a vaccine? Or do we pray that God will use this time to make known who he truly is?

And then we pray, your kingdom come. What are we praying for? We can learn from the early church theologian Augustine.

He famously used the metaphor of two cities to describe the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. The Christian, he says, must understand that there are only two cities in this world.

One is the city of God. The city isn't just God's city because God resides there. It is God's city because his character and his authority define it.

It is ruled and ordered by love and justice and mercy and holiness. And every Christian is already a citizen there.

[25 : 06] But although we hold the citizenship cards, we do not yet reside there. One day, we will be there as God's people in God's place, under God's rule and blessing forever.

But that's still in the future. Instead, every Christian lives in a different city, the city of man. And the city of man is characterized by what is opposite to God.

It's filled with self-love, a lack of self-control, and self-exaltation. This place is temporary, but it's where we live right now.

And the Christian's hope is not that the governments of this world will transform this city into the kingdom of God. This is not a request for God to help us implement his kingdom right here and now, as if God is an external consultant to our building project.

Too often, Christians pin too much hope on political power, don't they? If only so-and-so were elected, we will be protected, our values will be promoted.

[26 : 17] But to do so is to be disappointed. This is not what Jesus is teaching us. Instead, we're to pray that God will finally bring heaven and earth together under the rule of his enthroned king, Jesus, so that the world will finally be what it was meant to be, completely good.

And we pray this because only God can do it, not us. Which then takes us to our third petition, your will be done.

Notice it's not my will be done. In his famous book, *The Costs of Discipleship*, Bonheifer writes this, In fellowship with Jesus, his followers have surrendered their wills completely to God.

But the evil will is still alive, even in the followers of Christ. It still seeks to cut them off from fellowship with him. And this is why they must pray that the will of God may prevail more and more in their hearts every day and break down all defiance.

And so Jesus encourages us to make this petition a hallmark of our prayer. Now what is God's revealed will? The scriptures tell us. Next week, Jesus will say, God's will is for us to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

[27 : 49] In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 3, Paul tells us that it is God's will that we will be sanctified. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 18, we read give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

That's just a sampling. And so to pray all this is to say, God, I surrender to you. I let your demands become my desires.

I want to be devoted to you, my heavenly father who cares for me. And that's what the first three petitions are all about. As one commentator says, it is impossible to pray these petitions in sincerity without humbly committing ourselves to following them.

But if we pray for such devotion, that it naturally leads to us crying out in dependence. After all, it's not possible for us to achieve those things on our own.

God is inviting us to come in faith to us.

[29 : 13] Give us, forgive us, lead us, deliver us. God is inviting us to come in faith to him for what we need.

He's asking us to depend on him for our provision, our pardon, and our protection. Well, let's take each of them one by one. So first, our provision. The Bible affirms that it is God who supplies everything we need.

Anything we possess or enjoy comes freely from the hand of God himself. But for most, if not all of us listening, it can be hard for us to fully appreciate this.

After all, getting what we need isn't difficult, when there are probably two or three supermarkets within driving distance. We are most likely not wondering where our next meal is coming from, since we can just pop down the road to Tapao from the Kopitiam.

We should have at least enough money in our bank account to cover that. But perhaps the Old Testament background can help us. Back in Exodus, Israel were in the desert with absolutely no food.

[30 : 31] They needed God to feed them with manna. And so every single day, this bread fell from heaven. Every single day, God supplied. And every single day, they collected what they needed.

Just enough for the day. And they did this for 40 years. They had to depend on God with total faith. They had to take God at His word that He would provide just as He said.

Just imagine, you go out each morning as a family, hoping to see that the bread will be there. And then you go to bed each night, praying and asking and trusting God that for the following day, the bread will be there again, or else you and your kids will go hungry.

And in Exodus 16, verse 35, we get this little detail. They ate manna until they arrived at the border of Canaan. God provided for them every single day until they crossed over into the promised land. And so it is with the believer. Jesus is teaching us to request with faith that God will provide for all our needs, though certainly not for our greed.

[31 : 53] This He will expand on next week. And this He will do until we cross the border into the city of God. In the meantime, Jesus is teaching us to be dependent, to rest in the knowledge that our sufficiency is in God.

And so for those of us who might be more worried in these days where we have to tighten our belts, well, Jesus is inviting you to cry out to our Father that He will see us through.

Don't be afraid to ask Him. Next, our pardon, verse 12. Forgive us of our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

You see, Jesus knows what it's like to be a Christian. He knows that every day we keep battling with our sin. He knows how guilt and shame can chip away at our souls.

He knows how heavy the burden can be. And so He teaches us, come to God, humbly confess your sin, and joyfully receive His pardon.

[33 : 11] For as we do so, we are actually unburdening ourselves to our Father. Remember, He already knows what we need before we even ask.

So He already knows everything you've ever said, everything you've ever done, everything you've taught. We can't hide that from Him. But now He wants us not to hide ourselves from Him, but to run to Him for help.

