

MATTHEW 6:9

God revealed himself and his character and his holiness to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. Here, Jesus is revealing himself and the nature of his Kingdom to his followers.

Jesus' words open with the Beatitudes, where we're introduced to the Upside Down Kingdom, where among others he says blessed are the peacemakers, the meek, and even the persecuted. The Beatitudes show us the Character of the Disciple. Then Jesus shows us the Influence of the Disciple - salt and light. Then Jesus dives into the Righteousness of the Disciple, first looking at it in relation to the Old Testament commands and the surface application of them that tries to work externally from the outside in. Jesus introduces us to the Inside Out nature of his Kingdom advancement in hearts.

Last week we looked at righteousness in light of "do not"s and righteousness, now Jesus begins to look at doing right and how that relates to righteousness.

As we enter chapter 6 he speaks to three specific instances of doing good.
WHEN YOU... He implies these are things you WILL be doing as his disciple:
Giving to the poor. (generosity)

Prayer.

Fasting.

He calls them "acts of righteousness." In our current culture we may call them spiritual disciplines. Here you may hear us call them *pathways*. You'll walk in this as you follow Jesus.

There should be no debate about whether we step into them. The only part that is not a foregone conclusion- the part Jesus addresses- is motive. Why.

Jesus uses the word hypocrites. "Actors" - ***"they have received their reward."*** But the nature of actors is this: actors have an audience. They- especially at that time before film- would perform from a platform. Likewise in our culture, so many of us strive for a platform- or to create a platform through social media- and then to present our best for our audience.

Jesus is essentially telling his followers that while we're called to live in community, while we're called to be a light to those outside that community, ultimately we live for an audience of one.

What Jesus is getting at here: *Do you seek the praise of man or the praise of God?*
Which reward do you pursue? In our culture we like our rewards and gratification NOW.

It's a problem of **PERSPECTIVE**.

Those who perform for men: *"they have received their reward"*
Vs.

Those who perform for God - *"your Father in Heaven will reward you."*
We like the tense of the first. We don't like to wait for our gratification.

This is emphasized when Jesus teaches here on prayer:
We often go to prayer for **PROVISION**. *"I need something."* There's nothing inherently wrong with this. Jesus goes on to say just moments later to ASK, SEEK, and KNOCK.

But we can easily slip into thinking that the chief aim of prayer is to tell God what I need. Jesus accurately pinpoints the main reason so many of us don't pray.

Why pray if God already knows what we need?

The underlying confession within that statement is this:

I think the sole purpose of prayer is to get what I need from God.

If God knows what I need? Why pray?

Adoration. Worship. Thanks. Repentance. The list goes on.

If the sole purpose of prayer was adoration, we'd have enough reason to pray without ceasing.

If the sole purpose of prayer was repentance, we'd have enough reason to pray without end.

Jesus teaches us to adopt new perspectives as He gives his disciples the model prayer.

"The Lord's Prayer." But in many ways this is **The Disciple's Prayer**.

It's daily perspective. And every phrase is an inventory.

This "Our Father" isn't meant to be stringent, but a stimulant.

It's value goes beyond recitation, it's a model.

Each phrase is a framework. A launching pad.

Read it together... then work through the phrases.

Our Father - *INTIMACY*

Prayer isn't first and foremost about requests.

Prayer is first about a **RELATIONSHIP**.

In two important ways:

First- Prayer is the language of community. It's corporate. It's counter cultural.

- If it was just about you and God it would read: MY father.
- This isn't just about you and God. This is bigger than you.
- You have a life and purpose outside of your own private wants and needs.
 - o Give us this day *my* daily bread... not my daily bread, our daily bread.
 - o Forgive *me my* trespasses, lead *me* not into temptation... no, it's US!
- You have a personal relationship, but not a private one. It's communal.

Our speaks to community relationship,

Father speaks to our relationship with God.

"Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging" by Brennan Manning

"Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. This is the true self. Every other identity is illusion."

The quality of your life will be based on your vision of God.

Because that vision informs your identity.

Our culture is yearning for identity. Yet every other identity is an illusion that can't fill that need.

But here's the difficulty for many of us: our biological fathers have impacted our view of God. For some of us, calling God "Father" doesn't stir devotion, it makes us wince. Sometimes the image God has given us to behold his love is the same image that keeps us from stepping into it.

