

UNEDITED DRAFT

Last week we Jesus taught us how important it is to sit at his feet and listen to his Word. We talked about the story of Mary and Martha. Martha was busy and distracted by many things. Mary listened to Jesus. She chose wisely. So Jesus taught us: First thing first. I mentioned how in order to stay close to God, we need to be in close communication with him. We speaks to us in his Word. We respond to him in prayer. Last week we didn't talk about the prayer part. Today we'll focus on that part.

So last week Jesus taught us to listen. This week he teaches us how to speak to him.

Luke 11:1-4 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Maybe we could just pause here and note: we need to learn how to pray. Jesus' disciples observed him pray on many occasions. But they weren't sure themselves how to pray. So they asked him.

Many people are shy about praying before others. If I announced that I was going to randomly ask one of you to stand up and lead us in prayer, you would go into a cold sweat hoping I don't call on you. Prayer, especially leading others in prayer, is very intimidating for some. They think the words must be just right, and they should be poetic. But the Bible simply says this: Prayer is talking to God. Communicating. Just say what's on your heart using the normal language you always use. God just wants to listen to you, he's not going to critique your style.

My goal today is not to make you feel guilty about prayer. And certainly not to increase your self-consciousness about prayer. I just want you to understand prayer as Jesus taught us. What would please God regarding the content? Jesus lovingly taught his disciples how to pray:

He said to them, "When you pray, say: " 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.' "

Maybe you noticed that the prayer is different than the way you memorized it. This is because Luke relates an abridged version of the Lord's prayer. The full version is in Matthew's Gospel. It's also possible that Luke relates a different time when Jesus taught his disciples to pray. If you compare the two accounts, you'll notice the setting and circumstances are different. Isn't it possible that Jesus taught them to pray on more than one occasion?

By the way, even if you look at the full version in Matthew's Gospel, you will still note something is missing. It's the ending: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen." Why do we add these words if Jesus didn't say them? We include them because these words are absolutely Biblical and God pleasing. In fact, if you read 1 Chronicles 29:11 you'll find where these words come from. So rather than an abrupt ending, we conclude with a word of trust and praise.

In any event, we need to keep in mind that Jesus is teaching us here a sample prayer. A way to pray... not THE way to pray. Jesus certainly never intended that these words be recited back

mindlessly. Rather he wants us to pray keeping in mind the main things that he outlined in his prayer. He wants us to pray from the heart, and the prayer he gave us reminds us of the content or essence of what he would have us pray from the heart.

With that, let's take a very brief look at this prayer. I'm going to spend a lot of time on the first word of the prayer, and we'll talk about all the rest very briefly. Jesus said that when you pray, address God as FATHER. We dare not overlook that word. When Jesus taught his disciples this, it was revolutionary. None of the rabbis or religious teachers of the day addressed God as Father.

Yet Father is the term Jesus taught us to use because Father is the term that accurately reflects our relationship with God. He didn't teach us to pray "Dear almighty God, great and powerful!" nor "holy judge of all the living and the dead." Nor did he teach us to pray, "Dear buddy and friend." He taught us to pray to "our Father."

The reason that you address him as Father is because that is his relationship with you. He is your father, your daddy, and you are his dearly loved children. What established that relationship? Why is he not the scary Creator whose will I have violated? Why is he not the holy Judge whose laws I have broken? Actually, these both describe our relationship with him by nature. He did create us to be holy and perfect, and we haven't kept his will. How terrifying! He is a righteous judge and we are guilty sinners. How horrible! We do deserve his anger and punishment for eternity. But thanks be to Jesus and through Jesus alone, our relationship with God has been changed. Our status before God has changed.

Jesus came into our world and he was what we are not. Holy, blameless, perfect. The Father as pleased with his Son. But Jesus didn't enter our world to show off to us how it's done. Nor did he come to shame us. He came to save us. That life he lived was for us. The death he died on the cross is the death you and I should have received. But since he was punished for us, our guilt was removed and we were adopted into God's family. You are an adopted son / daughter of the almighty God. So you get to address him as Father, Papa, Daddy. Because that's who he is for you in Christ Jesus.

So listen: If you are uncomfortable in prayer, if you are infrequent in prayer, do you know what will change that? Get to know your Father better. The better you know him, the more you will want to talk to him. The better you know him the more comfortable you will be in talking to him.

Imagine a young boy who is an orphan. He grew up being abused, mistreated, put down. Whenever he spoke he was noticed and when he was noticed he was smacked. But then he is adopted by a loving father. His new father promises him: "I will always treat you with love. In fact, I already love you so much, that there is nothing you can do that will make me love you more. There is nothing you could ever do that will make me love you less. I will protect you, I will provide for all your needs. I will be there for you whatever your need. I want you to talk to me whatever is on your mind." You can imagine the boy might be hesitant to talk at first. But as time goes on and he experiences his father's love and he gets to know his father better and better, he opens up and speaks frequently and openly with his Father who loves him.

That's how you speak with God. And the better you get to know him, the more frequently and freely you will speak to him. How do you get to know him? First thing first. Time with him in his Word. Reading, memorizing, meditating on it, Bible class, church. Get to know your Father and watch your prayer life change.

Do you want to learn how to speak to God in prayer? Find a good, loving, caring father who really takes time with his kids. Then watch how the children talk to their father. That's how you can talk with your heavenly Father.