After all, He gently reminds us that every attempt to atone for your own sin, every attempt to justify yourself is futile and foolish.

And so don't work yourself up trying to do so. He has provided already your means of atonement and justification. If you humbly come before Him, He is always ready to forgive.

In other words, God simply wants us to apply the gospel day after day as we confess to Him our sins in prayer.

[34 : 18] And receive God's forgiveness forgiveness, true faith in Christ, letting Him wash you clean, make you right, set you apart. At the same time, that means applying the gospel to others as well.

We forgive others as God has forgiven us. Now, the second half of this petition, expanded on in verses 14 and 15, can be quite puzzling.

And so let's tease the meaning out. Jesus is not saying that you earn forgiveness by forgiving others. That's an anti-gospel understanding.

But He is saying that God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others is intimately connected. When we know how much we ourselves have grieved God's heart, what others have done to us will seem small by comparison.

God's pardon received would then become a huge and wondrous thing to us. And in this way, a sinner who has truly received God's forgiveness is always willing to forgive others.

[35 : 32] That's the point Jesus is making. To put it another way, quacking doesn't make you a duck, but ducks do quack. Forgiving doesn't make you a Christian, but Christians do forgive.

Is that you? Well, this brings us to our final petition, our protection, verse 13. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Of all the petitions in the Lord's prayer, this one probably gets discussed the most. After all, James 1, verse 13 clearly tells us that God does not tempt anyone, at least not directly.

So how does what Jesus say fit in here? One possibility, of course, is that we are simply asking God not to lead us into a situation where Satan will seize the opportunity to tempt us.

And I have no objections if you understand it that way. But let me suggest a slightly different way of understanding this verse. temptation, of course, could also mean testing.

[36 : 44] The footnote of your NIV will tell you that. And in the Bible, God doesn't tempt people, but he does test them. You might recall that God tested Abraham in the Old Testament regarding Isaac.

In fact, in Matthew 4, verse 1, just a few couple of chapters before, we read that Jesus himself was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit to be tested. And so, is Jesus asking us to pray that God wouldn't test us?

Well, in light of precedent, it doesn't seem likely. I wonder instead, if Jesus is teaching us to ask God that we wouldn't test him.

He's teaching us to pray, God, help us not to test you. After all, in the Exodus, despite being given manna and water from the rock, we're told that the people tested God in their unbelief by grumbling. And so, similarly here, Jesus is teaching us that after we've asked God for our daily bread, and we've been given it, that we wouldn't do the same thing as the Israelites in the desert.

[37 : 58] We wouldn't test God. We pray that God will protect us from falling into the same sin, and that God will protect us from Satan, who will take every opportunity to persuade us to test our Heavenly Father.

And so, in the space of just three verses, Jesus has covered every facet of our lives. We pray for our physical needs, our spiritual needs, and our relational needs.

As we pray this prayer, we are expressing our dependence on our Heavenly Father in every area of life. But let me just finish by showing you our teacher at work.

Come with me now to the Garden of Gethsemane, and come hear Jesus pray to His Heavenly Father, your will be done. Matthew 26, verse 42.

My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away from me unless I drink it, may your will be done.

[39 : 13] The teacher does what he teaches. He prays in dependence on the Father that he will go to the cross.

But notice what happens as he does so. he endures God's kingdom comes. He endures forgiveness of our debts. He endures we are delivered from the evil one.

And he endures we can call God our Father in Heaven. Jesus himself makes it possible for us to pray the prayer he teaches us.

And when we recognize that, we won't just pray independence. We'll be free to pray with delight. After all, we're talking to the Father who sent his very Son so that we will have a direct line to him.

We're praying in the name of the Son who sacrificed himself so that we're not just talking to dead air. And so we can be prayed, assured that he loves us.

[40 : 19] We can pray, confident our petitions will be heard. Such knowledge can only bring us delight. And that delight moves us to pray with devotion for his kingdom to come and his will to be done.

And that moves us back to dependence, which once again moves us to delight and on and on the cycle goes. This is what prayer really is. As the pastor John Stark wonderfully puts it, prayer is the daily habit of opening your mouth wide for all the fullness of God.

This then is how you should pray. Well, let's do that now. Let's just take a few seconds now. Again, just let everything that we've just heard sink in. And then I'll lead us in a short prayer. And then together, please do join with me wherever you are.

And let's pray aloud the Lord's prayer. Father, thank you so much for your word.

[41 : 41] Thank you that indeed you do pray you do teach us how to pray. And Father, we just pray now that with the words that you have given us that you would help us to take those words and pray them back to you.

Father, thank you for giving voice to the voiceless. Will you help us to pray not like the hypocrites or like the pagans performing and babbling, but indeed help us to pray to you as our heavenly father who knows what we need even before we ask you.

Thank you that you know us so well. And so father, we just pray now that you would continue to work in us and you would arise in us a deep delight to keep praying to you.

And so father let us now pray together the lord's prayer. Thank you. 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.

[43 : 23] For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.