

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

For today, we're going to return to the Sermon on the Mount, and we're going to come to what is a very familiar passage of Scripture; one of those places in the Bible where many people who have no clue about who Jesus really is have memorized these words, and many say them every day; and we're going to look at them in their context.

What is the context? Well, it's the continuing context of the entire Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus is teaching about a type of "righteousness" that "surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20; NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted). They had let the Old Testament / Old Covenant degenerate into a works-righteousness system (Rom. 9:31-32; 10:3; cf. Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:21), and they justified themselves based on the things that they did and didn't do (Lk. 16:15; 18:9).

This sermon has many themes, but the underlying one is exposing the hypocrisy of that belief system—that's mainly in Chapter 5, Verses 21 through 48; and now, exposing practices that go along with that belief system—that's Chapter 6, Verses 1 through 18, attacking the scribes and the Pharisees rather directly.

We now come to the Model Prayer that Jesus gave to His disciples, in the context of talking about the kind of prayer that the people who heard Him that day had been exposed to all their lives.

Think about Jesus's reason for teaching this prayer. As I said, many who don't even know Christ repeat this prayer by memory; and many Christian groups throughout history have made this passage look as if it's a command to pray this exact prayer over and over, whether it be in personal devotions or in a church service—a public service like this.

Now, it certainly isn't *wrong* to recite this prayer. It's not wrong to memorize this prayer. If it truly expresses your heart, if you can recite it with meaning and genuineness, that's perfectly fine; just as it's perfectly fine to incorporate *any* portion of Scripture in your prayers if you want to—learning to think Biblically is a *good thing!*

But there's an obvious danger in reciting this—or any other prayer recorded in the Bible—frequently. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their formalism and their ritualism, which replaced the reality of what worship was supposed to be in many ways (Is. 29:13).

As we come to this text that you're going to find so familiar—and we're going to look at the first part of it today—remember what Jesus *just said*. These are the words where we left off last time we studied the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 6, Verses 7 and 8—"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."

Let me ask you: Do you think there is even the *slightest* chance that the next thing that Jesus said after those words is something that He intended people to recite by memory, over and over? That can't *possibly* be the main application of this!

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

He's going to introduce this prayer by saying: "Pray then *in this way*" (Matt. 6:9). He *did not say*: "Pray then *in these words*." This is not a *formula*, this is a "model prayer," it's a *pattern* for praying; and our prayers should imitate the characteristics of this prayer—*no problem* if they also include the *words* of this prayer, but it's a "sample" for us, if you will.

It is usually called "The Lord's Prayer"; that title is a bit of a misnomer. This is the "Disciples' Prayer"—this is the prayer that Jesus gave to the disciples. You could argue that if there is a "Lord's Prayer," then that would be John Chapter 17—the prayer that is the words of Jesus that He prayed just before He was arrested and went to the Cross. The point is, putting labels on either one of them doesn't matter. This is a *sample*.

There are characteristics of this prayer that you can appropriately and profitably copy in your own prayers. You'll see some characteristics of it, and I'll introduce these to you now so that as we work through it, you can remember these things:

You'll notice that this is a *brief* prayer. There are three simple parts to it: There's an invocation addressing God—"Our Father who is in heaven" (vs. 9a). And then there are six sort of bullet-point petitions—specific requests covering quite a breadth of subjects; three of them address God (vss. 9b-10), and three of them address human needs (vss. 11-13a). Then there is a conclusion—"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (vs. 13b). The entire prayer is approximately 70 words in all; that's not a lot. And then we're going to add in the postscript, which is Verses 14 and 15.

You'll also notice, as you work through this prayer, that the priority is the glory of God. This model prayer gives *first and foremost* attention to God—to *His* name, to *His* kingdom, to *His* will. Then the human needs that are mentioned here—bread, pardon for sin, victory over Satan—those take second place; that comes *after* you put God in the right place that He belongs in your life. It's foreign to a society like ours to think of praying without first and foremost talking about *our* feelings and *our* desires and *our* needs at the top of the list; but this is the pattern that we *should* follow, as this prayer guides us.