Yesterday morning, Micah was at the table eating breakfast. He was enjoying a gourmet frozen waffle (we had even toasted it for him.) Meanwhile, I had made some fried eggs for myself. I sat down to eat my eggs, and Micah said, "Dad, give me an egg." So I gave him some of my eggs. That's how you can address your Father in heaven! Micah didn't even bother being overly polite. He had a need and he trusted I would meet it, so he asked without wasting any words. He didn't say, "Father, I humbly beseech thee, please grant an egg to thy humble servant." Just "Dad, give me an egg." When you know your heavenly Father well and trust him implicitly, you'll just say what's on your mind.

Perhaps you've heard the reminder to keep your prayer life balanced. Say prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. But the truth is, you'll automatically say all of those kinds of prayers when you know and trust your heavenly Father. On rare occasions my children will say, "You're an awesome Dad!" That's called adoration. If you know you're heavenly Father you will adore him, that is, praise him. When my kids do wrong, they will sometimes admit and say they're sorry. That's called confession, and when you know your heavenly Father really well, you will naturally confess your sins to him, knowing that he already sacrificed his Son for you to pay for that sin. When I gave my son an egg, yesterday morning, he said, "Thanks, Dad." When you know your heavenly Father, you'll naturally remember to thank him too. And I already told you about the supplication: an egg. When you know your heavenly Father, you will ask freely knowing he will give what is best.

At this point, there may be someone thinking, "I have prayed, and God didn't answer!" God always answers. He promises he always will. Like human fathers, our heavenly Father sometimes answers Yes, sometimes No, and sometimes Later. Because he sees your whole life and your whole eternity, and he sees how your life interacts and influences every other human you come into contact with, God doesn't always say, "Yes" to your requests. Sometimes it's a no. Sometimes he'll give what you ask, but not right now. We do that with our children, don't we. If one of my kids asks for a 5 lb bag of M&M's at Walgreens and wants to eat the whole bag, I will say no because I love them. Or I'll give them something better: A banana. They just don't understand that it's better. Same with our heavenly Father.

So in view of this most important point: God is your Father. Pray to your father in heaven... let's really briefly look at each of the requests that Jesus taught us in his example prayer:

Hallowed be thy name

The word "hallowed" means holy. Holy means set apart... in a class by itself... distinct and set apart from this sinful world. This request reminds us that our God is holy and we will address him and consider him as holy. He is set apart, distinct, in a class by himself.

Thy Kingdom come. Our God is a King. He rules over all. An the king is your Father! The reign is not always evident this side of Judgment day. We look forward to his eternal kingdom of glory when all wrongs are made right, where justice reigns, where all our needs are fully met, where no tear will ever be in our eye, where all is good and perfect and right. But I don't think that's the main thing in this prayer. Already now, God's kingdom is established. Jesus said that his kingdom is not of this world. He said the kingdom of God is within you. The place Jesus rules in the hearts of all believers. The unbeliever declares, "Jesus shall not rule here!" And he does not. So we pray in this request that Jesus would continue to rule in us by faith, and that he would come to rule in the hearts of many others as they come to faith and trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

[Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.]

Give us this day our daily bread. Recognize God is the giver of all we need for body and life. Rely upon God for your needs today. And if you have more than you need for today, be God's instrument in answering this prayer for another. Be generous.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

This request reminds us that sin is essentially a debt. (That's what the original says.) Do you dread getting your credit card statement? Then you look at all the things you charged. All the things you owe money for. And worst of all the total amount owed. Can you imagine if God sent you a monthly statement for all of your sin-debt? How many pages long do you think the statement would be with all your sins itemized for a month? You take a closer look, and you see that God included on that statement that sinful thought that fled through your head at 3am in the dark of night. And you think, "Oh, come on, you saw even that? You're up at 3am? I don't believe it!" And God says, "You don't believe me? Well, there's another sin... you can expect that on your next statement." And then the total amount owed is always listed. It never changes. Because there can only be one payment for crossing the living, holy, almighty God: DEATH.

We fail to appreciate the massive amount of sin we have on our account. We are keenly aware of our financial debt, and conveniently unaware of our spiritual debt.

But then Jesus our great Savior comes along with his perfect life without sin. And then he dies on the cross, because the wages of our sin is what? Death.

In view of that incredible, undeserved forgiveness, God calls you to forgive anyone that sins against you. Only in view of what Jesus did for you, can you find the power to forgive those who sin against you. There's so much more we need to say about this, but we'll have to save it for another sermon.

And lead us not into temptation [But deliver us from evil]. God leads no one to sin. But we pray here that he would take us by the hand and keep us safely in his arms when temptation and evil come our way. Again, notice what a child does when he trusts his parents. When there is a potentially dangerous situation, he walks right up to mom or dad, and grabs their hand, or holds on to their leg. Now you have a picture of what we're praying when we say this prayer.

Jesus has taught us to pray. There is so much more to say, but we're out of time. Some Christians call this prayer the "Our Father" rather than the Lord's Prayer. So let's let that thought be the one we take with us. Your Father in heaven loves you more than you can imagine. He wants to give you every good thing. He already gave you the most he could when he gave his Son to live for you and die for you on the cross. Get to know him better. Focus on him, and talk. That's called prayer. He loves to hear from you. Amen.