Our earthly fathers were like training wheels that were supposed to prepare us for a relationship with our Heavenly Father. Some were terrible training wheels. But the good news is God isn't just a replica of our fathers. He's the original. God the Father into eternity.

Ultimately, he's not our earthly father, he's our "Everlasting Father." His love is everlasting. It's unconditional. His love is intimate. It longs to know and be known. This should blow our minds! The God who created the universe wants relationship with ME.

But Father also speaks to the nature of this relationship: ***We aren't equals.*** Abba unlocks intimacy with our Father in Heaven. But it isn't a chummy relationship with God. Abba doesn't make God your buddy. The same way your earthly parents desire obedience, God desires our obedience. And just verses previous to this Jesus reminds us of our goal in obedience: "be perfect"

Hallowed be Your Name - GLORY

Is he profoundly intimate? Yes. But never forget He is powerful and infinite.

Isaiah 40 – listen to these verses that are spoken in the same breath...

- *Comfort, comfort my people," says your God. "**Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.**"*
- ***Shout that people are like the grass.** Their beauty fades as quickly as the flowers in a field. The grass withers and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the Lord.*
- *He will feed his flock like a shepherd. **He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart.** He will gently lead the mother **sheep** with their young.*
- *Has the Lord ever needed anyone's advice? Does he need instruction about what is good? Did someone teach him what is right or show him the path of justice? No, for all the nations of the world are but a drop in the bucket. They are nothing more than dust on the scales. **He picks up the whole earth as though it were a grain of sand.***
- *God sits above the circle of the earth. The people below seem like **grasshoppers** to him!*
- *To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?" asks the Holy One.*
- *He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles.*

It begins and ends with intimacy.

But throughout there is this juxtaposition of his infinite power and profound intimacy.

God is your Father. But your Father is not your equal.

He is holy. Infinite. Yet intimate.

Isaiah 57:15 – *"I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit."*

So our first request? May you be glorified.
My first request shouldn't flow from my **needs**, but from His **name**.
Our ego should melt into reverence.

Don't be like the hypocrites. They live for their own glory. My goals, my dreams, my wants, my needs.

So much of what we do- especially in the social media age- is fueled by see me, recognize me, affirm me.

The desire that drives this is our need to be seen by God. And when we receive validation as a son or daughter radically loved by God, we can shift our perspective.

Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven – *RENEWAL*

When our mind is filled with God, our concerns become his concerns.

The fruit we see here? That we be more concerned with God's kingdom coming to Earth, than with us going to Heaven. This is fruit in the life of the disciple.

Revelation 21:5 – “behold I make all things new.” It's spoken from the throne of Heaven. But it's not just Heaven being made new. **Revelation 21:1**- “I saw a New Heaven AND a New Earth.” The last stop in our lives isn't solely Heaven. It's a “*New Heaven and New Earth.*”

When Heaven is the only focus you become silent about what's going on here on Earth. It's how you get thousands of pastors signing a paper that says “social justice” is a distraction.

They would probably all echo one of the oldest Christian prayers we have on record:
“**Maranatha**” – Come, O Lord.

Often this prayer and the prayer “your kingdom come” become about wishing. “Come fix this.”

Don't ASK if you aren't ready to ACT.

Our prayer lives so often have a wishbone but no backbone. Don't just wish. Work.

What's the basis of the Kingdom work?

Find out what's going on in Heaven- in God's perfect presence and His perfect reign- and bring that to reality on Earth. God's Kingdom coming is about earth working toward harmony with Heaven.

Peace. Hospitality. Justice. Unity. Healing. And more...

In the prayer, **ONLY NOW** do we get to what we would consider our needs and petitions. Why?
You acknowledge before you ask.

Perspective informs your petitions.

The reminder of relationship informs our personal requests.

Give us this day our daily bread... - *DEPENDENCE*

We can spiritualize this idea of bread...

Jesus is the bread of life. Jesus said the work of the Father was his food.

But this isn't just spiritual. It's practical.

This recognizes that we are human- physical beings with physical needs. There's no shame in asking God to meet them. Asking for God to bless you at your job. He cares for these details.

Look no further than Exodus, as God provides daily "**Manna**" – a bread-like substance that sustained the Israelites throughout the wilderness. It appeared each morning. Daily. His command? Don't hoard it. Collect only enough for that day, as it was gathered in the morning.