You'll notice also that in just 70 or so words, there is amazing breadth. It's wrapped up in these six pithy petitions. It spans from the glory of God and His eternal purposes in the first three—the three that we're going to see today—to our own needs in the last three; it goes from our physical needs—"daily bread"—to our spiritual needs—forgiveness, etc.; it ranges from our present need for bread to the need generated by our past—the need for forgiveness—to our future need for victory, when the kingdom comes.

And you'll notice that it isn't at all a *selfish* prayer. As a matter of fact, when people are taught to pray this *personally*, there's a missing element to that, because the pronouns are all plural—"us" and "our"—indicating that this pattern for prayer should include our identification with all of the people of God; this is how His people come to address Him.

I'm going to give you a little schematic outline of the entire prayer. We're not going to get all the way through it today, but it starts out with The Target—"Our Father who is in heaven"—that's the beginning of Verse 9.

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

Then there are six petitions that take us through the rest of Verse 9, Verse 10, Verse 11, and Verse 12; and then the conclusion in Verse 13; and as I said, we will include, as connected to this prayer, the postscript, if you will (vss. 14-15).

So let's start out with The Target. The pattern—who do you pray to? Chapter 6, Verse 9—"Pray, then, in this way"—in this manner; here's the sample for you—"Our Father who is in heaven."

Not everybody is entitled to pray that way. Well, I guess anybody can *say* the words, but not everybody has the privilege to address God in this way. This is the *exclusive* prerogative of Christians (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:9, 15-16; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Jn. 3:1)—people who, by personal faith, are "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Rom. 5:1-2).

Now, let's not get things out of place—I know the concept of being "in Christ" wasn't introduced yet at that time; but Jesus is talking to people and saying, "If you are believing in Me, here is the way to pray" (cf. Ps. 34:15; Prov. 15:29; Rom. 4:13). Wrap that up into the whole New Testament—it's for those who are "in Christ" (see Prov. 15:8).

To use the word "Father" for God in the Gospels is *exclusively* reserved for those who follow Him—who believe in Him, who humble themselves before Him, who are in a personal relationship with Him (Lk. 12:32; Jn. 8:42; 20:17).

The idea that God is the "universal" Father over all creation because He made it—there's a certain legitimacy to that; that's not untrue (Acts 17:28-29)—but it's not the way that *Jesus* uses the term in the Gospels. Sometimes He said it when He was talking about a person's biological father—and when He was talking about it, He was always referring to a *legal* and *real* relationship—but sometimes, He used it of the faith relationship, and that's the one who can truly call God "Father" (Gal. 3:26).

Would you notice how Jesus combines, in just a few words, the ideas of "immanence"—or, "nearness"—and "transcendence"—or, "otherness." A couple of big words there, but the idea of "Our Father" indicates He is near, He is with you, He is approachable. This is a personal kind of a thing; He's not far off, you don't have to send off your letter and wait three months for a reply. You can come to God as openly and as warmly as you could approach a loving parent; or as your child could come to you, if you are a parent. Because as His child, in Christ you are an adopted member of His family (Eph. 1:5)—therefore, you are an "heir" to eternal life and blessing (Gal. 4:7; cf. Titus 3:7). Now again, Jesus hadn't taught all those things yet; but when He says it, it all fits together.

But notice, He also says: "Our Father"—"Dad," as Romans explains: you can call Him "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15), like "Daddy," very personal—but He is "Our Father *who is in heaven*." Now for the Greek scholars in the room: yes, I know it says, literally, "in the heavens." That makes it clear that God is to be approached in a spirit of devout, humble reverence (see Lev. 10:3; cf. Ecc. 5:1-2). He *is* your loving Father, but He is *also* and forever "God Almighty" (Gen. 17:1), "Maker of heaven and earth" (Ps. 115:15; cf. Neh. 9:6)—and you get to talk to *Him*! That's quite a privilege!

