**The Lord’s Prayer**

August 5, 2018

Matthew 6:9-15

Key Verse 6:9b,10 “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Last week we learned what a prayer is. Prayer is having fellowship with God; it is the life-breath of a believer, and a communication channel between sinners and God. Heaven moves when we pray, and Satan trembles when he sees the weakest sinner pray. Prayer is the expression of our faith in and devotion to God. Today’s passage is best known as the Lord’s Prayer, but it would be more appropriate to title this prayer “The Disciples’ Prayer” because it is a model for our prayer. Jesus himself did not pray this prayer. Jesus’ high priestly prayer is recorded in John 17. This prayer has been uttered by countless people on many occasions down through the generations: by passengers on airplanes that were in danger, by soldiers in battle, and by people facing natural disasters. Sometimes people pray this prayer without knowing its meaning. It becomes like a babbling. Note that Jesus is teaching us how to pray. Jesus did not just give us a prayer to memorize and recite. It is a model for every prayer you ever pray. What Jesus is giving here is a prayer outline, the basic elements of prayer. You have to develop this into its meaningful expression in every different situation.

Some people lament that God does not answer their prayers, even though they pray a lot. There may be many reasons for this. One is that we ask with wrong motives (James 4:2-3). On the other hand, 1 John 5:14,15 says, “...that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.” When we pray genuinely, according to God’s will, he answers. Let’s learn this kind of prayer as we study the Lord’s Prayer. The Lord’s Prayer consists of mainly two parts. The first part concerns God himself and his heart’s desire. The second part concerns human need. Many people want to begin their prayer from the second part. But our goal should not be to get something from God, but to glorify him. When our relationship with him is right, he generously meets our needs. We should not be self-centered in our prayer, but God-centered, first and foremost. So let’s pay close attention to the first part of the Lord’s Prayer.

I. Our Father God and his heart’s desire (9-10)

**First**, “Our Father in heaven” (9). Jesus taught us to call God “Father.” In the Old Testament God is called “Father” only seven times. In this chapter alone, Jesus calls him Father over 10 times; furthermore Jesus told us to call God Father over 70 times in the Gospels. God wants you to know him like a Father. God is a Person not a power. This is important because I can relate to a person; I can get to know a person; I can have a relationship with a person. The problem is that for many people the word “father” brings up a negative image. It brings back bad childhood memories; it arouses resentment, anger, fear, frustration. They don’t have good memories of the term “father.” If God is like my father, “No thanks, God! If that’s the way God is, I am not interested!” But God is a perfect Father in contrast to all of us who are human and imperfect. Firstly, God is a caring Father. God cares about you. He loves you. He is interested in you. Psalm 103:13 says, “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who honor Him...” Secondly, God is a consistent Father. He is dependable. He can be counted upon. He is worthy of trust. James 1:17 says, “Every good and perfect gift is from the Father who does not change like shifting shadows.” Some people are unpredictable, but God is a consistent father. In a world where everything is changing, in a world where everything falling apart, if there is one thing I can always count on, I can always count on God. Thirdly, God is a close Father. Psalm 145:18 says, “The Lord is near to all who call on him.” When you pray, you don’t get a busy signal. Whenever you say, “I've got a burden, a need I’ve got to talk with you about…” God doesn’t say, “Not now. I’m busy.” He is sympathetic to my hurts. You say, “I am feeling low today.” God knows and he understands completely. He is sympathetic. He is close to the brokenhearted. He saves those who are crushed in spirit. That’s what it means to have a heavenly Father. Fourthly, he is a capable Father. Nothing is beyond His ability; Nothing is beyond His resources; Nothing is beyond His power. Whatever problem you’ve got -- at home, at work, at school -- God can handle it. He is a capable Father. The point is that good fathers take care of their children, and you can count on your heavenly Father to meet your needs because He has unlimited resources to do it.

**Second**, “Hallowed be your name.” Hallowed means holy. Although we have a great privilege to come to God like children to our Father, we must remember who we are coming to. God is the Almighty Creator God. He is holy. He is the Judge of all mankind. It is right for his name to be exalted above every name, and for his name to be honored by all people. As we pray, “Hallowed be your name,” we must bring honor to his name by the way we live in this world. We must study hard in school and reveal God’s wisdom by getting the best grades. We must excel in our performance at work so that fellow employees may see God’s glory and honor him. Our homes must be set apart as holy to God. Our service to God in ministry must maintain the highest moral standard and reveal the Spirit of the living God. Prayer should begin by worshiping and praising God.