We are daily dependent.

We want monthly Manna. Bulk Bread. Sam's Club portions.

The result? We come to God once in a while.

We try to figure it all out on our own and come to him when something big comes up.

We try to be self sufficient.

But we are all needy people. We have a radical dependence on God for all things.

Come to God daily. Be in scripture daily. Be in prayer daily. Be in relationship with God daily. When we aren't? We forget our dependence.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass... - GRACE

This is God's will being done and kingdom coming in our relationships.

God's will is our lives should be defined and marked by grace.

Bob Goff - "*Grace is only hard to give if we're keeping score*"

Forgiveness takes down the scoreboard.

We receive a grace that forgives. God doesn't count our sins against us.

But we don't just receive a grace that forgives. We receive a Grace that should cause us to forgive. We aren't just called to relish in grace, mercy, and forgiveness. We're called to relay it.

Forgiveness doesn't mean reconciliation. Reconciliation takes two. Forgiveness takes one.

We are called to forgive no matter what.

God's love should define our love for others. His forgiveness fuels ours.

And lead us not into temptation... WEAKNESS

"Prone to wander Lord I feel it, bind my wandering heart to thee"

We can trust God doesn't tempt us to wander.

The first man, Adam was tempted.

Jesus, the second Adam, was tempted.

To be tempted is to be human. To be human is to need God.

Dallas Willard – this is "a vote of no confidence in our ability"

AA can teach us a lot. And in AA you're well aware of the tendency and ability to relapse.

When you have a healthy acknowledgement of your weakness, you more easily avoid relapse.

This confession of weakness is so important that Jesus doubles down on it at the Garden of Gethsemane, where he implores the disciples, ***“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”***

Jesus understands us as humans: we are weak.

But that’s usually not our confession. We hide our weaknesses. Why? *We* want to be hallowed. When we can give that up early in the prayer, we can step into the reality that I’m weak.

Deliver us from Evil [the Evil One]... WARFARE

God delights in deliverance. He delivers us. His delivered people in Exodus.

But it’s so crucial to see the purpose in Him delivering us from bondage.

And it’s not for autonomy. We just looked at how we’re dependent. We’re weak.

We’re delivered to depend on God. To worship.

“Let my people go... so they may worship ME.”

Deliver – a strong, violent term. To snatch.

In a way this comes full circle.

Our Father.

“Dad-reflexes” are a real thing.

No pacifier hits the ground. Children are caught mid-fall with one hand.

But as **Romans 3:23** says, we’ve fallen. We can’t get up.

It takes a power stronger than you to deliver you.

My NIV - “The Evil One” – but it can just as properly be translated “Evil”

Which adds another layer of meaning. There’s evil in me.

Why doesn’t God get rid of all evil? Because he’d be getting rid of me and you.

Deliver me from evil is also this: deliver me from myself.

We so often like to blame the enemy because it lets us off the hook.

The Devil made me do it.

But usually he’s content to let us be pinned by our flesh. We’re weak.

Prayer isn’t supposed to make us feel more self-sufficient.

In many ways, it’s a reminder that we’re weak and dependent.

But it’s a reminder that we have a Heavenly Father that cares and provides.

One way to look at prayer is that it creates a space for Jesus Christ to fill. All of our life should be walking in John the Baptist’s prayer: Let Jesus increase and let me decrease.

Jesus’s greatest desire is to give himself to us.

But He needs space.

Prayer creates space.

Take inventory:

Intimacy – seeing yourself as one radically loved by God.

Identities in life apply pressure – parent, spouse, employee, you can fail.

God's son or daughter. Never changes. You're radically loved by God.

That doesn't pressure you, it propels you!

Hallowed – Jesus has been your homeboy. You've been living how you want thinking He's just along for the ride. I can do what I want and He's still there for me. No. He calls you to be holy as God is holy.

Kingdom Come – Living with the focus on getting to Heaven. You're apathetic about God's kingdom coming here. Awaken from apathy.

Daily Bread – you've lived as a functional atheist. Independent.

Temptation – Concealing your addictions. Avoiding confession. One of the first steps to avoiding relapse is to admit weakness.

Warfare – Sleepwalking. Wake up.