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

So you dare not approach Him flippantly, or without appropriate reverence and respect. "Our Father" implies God's willingness and His eagerness to listen to you as His child; but "who is in heaven" lets you know: He can and He will answer your requests from a unique perspective! Only He has the sovereign power and wisdom to get every answer to every prayer perfect! And He can do something about whatever situation you pray about.

Here's an interesting thought; I confess I had read through the Sermon on the Mount several times before this thought registered in my head: For all eternity, you can address Him as "Father"—He will always be "Our Father"; we will always be His adopted children—but there will come a day when you will no longer say, "Our Father who is in heaven," because *you'll be there*, and you will be with Him forever!

So we have His transcendence—"in heaven"; His immanence—"Our Father." Now: What do you ask Him? What is the sample of the things to ask Him? "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven'"—now here's the request: Petition Number 1—"Hallowed be Your name."

We don't use the word "hallow" very often. It's not "hollow," it's "hallow." In ancient times, understand that a name was not merely what you put on the tag that you wear on your shirt to identify you and distinguish you from another person. A name was often an expression of the very nature of a person (e.g., Gen. 17:5; 25:26; 27:36; Ex. 34:14). His or her position can be reflected in the name. God's "name" is the most pure and extreme case of a name representing the entire entity. God's name is nothing less than God Himself, as revealed in His works (Gen. 16:13; 22:14) and in His Word (Ps. 138:2).

So, to "hallow" that—or, to sanctify that—means: "to set apart the One who is called by that name," to hold it in utmost reverence, to honor Him, to glorify Him, to exalt Him. To "hallow" God's name is to come to Him with humility, with gratitude, with respect (Mal. 3:16); to come to Him in worship; to bow before Him, symbolizing your submission to Him. It is to acknowledge all that He is. It is to appreciate all that He has done for you, to recognize His infinite and eternal and unchangeable being, and His wisdom and power and holiness and justice and goodness and truth and love and sovereignty. It is to recognize all of that when you say, "Father, hallowed be Your name."

Consider His name. He has a lot of different names in Scripture. "The Name" (Lev. 24:11, 16; 2 Sam. 6:2) is the whole collective of all of this; but in the Old Testament, there are several different names for God.

The primary root for the name of God is "El"—you would spell it as "apostrophe E-L"; that views Him as "the Mighty One," and that name is used in several different combinations in the Old Testament. Amy Grant discovered "El-Shaddai" and turned it into a popular song; it means "God Almighty" (Ex. 6:3)—He is the source of salvation for His people.

The first name that is ascribed to Him, in the very first verse of the Bible, is "Elohim"; that's *plural*. Now, Hebrew does things that English doesn't do. This plural refers to His majesty and the fullness of His power—it's like, "He's *too big* to be singular!" But also,

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

the plural grammatical nature of this word hints at His multiple three-Person existence: the Trinity is thus hinted at, at the very beginning (Matt. 28:19; cf. Jn. 5:18; Acts 5:3-4). Right in the first couple verses of the Bible, you have God ("Elohim") and you have the Word ("God said") and you have "the Spirit"—now, you wouldn't know that, just reading Genesis; but with the fullness of the revelation of the Scripture, we see that from the very beginning, His nature is hinted at in that word (see Jn. 1:1, 14; 2 Cor. 3:17).

There is also "El-Elyon"; that is: "God Most High" (Gen. 14:18-20, 22; Ps. 57:2; 78:35, 56)—He is above all in majesty and power (Ps. 83:18).

So there are several combinations of things built on that root "El," but there are also other names that are used for God. In the Old Testament, you have "Adonai"; that points to God as "Master" or "Lord" (Ex. 4:13; 34:9; Jos. 3:11, etc.). "Adonai" would be the Hebrew word most directly related to the Greek word *kurios*, which is consistently translated "Lord" in the New Testament. It is the word that was most often uttered by Jews whenever they ran across the name of God in the Scriptures, and I want to explain that to you.

