

Week 14 – The Lord’s Prayer Pt 2 – Matthew 6:11-15

Scripture Reading: 1John 5:13-15

Introduction

This week we are continuing our look at what we know as the Lord’s Prayer where Jesus taught his followers how to pray

And this prayer is truly amazing as a pattern for our prayers as it is able to cover the entire spectrum of life’s concerns in these six petitions covered by just 52 words – actually 82 words if you count Jesus’ amplification of the idea of forgiveness found in verses 14-15

We saw last week how our priority should be to put God’s interests first when we pray as we saw that our focus must first and foremost be on God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will

Those thoughts and intentions must form the foundation of our prayers and, even if we don’t always pray specifically for those things in those exact words, concern for God’s glory and sovereignty must direct every prayer we utter

There are some well-meaning folks in church world who believe that our prayers should stop right there because to pray “I,” “me,” “my” prayers causes an inappropriate shift in focus from God to ourselves

And to pray for oneself makes one self-centered rather than God centered which we should never do

But as we are going to see this morning, Jesus teaches us to come to God with three petitions that encompass all the needs we will ever face as followers of Christ

Because our heavenly Father stands ready, willing, and able to provide for his children and he delights in having them come into his presence and pour out their needs to him

Let’s take care of a bit of housekeeping before we dig in concerning the last half of verse 13 which says:

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen

In our ESV Bibles that doxology is contained in the footnotes and in other versions, like the NASB, it’s found within the steam of the text but placed within brackets

And that’s not because it says anything that is **un**biblical but because those words appear to be **extra**-biblical because they aren’t found in the earliest and therefore the best manuscripts

In fact, those words don’t appear until sometime in the late 1st or early 2nd century

There are explanations for the apparent addition that would take us on a bit of a rabbit trail but perhaps the best way of looking at it is that the doxology simply seems appropriate as it closes out a prayer that otherwise seems to just dangle at the end

Still, there is nothing unbiblical contained in those words making it “wrong” in any moral sense because reiterating our wish for God’s kingdom, power, and glory can’t be a bad thing

But since the doxology isn’t likely a part of what Jesus taught and doesn’t really add much except a tidy ending we will not be considering it today

If you are taking notes, we will start by considering the petition for our physical needs in verse 11

Then we will look at the petition regarding the forgiveness of sins in verse 12 and the amplification of it in verses 14-15

And, lastly, we will look at the petition for moral victory found in verse 13

So, without further ado, let’s consider how a follower of Christ should properly pray for themselves

And again, we are going to see as we’ve often seen during this study of the Sermon on the Mount there may well be more to these three petitions than we see at first glance

I. Physical Needs

I invite you to join me in Matthew 6 and look with me at verse 11 [**Matthew 6:11**] (page 811) where we will consider the petition for our physical needs

Give us this day our daily bread

That petition readily brings to mind God's provision of manna to the Children of Israel in Exodus 16 when God sent them the food they needed but only for the day at hand so that they had to rely on him each and every day

And what Jesus presents here seems to be a straightforward request that is easy to understand

But, believe it or not, the word "daily" has proven to be a source of controversy among linguists because the precise meaning of it has been difficult to determine

In fact, Matthew 6:13 is the only place where the word is found in all of Greek literature

There is one other instance where experts believe part of the word is present in what appears to be a grocery list and the context it is found in there has led to the impression that means "the day that is coming" or "the day that is before me"

Therefore, praying this petition in the morning would mean "today" and praying it in the evening would mean "tomorrow" in both cases one would be petitioning God to provide for the day ahead

And, while this admittedly seems to be a distinction without any significant difference, it does open us up to the idea of Jesus being the bread of life as we see in **John 6:35** and how he is our provision for eternity which is the ultimate of all tomorrows

Still, the primary meaning is that God wants us to come and ask him to meet our physical needs each and every day

We are blessed to live in a time and place and within circumstances where we don't have to be overly concerned about whether or not we will have something to eat

But in Jesus' day, laborers were typically paid at the end of each day for the work they had done that day and the pay was low enough that there was rarely a chance to amass any kind of savings so that each day's pay purchased that day's food

And without much in the way of food preservation it's easy to understand just how meaningful the prayer "Give us this day our daily bread" would have been

It's within that context that Jesus taught his followers the importance of learning to rely on their heavenly Father to meet their physical needs

But we must never allow the ready availability of food – or anything else – lull us into thinking that we are self-sufficient and that God isn't still the one who provides for our needs daily

Just look at the account of Job or of the rich fool who forgot God and planned to build bigger barns if you need to be reminded that everything we have is dependent on God first graciously giving it to us and then allowing us to keep it

Such ingratitude is a gross insult to God

The first lesson we need to learn from this petition is that **we must develop a true, daily dependence on God**

Jesus knows how much that chafes our sense of independence and that's probably why this petition is first on the list of self-ward petitions