**Third**, “your kingdom come” (10). In modern language, it means, “Your dream come true.” God has a dream, a dream in the sense of a vision, a goal for the world. The kingdom of God is that dream – “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.” (Rev 11:15) Whenever we pray for God’s kingdom to come, we are praying for God’s dream to come true. We can rephrase it as “May all your dreams for creation come true.” God has a dream that his will be done on earth perfectly; No more pride and rebellion of sinful men. His justice rolls down like waters and his righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. No more loneliness, no more sorrow and death, no more bullying due to our appearance. His dream is revealed in many passages in the Bible. Isaiah 11:5-9 says, “Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them…They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD.” Revelation 21:2-4 says, “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God…‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’” God wants us to pray for his dream to come true one person at a time, by praying that God’s will be done in each person’s heart. When we begin to pray for God’s dream to come true, great change happens in our hearts. We overcome our self-centeredness. We begin to see ourselves in light of God’s eternal salvation work. God broadens our hearts. In the past, we saw only ourselves and our interests. When we pray for God’s dream to come true, we begin to see others, especially those who are suffering and pray for them.

II. Prayer for our needs (11-15)

In this second part, Jesus teaches us to pray for our needs. We have both physical and spiritual needs, and we should pray for both.

**First**, “Give us today our daily bread” (11). Man is both body and soul. We should not ignore our bodies. In order to maintain our bodies, we need bread. Here “bread” represents our basic physical needs, such as food, clothes, shelter, and so on. God knows that we have these needs, and he wants us to ask him to meet them. Did you notice that we are to pray for our needs, and not our greed’s? When we pray, “Give us today our daily bread,” we are saying that we trust God to supply all the physical needs of our lives, and we affirm that he will take care of everything we need. Notice that this trust in God is for each day. In the first century, bread had to be made on a daily basis. They couldn’t just buy a couple of loaves and put them in the freezer. Like manna that comes once a day, God provides one day at a time. Proverbs 30:8-9 says, “Give me neither poverty, nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.” We must remember every day that God is our Provider. The point of the prayer is not for us to get what we want, but to receive what we need.

Jesus also did not tell us to ask for “my” daily bread, but for “our” daily bread. This teaches us that we should overcome our selfishness and be mindful of others. If we are selfish, our life will be miserable. There is an interesting allegory about the difference between heaven and hell. In the allegory, both places have piles of food. But it can be eaten only with spoons that have very long handles. In hell, they try to feed only themselves, fail and they are miserable. But in heaven, they put the food in others’ mouths and they are all satisfied and happy. We should be mindful of those with material needs, including our unemployed, and those starving in North Korea, and many African countries.

**Second**, “Forgive us our debts” (12,14-15). Look at verse 12. “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Here “debts” means our sins (14-15; Col 2:13b,14). As we need bread for our physical lives, so we need forgiveness of sins for our spiritual lives. Of course, at the moment we believe in Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we become children of God (Jn 5:24). But we still need daily forgiveness. It is because we sin every day, intentionally and unintentionally. Sin breaks our fellowship with God. Sin enslaves us and ruins our lives. Jesus wants us to dwell in the presence of God and to be fruitful as we live in this world. The only way to get out of sin’s power is to receive forgiveness from God. God has mercy on those who come to him. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Then we can have peace in our hearts, through a right relationship with God.

Verse 12b says, “...as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Here Jesus says that as we ask for God’s forgiveness, we should practice forgiveness toward those who have sinned against us. Jesus is very serious about this. He repeated in verses 14-15: “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.” Man’s great problem is that we do not forgive others. People would rather break relationships than forgive others. This is the main reason why there are so many broken relationships: between husbands and wives, between parents and children, and between fellow Christians. Of course, it is natural to hold a grudge against one who hurt us. However, grudges harm the person who holds them the most. We need to forgive others for the sake of our own mental and emotional health. Still, this requires struggle. We cannot forgive others with our own strength. Some people say, “Forgive others, but never forget what they did.” This is not real forgiveness. True forgiveness is to forget the wrong completely, and only remember the good things others have done.

**Third**, “Lead us not into temptation” (13). The world we live in is full of evil. Our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8). He is much stronger and smarter than we are. We cannot overcome his temptation with our own strength. So Jesus taught us to pray. When we acknowledge our weakness before God, and ask his help, he enables us to overcome temptations and live a victorious life. There is a popular saying, “Follow your heart.” But Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” We should follow God’s commands and live according to them, not our heart. That is the way to overcome the temptation.

According to the footnote, the Lord’s Prayer ends with, “...for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” The Lord’s Prayer starts “hallowed be your name,” and ends by declaring God’s glory. In the middle, everything in it is about God. “Our Father in heaven,” that’s God being our loving Father. “Hallowed be your name,” that’s God’s priority. “Your kingdom come,” that’s God’s vision. “Your will be done,” that’s God’s purpose. “Give us today our daily bread,” that’s God’s provision. “Forgive us our debts,” that’s God’s pardon. “Lead us not into temptation,” that’s God’s protection. And, “yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever,” that’s God’s preeminence. The Lord’s Prayer teaches us to pray and live with a deep desire to glorify God. It teaches us to pray and live according to God’s will. Then we can grow in God’s image. May the Lord’s Prayer be the principle in our personal lives, families, community, and nation.