Another name you've heard of is the name "Jehovah." Now, "Jehovah" is *not* a name of God. It's not in the Scriptures. It is a made-up word, but it's not *irreverently* made up. It's partly explained by Exodus Chapter 3, Verses 14 and 15. The Hebrew name of God in Exodus 3:14-15 is the four-letter word; you can't say "four letters," you have to say: "The Sacred Tetragrammaton," the "Sacred Four Letters." "YHWH" is how it would be transliterated into English. The most logical pronunciation of that would be "Yahweh."

But for a long time among the Jews, due to a misinterpretation of Leviticus 24:16, they would *never* pronounce that word, YHWH—they would not say "Yahweh," or any other way to translate that. Leviticus 24:16 says: "The one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death." Well, if you blaspheme, ridicule, mock, insult, misrepresent the name of God, that was blasphemy; that was to be punishable by death—but they turned that into a *superstition* about the *sounds* that they made when their eyes saw "YHWH" on the page. And Ancient Hebrew was not written with any vowels; it was all consonants. That sounds weird to you, but maybe you've seen one of those things where you take a paragraph and remove every vowel, but you can still read it—because you know what it sounds like in your language and in your experience, in your culture.

So here's what they did: When they would come to "Yahweh," they had a superstitious belief about mispronouncing it—I mean, what if they said "Yehwah" instead of "Yahweh"? They thought, "Oh-oh! That could be the death penalty!" It was *pure superstition*! It was twisting what the Scriptures say! But they would be reading along, and whenever they came to "Yahweh," they would say that other word—"Adonai"—that's the word that they would say: "Lord"; hence, in many of our Bibles, whenever the original is "Yahweh," you'll find the word "Lord" in English, but you will find it in all-caps—as opposed to "Lord," which would be a translation of "Adonai," or the New Testament *kurios*. So they would see "Yahweh" and say "Adonai."

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

As Hebrew manuscripts were protected and preserved and passed down, a group of Jewish scribes known as the "Masoretes"—they were in business from about 300 B.C. to the Tenth Century A.D.; and for our understanding of Scripture, we owe a great debt to the tremendous, spectacular, detailed work of the Masoretes in preserving the Hebrew text for us—but as Hebrew began to be spoken less and less, they wanted to preserve the language, and so they invented the system of vowel points. They have all these consonants, and they know the sounds to make with them, but fewer and fewer people are speaking Hebrew, so they invented a system to put little points above and below and between the letters to tell you how to make the right sounds.

Whenever they would come to "YHWH," they were always saying "Adonai"—*but that isn't what the text says!* So, in the Masoretic text, they take the vowels from "Adonai" and they connect them with the letters of "Yahweh," and you get something like "Yah-ho-wah"—or, to Anglicize it: "Jehovah." "Jehovah" *is not God's name!* "Jehovah" is a made-up way to avoid pronouncing "Yahweh."

Now, you probably don't have any spiritual goosebumps about that. But just imagine if, every time you read the word "B-i-r-d," you said the word "Master"—it makes that much sense! But it was to avoid mispronouncing the name of God, and therefore being guilty of blasphemy.

But "Yahweh" is God's *personal* name! This is God's name (Ex. 3:13-14). Yes, He is "El Shaddai"—He is God Almighty. He *is* "Elohim"—He *is* "God Most High." He *is* the Master. He is all of those things, but when God makes a *relationship commitment*—when He makes a covenant—He uses the name "Yahweh."

So, for example, Exodus Chapter 6, Verses 2 through 4—"God spoke further to Moses and said to him"—and I'll show you how it is in the Hebrew text—"I am *Yahweh*; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as *El Shaddai*, but by My name, *Yahweh*, I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned." So when He brings up His covenant, He says, "That's Me in My relationship with them."

Isaiah 42, Verse 8, says: "I am *Yahweh*, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images."

