

The Christian's Prayer Template

Call to Worship: Psalm 106:1-5

1st Scripture: Matthew 6:5-8

2nd Scripture: Matthew 6:9-13

Hymn #716- *Showers of Blessings*

Hymn #534- *Sweet Hour of Prayer*

Hymn #533- *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

Introduction

We've been considering another important section of the Sermon on the Mount, where our Lord has been addressing the wicked behaviors of the religious leaders, especially those behaviors which concern acts of worship. And as we have seen, after exposing the self-glorifying behaviors of the Scribes and Pharisees, our Lord then moves on, in each case, to address the God-honoring ways, in which, we should act. We have already considered the matter of "charitable deeds," and last time, we began to consider the matter of "prayer." This morning, in our consideration of our Lord's model prayer, we continue where we left off last time, as a positive response to the wrong way, in which, the heathen nations pray.

We might organize our Lord's format here, in the following way:

1) He exposed the ungodly way, in which, the religious leaders prayed, who sought to flaunt their long, lofty and wordy prayers before men, so that, they might receive the praises of men, and thereby, gain their only reward.

2) Contrary to this, we were told to pray in the private/secret place, where God alone sees, and God would then reward us openly.

3) Following this, we were cautioned against praying as the heathen pray, offering up vain repetitions, thinking that by their chants and many words, that God would hear them. To this end, we considered the fact that God is much more concerned about sincerity of heart than form, when it comes to our praying.

4) Finally, this morning, we move on to consider the positive contrast to this, where our Lord presents us with a model prayer; a template, as it were, to help govern the quality and focus of our prayer times. An to this end, we will get a clear glimpse of the type of heart, those in the Kingdom of God, ought to have, in keeping with all that we have gone over (in the Sermon on the Mount) thus far, as revealed in the content of our prayer lives.

I. The Christian's Prayer Template

In contrast then, to the self-serving heathen, who attempt to reach their distant, non-relational gods, with their repeated chants, the prayers of God's children, ought to be focused and personal, greatly influenced by their concern for the Kingdom of God, of which, they are truly part, and not primarily saturated with the things of this world.

Let us work through this prayer template then, line by line, drawing out the meaning of each statement, with the intent, of seeking to discover a few general principles that ought to direct the quality and sincerity of our prayer lives.

1) "Our *Father* in heaven." Again, definitely not to be glossed over, our Lord emphasizes once again, the intimate and personal relationship, which God has with His people, when He calls us to address Him as, our *Father*. This is the fourth time, in this section on prayer alone, that our Lord speaks of God as our *Father* (read verses 6&8). Contrary to the heathen gods, the true and living God is indeed personal. Yes, He is infinite and transcendent; He is far bigger and greater and holier than we could ever imagine, but, He is also near, close, intimate and personal, with those who are His true children. When our Lord adds the statement "in heaven," to this address, it is not to emphasize distance, so much, as it is to highlight the fact that we have a Father, who is not of this world; one who is infinite and eternal, our God and Creator, all powerful and almighty, able to do all things, and yet, willing to remain ever close and personal with His people.

This reality alone, brethren, ought to greatly encourage us. You see, our Lord knows that we are finite, and much more, that we are sinful creatures, who cannot naturally come into the presence of our God and Creator. And yet, as citizens of His country; as residents of heaven, through faith in Christ, God desires that we should relate to Him as our Heavenly Father. Again, we revere Him, but we also embrace Him!

2) "Hallowed be Your Name." What ought to be the first and foremost desire of the child of God, who has been redeemed entirely from sin, through the shed blood of Christ? Having been brought from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of light, in Christ; having been washed completely clean and freed from the curse and penalty of our sins; having been welcomed back into fellowship with God, not merely as his acquaintances or friends, but as His

beloved children, forever; and then looking back upon a world, that is by and large, still at enmity with it's Creator, ought to move us in a certain way. And furthermore, having come to realize that we are the glorious design of a glorious Creator, who has no beginning and no end; who existed eternally, when there was nothing else, compels the child of God to grow intensely jealous, for the glory of God to shine forth, over all that is rightfully His.

We look upon this fallen, dark, rebellious creation, of which, we were once part, and we long for God's name to be honored, to be feared, to be respected, to be revered, to be hallowed; to be wholly worshiped and recognized as unique and all glorious, drawing all creatures to bow down, and worship before Him. And so, we pray, Father; blessed Father, set your Name apart as holy, in this Creation that is rightfully yours; hallow it; let it be plastered in every single conscience that exists; let it be engraved on the billboard of every single heart, so that, as the waters cover the sea beds, Your name is hallowed everywhere! Let this material earth, be as Your glorious heaven. Let the honor and glory which angels and cherubim, in heaven, ascribe to You, be ascribed to You, here on this fallen ball of dust, as well!

