

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

Pattern For Prayer

By

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Matthew 6:7-15

⁷But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

⁹After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. ¹⁴For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matt. 6:7-15 (KJV)

Pegi Tehan of Dayton, Ohio tells about this experience. One day she decided to take her three children to an ice skating party in a nearby town, but after several wrong turns and stops to ask directions, She pulled over to the side of the road and suggested they all ask God to help them find the rink. "When they finally arrived," she said, "We were nearly an hour late. The following week, as we got into the car to go skating again, my five-year-old son exclaimed, "Mom, let's pray now and save time!" --- Pegi Tehan, Dayton, OH. Today's Christian Woman, "Heart to Heart."

In chapter 6 of Matthew's gospel our Lord gives instruction about Christian piety. He divides up the subject into three parts, which actually covers all that men do in religion, namely, almsgiving, praying and fasting. We might summarize these three categories this way...Almsgiving addresses the matter of our charity toward others: Praying addresses the matter of our personal relationship with God: while fasting addresses the matter of personal discipline.

In a previous message I talked about the rationale for prayer. We pray because we have come to recognize the sovereignty of God and our own creaturely dependence upon Him. But more than that, prayer is an expression of praise and worship. It is an act of faith. Men who do not believe that God is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him do not pray.

Our Lord had some things to say about what not to do when we pray. We are not to pray for ostentation or display. We should not use prayer as a platform to draw the attention of men, to make ourselves appear religious and devout in the eyes of men. And we are not to be mechanical and repetitious in our praying. Prayer is meant to be personal, intelligent, reverent communication between a man and God.

Our Lord tells us in this passage of scripture what prayer should consist of. All of the instruction you need to pray is given in this model prayer. It contains the principal elements that belong in prayer. Nothing is left out. All we can ever do is to enlarge on and expand these principals when we pray.

Regarded in that way the Lord's Prayer is a marvel of economy and completeness. Our Lord has summarized and reduced the subject of prayer to a few brief sentences, which cannot be improved upon.

It is an outline for anyone and everyone to know how to pray. It is appropriate as your own prayer, provided it is not prayed mechanically without appreciation and comprehension.

Prayer must always be personalized to be true prayer. So we ought not pray the Lord's Prayer by rote, much like a parrot repeating what it has heard. That sort of praying is empty and meaningless. True prayer has to be from the heart voicing a true expression of the person praying. Thus, written out prayers can become mechanical and void of true faith. This is not to say that you or I could not write out a prayer and have our heart in it. But for someone else to pray that prayer it might not be the same at all. God desires that we worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. So prayer must be in that same vein.

Again it is emphasized by our Lord that the Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him.

Immediately that raises the objection some make to prayer. They say God knows what I need. If he wants me to have something he will give it to me, and if not, I won't get it. So I don't bother him by praying about every little thing.

Is that a legitimate conclusion? Should I ignore prayer because I know that my Heavenly Father knows all about me and I trust him to take care of my needs without my telling him about them? The best answer is right here in our Lord's instruction. He goes right from saying that to give His instruction about prayer.

As I said before, prayer is an expression of faith. It is a form of devotion and praise and worship. To neglect prayer is to neglect the highest activity of the human soul. This is the greatest expression of manhood or womanhood. To talk to the Creator is the most ennobling thing conceivable on earth or in heaven. That is why singing as an act of worship is attended with such blessing. We speak forth praise to God in hymns and spiritual songs. It is not surprising that often the most spiritual persons in a congregation are the singers and choir members. Prayer may not be done to music in cadence and verse but it is praise and worship without melody or music. And prayer is usually more personal simply because the person praying is the composer of the prayer. Our Lord begins, pray, then, in this way...

I. Our Father Who Art In Heaven

We must pause here on this first part of the model prayer to say that only the Spirit-regenerated soul can truly address God as Father. For the Christian God is Father. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and having come to know the Son Jesus Christ we also know his Father.

There are two things I would like to say about this teaching of Christ of God as Father. First, many people believe in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This is a very attractive concept. And in one sense it is true. All men are of one blood and have a common ancestry. Paul taught that at Athens on Mars Hill when he said to the philosophers and others gathered there,
²⁵**Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.** ²⁶**And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,** ²⁷**so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;** ²⁸**for in Him we live and move and have our being, as**

also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' Acts 17:25-28 (NKJV)

We all trace our beginnings back to the first man Adam and the first woman Eve. But that does not mean that all men know him as father or that all men are brothers. This is only true for the souls who are joined in true brotherhood under the Fatherhood of God in Jesus Christ. Those who are outside of that spiritual family are still strangers and foreigners to the commonwealth of Israel and excluded from the covenant promises of God. There must come a day of adoption, a day of salvation, a new birth from on high for a person to know God as his Father. I pray that every person here may know the Father in Jesus Christ.