Or, Malachi 3:6—"For I, *Yahweh*, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." Do you see the connection to the covenant? "The only reason you exist in spite of your sin is that I don't change, and I made a promise to preserve you. So we're going to have to deal with this sin problem of yours, and I'll send somebody to take care of that."

There are many combinations of "Jehovah" or "Yahweh." I'll give them to you anglicized: He is "Jehovah of hosts" (Ps. 46:7, 11); He is "Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6); "Jehovah is my banner" (Ex. 17:15); "Jehovah heals you" (Ex. 15:26); "Jehovah is peace" (Jdg. 6:24); or, Psalm 23:1—"Jehovah is my shepherd"—"Yahweh is my shepherd."

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

So when you say, "Hallowed be Your name," you're saying, "I'm setting aside this *special understanding* of who You are, because that is the One who has redeemed me!" Psalm 34:1-3 says: "I will bless *Yahweh* at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul will make its boast in *Yahweh*; the humble will hear it and rejoice. O magnify *Yahweh* with me, and let us exalt His name together."

That sounds *foreign* to us, right? We have this long history, this long tradition of English translations not using that name, but using "LORD"—all caps—which confuses it with the other word for "Lord."

There is actually a new Bible translation in process right now; it's due to be released very soon in the New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs; and then the whole Bible will come along later. It's a revision of the New American Standard that will, among other things, work the actual name "Yahweh" into English where it is in the text. It'll sound a little weird to you at first, but you'll understand the name of the Lord all the better.

The Target: "Our Father who is in heaven." First Petition: "Hallowed be Your name." Second Petition, in Verse 9 and then the beginning of Verse 10—"Pray, then, in this way: Your kingdom come."

This is a prayer to hasten the time that the kingdom will come to Earth. Our greatest desire should be to see King Jesus reigning in His kingdom (Re. 22:20; cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Pet. 3:12), where He will have the honor and the glory and the authority that has always been His, but has never been claimed on Earth (Zech. 14:9).

This petition is for Jesus to come and reign as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15; cf. Matt. 28:18). Now in the Sermon on the Mount, He didn't say "King of kings and Lord of lords"—why? Well, that's a name that we have to read to the end of the Book to get. Revelation Chapter 19 is about the Second Coming of Christ. Revelation 19:11—"I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True"—of course, this is Christ—"and in righteousness He judges and wages war"—which you read about in the last part of that chapter, and then on into the judgment in Revelation 20. And then, down to Verse 16 of Revelation 19—"And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.' "

Jesus says pray: "Your kingdom come." There are several ways to see that prayer potentially being answered. Obviously, the most clear one is: you're praying for the Kingdom to come! Like Paul said, we have "loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8; cf. 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20b; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:13)—we're looking forward to seeing Him "face to face," knowing Him as we are now "known" by Him (1 Cor. 13:12; cf. 1 Jn. 3:2).

Right now, we live in a sin-cursed, upside down world. Ephesians 2:2 says Satan is "the prince of the power of the air"; Second Corinthians 4:4 says he is "the god of this world" (cf. Lk. 4:6); so—we want the *real* King to come! The earth is a revolted territory within the creation of God, and we want to see that turned back right-side-up.

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

So in this age, we are members of a spiritual kingdom (see Lk. 17:20-21). Colossians Chapter 1, Verse 13: You have been "rescued" from "the domain of darkness"—where Satan is "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4, NKJV), "the prince of the power of the air"—we've been "rescued" from "the domain of darkness" and "transferred...to the kingdom of His beloved Son." That's our "citizenship" (Phil. 3:20)—we belong to that kingdom—but *right now*, we have to operate behind enemy lines (1 Jn. 5:19). *Right now*, our King is not present on Earth reigning; we're like "ambassadors" in a country that is under the domination of our spiritual enemy (2 Cor. 5:20; cf. Eph. 6:20), and all around us are the captives of the enemy (2 Tim. 2:26). So right now, our mission is to help the captives see the light and be set free to serve the true and coming King (Acts 2:40; 2 Tim. 2:25). So He says: pray that the "kingdom" will "come" (cf. Col. 1:6).