Paul asks in **1Corinthians 4:7** – *What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

When we recognize that God is the source of all that we have we also must face the reality that he doesn't owe us anything at all and that God would not be guilty of injustice if he were to withhold his blessings

James tells us in **James 4:2** that we have not because we ask not and that is so often true simply because we are stiff-necked and think we can get by on our own

Or we forget that God is the source of all good things and take his gifts for granted until he withholds them or takes them away and then we begin to question his goodness

Again, God stands ready to furnish our needs but he wants us to recognize his provision and ask

That brings us to the second lesson of this petition – **we are to ask for our needs** not our wants or our “greeds”

The fact that Jesus uses the imagery of “bread” indicates that he is talking about the necessities of life and not the luxuries – we are to pray for bread not cake

And God wants us to bring our everyday needs to him even if they seem trivial to others

I once had someone approach me and ask me to pray for a need of theirs and they began by saying “I know that you will probably think this is silly but would you pray for...” and I think their request was about a relatively minor car repair

But God doesn’t think those kinds of things are trivial if they are needs we have – and reliable transportation is no small matter where we live

Delight in the fact that just as there is nothing that is too big for our God to handle there is likewise nothing too small for him to care about if it concerns our life and health and well-being

The third lesson is subtle enough that we could easily overlook it – **God expects us to pray for each other** as well as ourselves

Notice that Jesus taught his followers to pray “Give us” not “Give me”

There is an implied command there to be mutually concerned about each other and to pray for each other’s needs

Depend on God each day and ask him for the things you and those around you need God cares about your physical needs and he wants to provide for them – all you have to do is ask

The second self-ward petition is found in verse 12 and it really contains two petitions –

II. Forgiveness of Sins

The first one is explicit, for the forgiveness of our debts, and the second is implicit, for a forgiving spirit toward others

Matthew 6:12 reads – *...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*

And Jesus goes on after he completes giving his pattern of prayer to expand upon the point of forgiveness in verses 14-15 which read [**Matthew 6:14-15**] –

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

It should be obvious that the “debts” and “trespasses” referred to in this petition are synonymous with sins – with offenses first against God but also against man

So what Jesus is saying in verse 12 is that we should ask God to forgive our sins against him in the same way that we forgive the sins of our fellow man against us

That presents us with a frightening prospect that we’ll get to in just a minute but there is something we need to understand first

The first thing we need to be sure we understand about this petition is what type of forgiveness is in view

Jesus does not mean the forgiveness that occurs at the moment of salvation and that by forgiving others a person can be saved

This prayer is for those who have already been saved through accepting Christ which is the only way to be saved

So that what we have in view is the forgiveness of ongoing sin that damages a believer's relationship with God
The unfortunate but very real truth is that Christ-followers continue to sin and every sin we commit results in a rift between us and God – just the same as offenses create rifts between us and our fellow men
Therefore, we need to be continually forgiven in order to restore a healthy relationship

And that's what makes this petition truly ominous

Because, if we pray these words with an unforgiving spirit toward our fellow man, we are asking God to not forgive us

Actually, this is the clear teaching of Scripture anyway

Jesus has already said much the same thing in this Sermon on the Mount when he said in **Matthew 5:7** –

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy

Which as you will recall actually means “for they **and they alone** will receive mercy”

The same truth is taught in Matthew 18 where Jesus told the parable of the servant who refused to forgive his fellow servant a small debt after his master had forgiven his huge debt

And picking up the account in verse 32 we read [**Matthew 18:32-35**]

*“Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. **So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.**”*

And James teaches the same thing in **James 2:13** when he says that judgment is without mercy to one who shows no mercy

There are two attitudes that should never be found in a follower of Jesus Christ

First, they should never say “I can't forgive” and second, they should never say, “I won't forgive”

The first is a statement of ability and the second is a statement of will and both of those should cause flashing red lights and sirens when we think them or hear a person who claims to be a believer say them

Jesus isn't talking here about the person who is struggling to forgive

He's not talking about the person who has been freshly wounded and who has not had the time to properly process the offense and is therefore unable to respond with genuine forgiveness

Likewise, he isn't talking about those who have genuinely forgiven someone and who has something happen that causes the old feelings of bitterness, resentment, or hatred to well up once more to be tamped down by forgiving once more

Rather, Jesus is talking about the person who insists on keeping a death grip on his grudges

The person who rehearses his wounds, nourishes his hatreds, and even delights his feelings of malice toward another

Sadly, there are people in churches all around the world who actually find at least a part of their identity in the offenses they harbor and many more who claim that the sins committed against them are simply too grievous to be forgiven

And they proclaim, “I simply cannot forgive”

In Luke 7:47 Jesus said that the one who has been forgiven little, loves little so the person who says that forgiveness is impossible for them should definitely ask themselves if they are sure they are actually saved

Because, if they truly have no ability to forgive it may well be because they have never truly been forgiven and an unforgiving spirit is a powerful testimony to a lack of personal acknowledgment of and repentance for sin

For when we come to realize the depth of our sin and why Christ needed to die on our behalf and how even after we cry out for salvation we recognize that we continue to need to be forgiven each and every day, it should be impossible to deny another what we know we so desperately need ourselves

Pastor John **Stott** had it just right when he said –

“Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offense against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling. If, on the other hand, we have an exaggerated view of the offenses of others, it proves that we have minimized our own.”

