

“THE LORD’S PRAYER”

Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

February 13, 2005

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This morning I would like to share with you from the sixth chapter of the book of Matthew and begin with verse five — Jesus is speaking on the Sermon on the Mount and says:

5 "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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6 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. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 "This, then, is how you should pray:

" `Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. 14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.'

Years ago someone gave my wife Liz a book about 107 questions that children ask about prayer, and I figured that you didn't want all 107 of them. I've got four here.

1. If we talk with God does he always hear us? Good question about prayer. Yes, God always hears us no matter where we are or what we are doing. He is never asleep or far away. Nothing can stop Him from hearing what we say. Good answer. Well, here is another question.
2. How can God hear our prayers from heaven? Well, the answer is, God can do anything. He is all powerful and unlimited. He is everywhere all the time. He also knows everything. He knows what we think as well as what we say, so God can hear everyone's prayers all over the world all the time. And then some child asked this question:
3. Why do some pastors pray long prayers? I think they have a real kind answer – what they could have answered they said; “Pastors pray long prayers cause they have lots to pray about.” That's true. They are responsible for caring for a lot of people and want to pray for the concerns those people have. And again that was a kind answer; I could have given another one, but that's alright. And here's one:
4. Can we pray for animals? Yes! We can pray about anything that is important to us, and that includes animals. God wants us to talk with him about the things that matter to us. He is our friend, and He cares about us. But oftentimes the question that we all ask is: We know

we need to pray, but how do we pray? When we take time to pray it is often times when we ask Christians about their life of prayer, they feel guilty cause they don't pray enough, or they feel like, "Well, I wonder if my prayers are really getting past the ceiling." And we just simply ask, "How can we pray?"

During the Lenten Season if there is one spiritual discipline you can practice that will really help you draw closer to the Lord and really prepare to celebrate the Resurrection is the practice of prayer. And the way that you grow in praying is very simple, you pray. You actually pray, but Jesus, they came to him. Luke's account in the Sermon on the Mount says, "Lord teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

And these were praying men, I mean, they knew about prayer, but they could tell with Jesus, that there was something about his relationship to his Father — they could tell by the way he prayed, the way he talked about his Father, the way he would withdraw when crowds were gathering around that because he was so popular that for him — prayer was not just a priority; it was a have-to and, he enjoyed being with his Father.

This Lord's Prayer, I found out I come back it time and again, these six ways of praying to give us a balanced prayer life, and whether you are praying five minutes or an hour doesn't matter. And sometimes you'll pray one part of this more than the others, but still it's a guide of how to pray. Jesus said first of all we start off with,

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name.

Ken Hemphill has written an excellent book on the prayer of Jesus. He is president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and in his early ministry did a lot of traveling, and he had little girls at home, and what he would do, he would get his little girls a gift when he would get back and as soon as he would get out of the car, "Daddy, Daddy, what did you get us?"

And that ritual was repeated every time he would come back, and one time he was coming back especially tired and they met him with that, "Daddy, what did you get us?" he said, "Just once I would like that you would actually say, "Daddy, we're glad that you are here, we love you, before you ask me for something."

So, the next he came home, he had forgotten about that little lecture he had given to them and sure enough one of his daughters met him and said, "Daddy, I just missed you so much," when he came back home "and I love you," and oh, his heart just melted.

And then she said, "Well, so, what did you get me?" And a lot of times that is the way we are about praying. We know we ought to praise God first, but it is hard. It is a discipline to actually praise him before we get to our , "Alright, Lord, this is why I am here; this is what I need to talk to You about."

But, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name — hallowed means to make holy, that we capture or recapture that sense of awe in the presence of a holy God. In the presence of a

holy God. I think it was Reginald Heber who wrote, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee."

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. That is based on Revelations chapter four it is John's vision of the angels worshiping the Lamb of God upon the throne. When we hallow Him, we praise Him. We can praise Him with the Psalms, the eighth psalm,

Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth.

We praise Him with hymns, regardless of whether or not you have a great singing voice. It sounds great to God. Or just repeat the hymns, "O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hand hath made." We sing, "How Great Thou Art." And we praise Him.

And also when we praise Him, we think of ways that we can thank Him. Jesus had some lepers who cried out to Him for help in Luke 17, and the Lord had mercy on them and healed them, but only one came back. And Jesus said, "Weren't there ten healed? Where are the other nine?" Think about that! The ways that God has blessed you. Take time in prayer. We begin to thank Him for His many blessings.

In your sanctuary for Lent yesterday there was a story of an uncle that had come to visit, and they knew that he was a righteous man, and so the family, who didn't go to church and never had a blessing, out of respect for him had a blessing while he was there over the weekend. When Monday came it was just back to usual, and the four year old asked, "Did God leave?" when they didn't have the prayer. We are to thank God. We spend time praying, *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name.* We start off praising Him, and getting His perspective.