Now, "kingdom" isn't used here primarily for geographical boundaries; it has more to do with sovereignty and dominion. When you're praying for the kingdom to come, you're praying for God's rule to come more and more widely and visibly to Earth (Lk. 10:2); and ultimately, for the King Himself to come (Rev. 22:20; cf. 2 Pet. 3:12).

If you want to do one of the richest Bible studies you can ever do, take the theme of "kingdom" and "King"—Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven—trace the kingdom theme from the beginning of the Bible through the end, and you will see what a spectacularly beautiful, seamless theme this is, revealed progressively through the Scriptures until you have the fullness of it in the Millennial Kingdom on Earth; and then, like First Corinthians Chapter 15 says: when He is done there, Jesus then presents the Kingdom back to the Father (vss. 24, 28). It's a beautiful theme. (e.g., Lk. 1:32 with Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:10-11, 16, 19; Ps. 2:6-9; Is. 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 11:4-10; 16:4-5; 24:21-23; 33:17-22; 60:1-18; 65:18-25; 66:23; Jer. 3:17; 23:5-6; 30:8-9; 33:14-16; Ezek. 28:25-26; 34:23-30; 36:28-38; 37:21-28; 39:25-29; Dan. 7:13-14; Hos. 2:18; 3:5; Mic. 4:1-8; Zeph. 3:11-20; Zech. 2:10-12; 8:3, 20-23; 9:10; 14:8-11; Mal. 1:11; Matt. 19:28; 25:31, 34; Mk. 11:10; Lk. 19:11-12; 21:31; 22:29-30; Acts 1:3, 6-7; Rev. 2:26-27; 20:4-6)

In this prayer—we want to be honest with it—in "Your kingdom come," the word "come" is an aorist verb, which describes a sudden, complete coming; so the foremost reference is to the future coming to Earth of the Kingdom of God in the Millennial reign. But in the meantime, like Jesus says in John 18:36—"My kingdom is not of this world." It's not about territories. It's not connected to earthly political/national entities. His kingdom is set apart from the evil world system which is in rebellion against God; and since sinful people cannot be part of a divine reign, it is only when He, in judgment, sweeps aside everything to do with the manmade "kingdoms of this world" that the Kingdom of Jesus is going to come to Earth (Rev. 11:15, NKJV). We're not here to *take over* geographical territory in the name of Christ. We are here as ambassadors of the coming King.

We've had some really ugly stuff happen in our nation lately. As recently as last week, how sad to see the capital overrun by people committing anarchy, and in some cases violence, and defacing things and ridiculing. It's tragic to see that, but far worse than seeing *that* was the fact that some of those people were prominently displaying Christian symbols while they were committing vandalism and breaking-and-entering and violence.



Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

That's *so horribly incongruous!* We are not here to take over geographical territory! We are here as *ambassadors* of the One who created everything and is coming to reign, eventually, over everything; and we bring the good news that *you don't have to be* among those who are judged when He comes (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Thess. 2:7-9).

Our efforts now—they've already been described in the chapter before this: We're to be like "salt" (Matt. 5:13) and "light" (vs. 14). Or, Ephesians Chapter 5, Verse 8—"For you were once darkness, but now you are light." We bring light where the darkness is (Phil. 2:15). We bring a preserving influence like salt; we slow down the corruption, we retard the degradation of the society, wherever God's people really are. And people see our "light" shining in the darkness, and they "glorify" our "Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16)—that's nothing less than the salvation of souls (1 Pet. 2:12). So, to say "Your kingdom come," we're praying that people are going to come to know the King.