Remember how Jesus prayed in his high priestly prayer in the 17th chapter of John, speaking of those whom the Father had given to Him... **"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. John 17:9 (NKJV)** So we see that Jesus did not consider all men to be in the holy family, only those who knew that He had come from the Father and who believed His word.

The second thing I want to say about that is that some people would have a hard time with the concept of God as a Father simply because they had a father in this life who was cruel, mean, drunken, one who came home and was abusive to his wife, who thought only of his own needs and not the needs of his wife and children.

It would be hard for the girl who had been sexually abused by a father to ever have a good concept of a father by what she had known and experienced in her life. But that is why Jesus says, **Our Father, Who Art In Heaven.**

The heavenly Father is altogether good and kind and gentle. To know God as your heavenly Father is to know a Father incapable of sinful conduct. He is holy and righteous in all his ways. Any debased or sinful idea of a father is transformed by the words **Who Art In Heaven.**

Always have in mind that our Father God is perfect. He dwells in a perfect place -- in Heaven. His plan for you and me is to take us to that perfect place. Jesus says again in His high priestly prayer **"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. John 17:24 (NKJV)**

II. Hallowed Be Thy Name

The Name of God is above all names to be revered and revered and venerated. His Name includes all that He is and to besmirch that Name, to profane that Name, is a sin. God says He will not hold a man guiltless who takes His Name in vain. All true prayer must come with a sense of reverence for that Holy Name of God. The Jews would not even speak the Name Jehovah. It was so sacred that they would only speak of the NAME. It encompasses all that God is, his strength, his power, his might, his dominion, his Holiness, his Honor, Majesty and Glory. The One who dwells in the Highest Heaven has a Name that must be kept hallowed and holy. Ever and always when we come to God in prayer it is with this lofty view of the sacredness of His Most Holy Name.

III. Thy Kingdom Come

Here is a petition that the Kingdom of God would come in this world. This is the prayer for world evangelization. Some might think this means to pray for the coming of the Lord, but the very next

petition seems to me to clearly indicate that it is to see the Kingdom come upon this earth before the consummation of all things at the Second coming of Christ. For He tells us to pray, **Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven.**

We can see a logical sequence in this model prayer. The Father in heaven is to be hallowed in His Name. And why is this not done? Why do we see that holy Name besmirched and blasphemed? Is it not because there is a rival kingdom? The kingdom of darkness is also in this world and it casts its shadow over the Kingdom of light. We see the evidences of it every day in murders and rapes and all manner of immorality. The transforming of this world can only come as the Kingdom of Christ is established. And that is going to happen because of prayer. Men are called to become laborers in the harvest as we pray for them to be sent forth. We are all involved in the work as we pray **Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done, On Earth, As It Is In Heaven.**

How is the will of God done in heaven? Why every angel is attendant upon the will of the Father, hastening to obey the moment His will is revealed. Every soul redeemed from this earth is perfect in obedience to that holy Word of the Father. Our prayer is to be that it would be like that on this earth. When we see that happen we will see wars cease and peace on earth and good will among men.

The kingdom of God comes within. Every person who comes to Jesus Christ is willing to obey the will of the Father. What a blessed thing it is when men are subservient to the will of the heavenly Father. The Kingdom of God is now here and it will expand and enlarge in just that measure we pray for it to happen. Every prayer we offer up should include world evangelization, **Lord, Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

We live in a day of great opportunity. The demise of communism opened the way for the gospel to be preached in a way it has perhaps never been preached before. Men are hungry and thirsty for the gospel because they were denied for so long the water of life. And that is true in all lands where darkness holds sway. We need to have a vision for world evangelization and we all should be praying as our Lord taught, **Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven.**

Prayer pulls the rope below and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly. Others give but an occasional pluck at the rope. But he who wins with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously, with all his might.-- Charles H. Spurgeon in *The Quotable Spurgeon*. Christianity Today, Vol. 39, no. 3.

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