And then we pray, *Thy kingdom come, Thy come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* Jesus spoke about the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure out in a field. Then a man discovered that field, and he went and sold everything he had to get it; or it is like a pearl of great price that when he found this pearl he went again and sold everything he had to have it, because the kingdom is that great. The kingdom is God's rule, God's reign in this world. So when you are praying for *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*, it is the same thing. You are praying for God's will to come to pass in our lives.

A lot of times, this is a prayer I pray for my family, I pray for you. I pray, *Thy kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* And often times when we are praying for God's will, it is a struggle. Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane was really struggling with about going to the cross. No one wants to suffer, but then He had that prayer, *Father, not My will, but Thy will be done.* He had asked that if it was possible that this cup of suffering would pass, but it was not to be. But Jesus went to the cross with courage and power because He believed this was what God had intended.

James Howell in his book, *The Beautiful Work of Learning to Pray: 31 Lessons*, shares about

Madeleine L'Engle who tells of a long weekend while she and her husband waited for a biopsy result. She kept praying, "Please dear God, don't let it be cancer."

Someone suggested that her prayer was invalid. The tumor already either was or wasn't malignant. But she said, "I can't live with that, I think the heart overrides the intellect and insists on praying. If we don't pray according to the needs of the heart, we repress our deepest longings. And so I pray as my heart needs to pray."

Later, after the cancer was pronounced terminal, she wondered if her prayers had been wasted, but she concluded by saying this:

Prayer is love, and love is never wasted. Surely the prayers had sustained me, and are sustaining me. Perhaps there will be unexpected answers to these prayers, answers I may even not be aware of for years, but they are not wasted. They are not lost. I do not know where they have gone, but I believe that God holds them — hands outstretched to receive them like precious pearls. When I pray: *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*, things don't always turn out the way I'd like them to, but there is a peace. There is a peace. I am seeking to do God's will. I am praying for God's will, and it is His hands. We pray, *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*. And these prayers are never wasted.

The first three parts of this prayer focus on our Lord, and then we say, *Give us today our daily bread*. We do pray about our needs. The children of Israel were taught Faith 101 out in the wilderness. They had been delivered from slavery — four hundred and thirty years of slavery — and now God is trying to get them to trust Him, out in the desert, for food and for water. And they begin to gripe. They begin to complain. Have you ever done that? You know, God has provided for you, but somehow you just don't think He is providing well enough and the manna comes. It literally means, *what is it?* And they went out and gathered it, but before long it just became very apparent, that this nation just would not enter the Promised Land, because they just had a trouble with unbelief. And the clinker was when they were ready to go into the Promised Land, they sent out a spy mission, and the people came back — ten of the twelve — saying, "We just can't do it, because they are so great, they are so big, we are like grasshoppers," and so finally, they didn't go. We miss the abundant life that Christ intends for us; we miss the Promised Land when we want to hold on to unbelief and not trust God to give us this day our daily bread.

Dave Ramsey is a financial advisor. Things are a whole lot better for him than they were back in 1998. He remembers very well driving up to the gas station in his Jaguar dressed very nicely, hoping that his gas card would work, because he knew that even though it looked like he was a millionaire and he made a lot of money in real estate, what he really did was, he owed a lot of money. And finally when a bank changed hands and they decided they wanted 1.2 million dollars back within 90 days, he was in trouble.

And he said, "It's very humbling when you lose everything except the clothes you have and your house, and you actually see your furniture leave because they come back and get it." He said it took him some seven years to recover from that day. One of the things that he learned is that he had a case of chronic 'stuffitis.' He said the best way to deal with chronic 'stuffitis' is to have a 'plastectomy.' That is that you take all the plastic and you cut it all up, I mean you are just very radical about that. But he learned in the area of finances that it is important to trust and thank God for what He *was* providing instead of looking for another way for that to be provided.

Over the years I have learned though that “give us this day our daily bread,” is far more than just finances, although it is that; it is to trust God for anything that you need. When the apostle Paul wrote that promise in chapter 4 verse 19, he said,

And my God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

That could be a need for wisdom; that could be a need for strength; that could have been a need for — you fill in the blanks. But God will supply the needs that we have according to His riches and glory. *Give us this day our daily bread.*

And then we pray a prayer of forgiveness. *Forgive us our debts, or our sins, or our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

Peter came up to Jesus and said, “Lord, how often should I forgive my brothers? As many as seven times?” And He said, “No, seventy times seven.” And He told the parable of — it is called The Unmerciful Servant where there was a servant, well he owed his master a great deal of money, in fact it would translate today to about a million dollars. He couldn’t pay it (end of tape). good, don’t have to go to prison, but then as he has been forgiven greatly — you know it is different — it is one thing to owe someone a lot of money, but it is another thing for someone to owe you money. And so he sees someone who owes him money, and he goes and, it’s not a lot of money — maybe twenty dollars it translates — but he not merciful. He has been forgiven greatly, but this other one owes him money — he has him put into prison until he can pay back the debt. The master finds out about it and says, “You have been forgiven this incredible debt, why didn’t you extend mercy as you had been extended mercy?” Then they put him in prison. What is that to say? It is to say, when we pray *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*, we are asking God to do divine surgery in our lives.