So in a sense, the Kingdom of God is not only going to come, ultimately, when Jesus comes (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 12:10), but it comes by way of personal conversions to the Lord Himself (Acts 8:12; 28:31; Rom. 14:17; 1 Thess. 2:12; Rev. 1:9). In a sense, "Your kingdom come" is a prayer for the salvation of souls, *and* it's also a prayer *for us*, that we would *ever more accurately* represent the King—so it's also a prayer for spiritual growth and commitment. But *ultimately*, this part of the prayer is going to be answered in fullness when the "King of kings and Lord of lords" shows up to reign.

Next petition—this will be our last for today: "Pray, then, in this way"—not only "Your kingdom come," but "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

I don't want to take a big side-trip here, but you might well understand—most of you do—that the most obvious antinomy in the Bible is the tug-of-war between the sovereignty of God and the freedom of choice that is accorded to man (Prov. 16:1, 9). The word "antinomy" means: "opposing laws." This law is true; that law is true; but how do you explain both of them being simultaneously true, when it *appears* that they contradict?

If you interpret the sovereignty of God *underneath* the will of man, you get it all wrong. And if you interpret the will of man *under* the sovereignty of God, you get it all wrong. *Both* are true! Don't mess with either one! They are *both* absolutely true, all the time. You can't explain that—*that's good!* That means you're not God, and you need this Book! You have to be able to let those things stand.

Well, prayer is one of the arenas in which those two apparently opposing truths come side-by-side. If God does not act in response to prayer, then prayer is fruitless—and what a cruel thing for Him to tell us to pray, if it doesn't matter! *Of course* it matters! So even though we can't explain the nuances of the mysteries, we accept prayer as the privilege that it is. And when you pray, if you don't believe in the sovereignty of God, for goodness sake, *stop praying* and go study some theology! If you don't believe that God is in *complete control of everything*, why in the world would you pray to Him? Maybe He's the *best* thing you've got, but if He's not the *ultimate* thing, *He's not God!*

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

So, *pray*—and understand: He is the *only One* that you can pray to, and He can change things, according to whatever needs to be done (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17, 27; Zech. 8:6)—including changing *you* (Ps. 119:35-37, 88, 133).

What does it mean, then, to pray: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"? Well, start by observing that, that confirms that God's will is *not* always done on Earth. Is He sovereign? Yes. Does He know "the end from the beginning" (Is. 46:10)? Yes. Will everything come to the conclusion that He intends for it to come to? Absolutely, yes (Eph. 1:11; cf. Ps. 33:11; Prov. 19:21; Is. 55:11). But between now and then, in the moral realm, His will is not always done on Earth (e.g., 2 Sam. 11:27).

Therefore, to pray for God's will to be done is to ask that people submit to the revealed moral will of God. It is a prayer that people will *do right* (Ezek. 36:27; Rom. 1:5). It's a prayer that *I* will do right (Phil. 2:13). God, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"—how, today, can I be an influence for Your will, to do what is right and true and loving and compassionate and just? (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17) Make me that kind of person (Heb. 13:20-21).

Also understand: To say, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" is to acknowledge that *we ourselves* don't automatically always joyfully submit ourselves to that moral will of God. Therefore, it's a prayer for God's will to become *our* will; it's a prayer that we will learn to want what God wants for us, because that's the best for us. And my friends, as a fallen creature, my first instinct is not necessarily always what God wants (Rom. 7:21-23). God, remind me what is Your will, that I might be wholeheartedly sold out to doing it (Ps. 119:34).

And understand also: To pray "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" is to acknowledge this great moral crevasse between Earth and Heaven. In Heaven, everything is done right. Do you know there are no police in Heaven? *Don't need them!* God's glory is *always* untarnished; it's *always* the focus and the object of rejoicing! But on Earth, people *constantly* rebel against God (Prov. 19:3). They *do* blaspheme His wonderful name. And therefore, this—along with "Your kingdom come"—is a prayer for God to take supreme control of the Earth.

That's as deep as we're going to dig in this sample prayer for today; but already, we can extract from this some important lessons about prayer in general, and about how God wants us to pray.