3) "Your Kingdom come." Again, as citizens of the Kingdom of God, our utmost desire and priority, is to see Christ wholly consummate what He has begun to build, by way of His incarnation, death and resurrection. Unlike the heathen, our hearts are not fixed first on this world. Rather, we long for the completion of Christ's work in this world, and in us. We long for His kingdom to reach its final consummation. And so, we pray in the direction of that consummation, where our blessed Savior and glorious Lord, who has redeemed us, will take His rightful seat on the throne of David, recognized by all, bowed to by all, as He is exalted to His rightful place. We long for righteousness to reign, and for every wicked way, to be extinct; to be incapable of finding a place in this world, and in our hearts, ever again.

4) "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God has a divine will. He has a decreed will, which He has ordained before the foundation of this world, and all things are most certainly moving in the direction of fulfilling that will. And yet, there is much that is contrary to the moral will of God, in the present. There is so much that is contrary to God's nature and character; there is so much that has to be rectified and restored, and God must be vindicated, such that, there are no loose ends in His justice. And so, we pray toward that certain end, as

those who long to see everything on earth, functioning right in accordance with God's moral, revealed will. We long for there to be no residue of anything that contradicts the moral character of our glorious God. We long for the earth to be fully in line with all that is godly and lovely; for God's moral and secret will, to merge into one complete glorious fulfillment. We long for universal obedience, recognition and worship, to be given to God, who deserves all these things. We long for the day, when not a single offense toward God will exist, and all are wholly compliant with the righteous desires of His heart. We pray for His will to be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

5) "Give us this day our daily bread." We have physical and spiritual needs that need to be met. We rely on physical nourishment; food and drink and shelter for the body; and spiritual nourishment; the continuous, daily feeding and drinking upon Christ and all of His glory, so that, we might grow thereby, and move toward our ultimate end. We bring our daily requests before God, who delights in meeting our needs; caring for our bodies and souls.

6) "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." We daily confess our sins, confident that God, in Christ, will justly and graciously continue to pardon us, freely. We still need daily grace, and so, we pray for it. But, even as we pray for forgiveness, we are reminded to look outside of us, toward others, to ensure that we too, have forgiven all who have offended us. As we come to God, seeking His pardon for our incalculable debts, which our sins have incurred, we ensure that we have been willing to pardon others, for their much lesser sin debts against us. By praying like this, we make the connection between God's forgiveness toward us, and our forgiveness toward others. We are compelled to do this, especially, when we pray, because, it is a means of us, giving an account to God, as we seek His daily forgiveness (this will become more clear, as we move onto the next text, Lord willing). Suffice it to say, that we ought to be very uncomfortable asking God to pardon us for our much weightier sins/offenses against Him, if we have been unwilling to pardon others (especially of His children), for their much lighter sins/offenses toward us.

7) "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." As God is all sovereign, and ordains all things that come to pass; as God led the Lord Jesus Christ into the wilderness to be tempted, we know that our temptations and struggles are not beyond the scope

of His preordained will. And yet, it is not wrong (indeed, God will use even our humble prayers), to pray that God would lead us not in the way of temptation. We know that we are weak and ever prone to wander. We are like dumb sheep that would constantly wander away, should God not preserve and protect us from the enemy, who is a masterful wolf. And so, we pray toward that end, and should God lead us into temptation, we can yet be assured, that He will prepare us to endure, and lead us to overcome, even as Joseph did, when Potiphar's wife, sought to lure him in.

And so, we pray, both, to be led away from the path of temptation (should God so will to spare us), and, that we would be delivered from the evil one, who wanders around like a roaring lion, seeking whomever he may devour. We must ever watch; we must be awake and ready, at all times, and yet, apart from God's sustaining grace; apart from the One, "who is able to keep us from stumbling, and to present us faultless before His throne," in Christ, we would be devoured in no time. And so, we pray to be led down safe paths, and to be delivered, as the enemy would seek to destroy us, and to sift us like wheat, so that the church might be divided and cast down.

8) "For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Beginning with a desire to see God's name hallowed, His will done, and His kingdom consummated, our Lord provides us with an appropriate closing to such a "kingdom focused," "God-centered" prayer. "Amen," meaning "truly," or "Most assuredly, let it be done," follows the glorious, emphatic declaration of recognition, that the Kingdom (in its entirety), the power and all of the glory, rightfully belong to God! And so, this closing is a basic, but emphatic acknowledgement of that which is true, just, righteous and proper, in every sense. God, as Creator; God as uniquely holy; God as supremely powerful; God as a glorious and merciful Redeemer, deserves to see every iota of His plan, fulfilled to the uttermost! "For;" It is befitting, it is only proper and right, that you receive Your Kingdom, and that all power and glory belong to You; Most assuredly; truly, Amen!"