Lent, this could be a season where God finally gives you the power to forgive someone that you have needed to forgive for a long time, but also it could be forgiving yourself for something that you’ve felt guilty of for a long time, and God told you that you need to be set free from that. But we realize that un-forgiveness is a prison. It is a prison door that we open up and go in ourselves. But when God works in our hearts and we pray “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” a divine miracle happens, and our hearts are set free to forgive.

And then we pray, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, wasn’t he? Well, how can we pray, “lead us not into temptation?” I believe what this is saying is that, “Lord help us to realize — to be aware when we are being tempted.” Or another way, when the bait is out in the water, and we are the fish that we realize that we are being baited, we are being tempted. Sometimes the temptation that we struggle with is over our calling from God, and God is leading us to do something different, and we don’t want to. And we struggle with it, because it is something that is very different.

Henri Nouwen, who is in heaven now, was a great spiritual writer, and he was a very distinguished professor at Harvard University. Then God began to work in his life, I think in his fifties about this time, and he wrote it this way: “My decision to leave Harvard was a difficult one.”

one.” What he did, he left Harvard to go to a home for developmentally delayed adults and to care for them. A very different calling at Daybreak.

He said:

My decision to leave Harvard was a difficult one, for many months I was not sure if I would be following or betraying my vocation by leaving. The outer voices kept saying, “You could do so much good here. People need you.” The inner voices kept saying, “What good is it to preach the gospel to others while losing your own soul?” Finally I realized that my increasing inner darkness, my feeling of being rejected by some of my students, colleagues, and friends, and even God, my inordinate need for affirmation and affection and my deep sense of not belonging were clear signs that I was not following the way of God’s spirit. The fruits of the spirit are not sadness, loneliness and separation, but joy, solitude and community. After I decided to leave Harvard, I was surprised that it had taken me so long to come to that decision. As soon as I left, I felt so much inner freedom, so much joy, and new energy that I could look back on my former life as a prison in which I had locked myself.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Have you struggled with a calling? Maybe God is trying to get you out of your comfort zone and your struggling. *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

The King James version has, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and glory forever.*

As we have hallowed the name of God, we praise him. We are praying sincerely for His kingdom to come for His will to be done. We pray about our needs and the needs of others, for His daily bread. We pray a prayer of forgiveness. And we pray that God will make us strong through the power of His spirit to resist temptation.

Then we pray, *For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and glory forever.*

In Matthew, chapter 6, verse 33 Jesus said,

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteous and all these things shall be yours as well.

What is that in the context of? Worrying! And so if we seek first His kingdom it’s a great strength, a great guard from worrying.

And then we pray for his power. In Acts, chapter 1, verse 8,

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you to be my witnesses.

We don’t do this in our strength alone. We do it with the power of the Holy Spirit. When God empowers us by His Spirit, He can use our personality, He can use our gifts, and He’ll make

quite a difference.

In the Christian Believer Class this week there was a quote from John Wesley that said the Spirit works in people differently. Some get more exuberant; some have more of a peace, but he said just let the Power mold the clay, let the Spirit work.

And then, *Thine is the glory*. In Matthew, chapter 5 in the sermon on the mount, Jesus said, "Let your light so shine . . . everyone would see good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." That is, that when we have a life that is filled with the Spirit and God's love has been put into action, it glories God. People can tell that Christ lives in you. And that is what people want to see. That's what people *need* today. When they see Christ living in you, they will want to know this Christ that has changed you.

The true goal of praying is to develop a love relationship with Almighty God. I was looking at the History Channel site about St. Valentine. Most of it is legend but it seems like in the third century in Rome that Emperor Claudius had an idea that soldiers would be better off not to be married, so he told them he couldn't get married and apparently St. Valentine went ahead and did these weddings when he wasn't supposed to and Claudius didn't like that and he paid dearly for that. But tomorrow, not only is it the day for romance, but especially remember this Lord's Prayer because you may still think, well, I just don't know how to pray, but take this Lord's Prayer and just take your time. It doesn't mean you have to pray two minutes on each one of these sections of prayer. But it does mean that you take the time and there is a place and that you spend time with your Lord, and you realize, what He wants more than anything is *you*, that He wants to grow in His relationship with you. And when you do that, you will discover a love that is just simply amazing. Let us pray.

Our Lord, we ask today, during this Lenten season, that You would teach us to pray, teach us to come to You. Teach us, Lord, to pray. For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.