Understand that prayer is good for you because prayer is submission to God (1 Jn. 3:22; 5:14). The definition of prayer is the inferior one speaking to the Superior One. We don't come like we're barging in the door—"Hey, God, Buddy! How ya doin' today?" No—"Hallowed be Your name." Let me represent who You are. He is in control; we are in need; and when we pray, we are admitting that. *His* glory is to be sought; *my* glory is to be suppressed. Prayer, by its definition, is a good thing because it is an act of submission to God.

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

Secondly, understand that prayer is an *amazing privilege*! Yeah, it's true—it is like the intimacy between a child and a father (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6); it's that close, it's that special—but it also allows us to speak to the Lord God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth! (Is. 44:24) *He'll listen to me?* What a privilege! (Heb. 4:16; 10:22) It overcomes the transcendence of God, and actually allows *me* to pour out my heart to the Creator and the Judge (Ps. 62:8).

Prayer also reminds us that our "citizenship" is *not* of this world (Phil. 3:20; cf. Col. 3:3; Heb. 11:16; Jn. 15:19; 17:16). It's good to pray because it's so easy to get caught up in all of the stuff around us; but we need to realize: We don't judge by the world's judgment! We don't judge by the world's standards! We want to judge by *God's* standards, and so prayer reminds us that we belong to a "kingdom" that is "not of this world" (Jn. 18:36), and that's a *good* thing to be reminded of. We want to serve Him out of love for what He has accomplished and done for us, and out of our gratitude for that (Ps. 116:12). We don't do it because we're in *bondage*; we do it because we're *redeemed*, and we're standing in His grace!

Another principle that we can draw from this—and I said this a couple of weeks ago: Prayer allows us to align our wills with God's will. When I said that last time, I said, "Now be careful that you don't *only* say that!" Prayer is not *only* about me aligning my will with God's will; don't put *too much* stock in that. But also, understand: It's not the power of your words to persuade Almighty God to do something He otherwise wouldn't do. God is not dependent on our prayers in the slightest way whatsoever; but in prayer, we declare our dependency on Him; we declare that we stand in His grace; and therefore, we *do* pray, "Father, *I don't see things as You see them* (1 Sam. 16:7; Is. 55:8-9), but may *Your* kingdom come! Let me live in light of what the King is like. *Your* will be done, not just what I feel like doing; Your will, which is always right, always true, always loving, always compassionate—make me that kind of person." So by praying, it *does* align me with God's will, and that is a very good thing.

I've always said that God is not the great vending machine in the sky. A lot of systems of prayer teach you that, "To get your prayers answered, here's what you need to do..." No, prayer is not putting the right amount of money in and pushing the right buttons in the right order to get the right goody that you want; prayer is not *placating* an angry God so that maybe He will toss you a goody here and there; but prayer is one of the means God uses to give us what *He* wants. Think about it that way (Ps. 84:11; Matt. 7:11).

I have *no problem* praying for what I want! I *know* what I want! I *like* what I want! I *want* what I want! But if I'm going to humble myself before Almighty God, my prayer should be: "Oh, Lord, please teach me to want what You want for me—what You know is best for me."

Next time, we're going to pick it up and go further. I do also intend to talk about what to do when you pray zealously and earnestly for something that seems really good and right—and you don't get it. We'll talk about that as we return to the Model Prayer.

Sermon Title: Pray Like This (Part 1)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:9-10 (Sermon on the Mount #21)

Date: 1-17-21

---

And now, why don't we pray? Follow me, please:

*Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You that Jesus took the time on that day to lay out for us this model prayer. May we learn from it. Above all, may we know that when we pour out our hearts to You, it is to a loving Father. Lord, I pray that You will not let anyone leave from this place without being able to call You "Father," in that sense of an intimate, genuine, eternal connection, where grace has been extended and received by faith. Please do Your will in our hearts today. Teach us what needs to be taught. Convict us where we need to be convicted. But above all, Father, teach us to want what You want for us—individually, and collectively as Your church; for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*