It’s reasonable to ask the person who cannot forgive the sins of another if they have ever recognized their own personal debt of sin before God because, without that recognition, they cannot be saved and with it, they should not be able to rationalize their refusal to forgive

Forgiveness isn’t easy and we need God’s help to forgive so we must ask for his help every day but forgiveness for a believer isn’t optional and God doesn’t allow us the luxury of holding onto our grudges toward others

In the final petition of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus turns to the subject of moral victory

III. Moral Victory

Look with me at verse 13 [**Matthew 6:13**] – *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

At first glance, and possibly after a long look, this last petition seems rather strange

And it seems especially odd to those who are familiar with **James 1:13** which says –

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

If God doesn’t tempt us and God cannot be blamed for temptations that come our way, which James makes perfectly clear, what does Jesus mean by this petition?

There are Bible scholars who have pointed out that there is a difference between a temptation that could lead someone to sin and a temptation that is more like a test of the validity of one’s faith

And in most of the instances of the word translated as “temptation” here, testing or a trial meant to reveal genuineness or purity or strength is meant

Therefore, they say, the meaning of “Lead us not into temptation” means “Keep us away from temptation that will cause us to fall into sin”

Those scholars may well be correct in their assessment but it seems to leave us with some unsolved difficulties

After all, God regularly tests his children and this testing is a necessary part of our spiritual and moral development

And the unfortunate reality is that we often learn more by our failures than we do by our successes so, again, we are left to wonder what Jesus means here

I believe a reasonable explanation that is actually quite simple is found in viewing the negative half of this petition, lead us not into temptation, as an expression called *litotes*

Litotes is a figure of speech that expresses something by negating the contrary

An example of this would be the expression that the apostle Paul used in Acts 21:39 that he was “a citizen of no obscure city” meaning that his hometown of Tarsus was a very well-known and important city

And we use litotes all the time when we say things like “no small feat” or “they’re no slouch” meaning of course a big accomplishment and someone who excels

Another biblical example is found in **John 6:37** where Jesus says,

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

If we view that last phrase as a litotes and negate the “never cast out” we are left with the understanding that Jesus is saying “whoever comes to me I will surely keep in”

All of that is to say that viewing the negative half of the petition as litotes means we negate the “into temptation” and are left with the request meaning lead us away from temptation or lead us “into righteousness”

So we ask God to protect us and lead us into situations where we will be protected and kept righteous, knowing that we will therefore be successfully delivered from evil

This petition reminds us that we are prone to sin and none of us is immune from falling into sin

Therefore, just as we acknowledge our daily dependence upon God for our physical needs, likewise we are dependent on him for spiritual and moral sustenance

There is perhaps nothing that is more dangerous to the spiritual welfare of a Christ-follower than the mistaken belief that they are beyond failure in the area of succumbing to sin

And yet we are prone to step boldly or blindly into the fray without ever stopping to seek God’s protection for the day Believers are lost to Satan and he knows they will never be his so his strategy is to discourage us, to defile us, to defeat us, and ultimately to devour us by causing us to lose our effectiveness for God by causing us to sin

As mere mortals we are no match for him

Failing to see our own moral weakness and vulnerability is one of the most careless things we can do because it sets us up and makes us ripe for the enemy to pick us off

Conclusion

It’s not unusual to discover that God wants our worship we would reasonably expect that

The truly amazing thing is that God desires our prayers and wants us to come to him so that he can meet our needs

As we come to the end of this prayer that the Lord said should be the pattern for our prayers we are left to face how well our prayers match the pattern

When we come into God’s presence are we most concerned with his glory?

Do we frame our prayers with concern for his reputation, his sovereign working in us, and with his will?

Are those things even a concern as we pray?

And what do we pray when we turn our prayers toward ourselves?

Do we acknowledge our daily dependence on God for our physical, spiritual, and moral needs?

Are our prayers rather self-centered affairs or do we take into account the welfare of our spiritual brothers and sisters?

If the doxology that was lately tacked onto the end of the prayer has value it’s in the sense that it causes us to acknowledge that this is indeed God’s kingdom and that he is all powerful and that God alone deserves all glory

It’s only fitting that we approach him rightly so let’s ask him to guide our prayers

Let’s pray