II. The General Principles Drawn Out of Our Lord's Prayer Template

1) Our prayers ought to be God-centered, which means that they ought to be "Kingdom-centered," since building, prospering and exalting the Kingdom of Christ, is the primary purpose of God, for this creation.

2) Our prayers ought to begin and end with expressions of desires that are geared, not toward meeting our own needs first, but toward seeing God glorified in the accomplishing of His will; that His name would be hallowed; that His will would be done; that His Kingdom would come...etc. These should be the greatest focal points of our prayers; they should dominate our requests, and our expressions of praise and worship to God.

3) While secondary, we ought to boldly, and yet humbly, make our specific requests known to God. And, in many ways, our requests even, should be geared toward seeking God's help, in meeting our needs, so that, we can better serve His Kingdom purposes. This would include both physical and spiritual needs.

4) We ought to continually confess our sins and short comings to God, recognizing that while He is always more than willing to forgive us in Christ, at the same time, it is appropriate, beneficial and necessary, to confess our sins to Him, seeking His continual forgiveness and pardon, on the basis of Christ's sacrificial merits.

5) We ought to continually take into account, if we have any unresolved conflicts, or open accounts with others, whom we have sinned against, or who have sinned against us. And we ought to seek to rectify any unresolved matters. We ought to ensure that we are not harboring any bitterness toward anyone, and that, we have been willing to forgive those who have sought our forgiveness, and even those who haven't, at least from a judicial standpoint.

6) We ought to continually express our dependence upon God for all things, never for a moment, presuming that we are capable of doing anything, apart from Him. This would especially concern our ability to finish the race that is set before us. We will prevail over the enemy, but only in the strength that God provides. We will be kept from stumbling, if God, by His Spirit, keeps us from stumbling. And so, we ought to pray for continual grace, strength and wisdom for the battle.

7) All in all, brethren, this is very different, both from the prayers of the religious leaders and the heathen, both of whom, were “man-centered,” having themselves and their own ambitions, as the ultimate focal point and end of their prayers. Those who are in the kingdom of God, pray, as those who are *truly* in the kingdom of God. They pray, in accordance with their citizenship. Their hearts are with God and Christ, and their lives are given over to serving His glorious purposes, first and foremost. God is not here for us. We are here for Him...not that He needs us, but rather, we have the wonderful privilege of being used, as vessels for His great honor and glory!

III. Concluding Thoughts

Brethren, ultimately, we don't benefit God in our prayers, or in anything that we do, for that matter. But, we do bring Him the glory that is rightfully His. And as we pray in this type of way (this is a template for us—not primarily meant for mere repetition); as we pray in these general directions, and with this type of heart, we will actually, inevitably, serve to benefit ourselves, as well, because it will enable us to pull back and to see every present circumstance from the proper divine perspective. So often, we grow weary or anxious or despondent, because we pull our minds and hearts out of this, “Kingdom of God” perspective. We get lost in the affairs of everyday life, and forget what this is all about, and where this is all heading, and we lose heart. But, as we seek God in this way, we will be reminded, as well; we will regain the bigger picture and perspective, as it were, and, God meeting us with His grace, will prepare us, yet again, to face another day, such that, we are ready to serve Him, boldly and confidently, in Christ! Our Lord tells us that we can be certain that God will answer our prayers, and grant us our requests, when we pray in accordance with His will. And it is so easy to think, “Well, how can we be sure that we are praying in the will of God?” This template will direct our hearts into the divine will, continually, which will give us great assurance in our prayers. It will keep us praying within the kingdom mindset, and if we are praying within the kingdom mindset, we can be certain that God, whose will is to build and advance His Kingdom, will, most assuredly answer!

2) If you are not a Christian here, this morning, see that Christianity is not merely a confession of faith, or a list of religious rules of “do’s and don’ts”; it’s a whole new kingdom. It is a daily, relational walk with God, having the sincere desire of wanting to please and serve Christ, and to further the advancement of His glorious Kingdom. You see, in the end, nothing in this entire world (nothing!) will last. It will all be dissolved. The foundation of everything in this world will ultimately collapse, and the only thing that will remain standing, is the Kingdom of God. [Ill: Like jumping into a mountain of hay]. Your impending death should convince you of this. You’re nearing your end, friends! Only those who are in Christ, will stand upon solid ground forever! [The Gospel!!!]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25