

November 8, 2015

THIS IS HOW YOU SHOULD PRAY

Part Two

Matthew 6:9-15

Remember that prayer is about a relationship; three dimensions of relationship: toward self, with God, and with the world. Prayer may not always get us what we want, but it makes us what God wants, and God wants us to be spiritual, to be people who pray, who seek Him out, who make our requests known, especially in the Name of Jesus.

Last week, I covered the first four petitions of the Lord's Prayer: Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done; and Give us this day our daily bread. The last three petitions are about forgiveness, temptation, and deliverance from evil.

Recall how I have said that, as an attitude, prayer has to do with our relationship with God, with self, and with others. As the Lord's Prayer continues, the relationship with self and others becomes very central. Prayer can become an opportunity for surfacing problems, either individual or corporate, mutual; and, prayer is a response of hope that those problems can be resolved. Prayer can be a process of self-inventory, or, self-examination. Some have believed that to pray is to do nothing. The problem with that attitude, though, is that, with doing nothing, you never really know when you are finished. But prayer can help us to decide what to do sometimes. Prayer doesn't do everything for us, and sometimes prayer simply helps us to be patient when nothing can be done. Patience is an important part of prayer, and, we need to learn to be patient with ourselves. Sometimes, a way of being patient comes in giving second chances. And in order to give a second chance, we must be forgiving.

FORGIVE US

This petition in the Lord's Prayer reminds us that we are guilty. When we pray for God to forgive us our trespasses, debts, or sins, we are admitting our guilt. We stand under the conviction of having failed to hallow God's Name. Not only have we so failed by the sins we commit, but by the good we have omitted. The will of God is often left undone. And there is so much to do for God's Kingdom to come. After Christ teaches this Prayer, He says, *"For if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive your sins; but...if you do not forgive others their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins."* (Matthew 6:14-15) And, Jesus says, *"With the judgment you pronounce you will be judged; and the measure you give will be the measure you get. (7:2)* We must be forgiving...if we want to be forgiven.

TRESPASSES/DEBTS/SINS

Debts – We owe God our very lives. Trespasses – crossing over the boundaries. Sins – acting against the will of God.

We do not just ask for God to forgive *me*, but to forgive *us*. As we sin, we are under the spiritual obligation to make amends, and we are not free until we have fulfilled that obligation, paid that debt.

Examine Luke 6:36-50!

Love merits Christ's forgiveness. Not status, not intelligence, not even good intentions or good deeds. Love can heal the wounds we open by sinning. But... those wounds can still leave scars. The

consequences of sin do not just automatically get erased. Sins are rarely completely forgotten, not in this life, though the debt *can* be paid. We *can* start out anew. We should always remember that we have been hurt, or, have hurt others, by our sins. The pain may be in the past, we may no longer feel it, but we still need to be morally sensitive so as not to repeat those sins. Forget the pain, but remember what caused the injury. People who hold grudges either imagine the pain is still there, or, they exaggerate the trauma brought on by the wound. They fail to move forward to start out anew. They live in the past, pointing at times when the wrong thing was done. Maybe that proves that they were right, but... they were right in the past, and pointing that out today, serves no one but themselves. It shows no love. It serves no will but their own. God's will *must* be done...today!

AS WE FORGIVES THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US

Examine Matthew 18:23-35

Sometimes we are so aware of the sins of others that we forget our own. *"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own?"* (Matthew 7:3) There are two dimensions of forgiveness – for our sins, and for those committed against us. The Lord's Prayer hopes for God's will to be done... on earth as it is in heaven. And there is a need for a bridge between earth and heaven. The bridge is forgiveness. God is ready to forgive, but, in some ways, we are not always ready to be forgiven. An unforgiving spirit shuts the door on God's forgiveness for us. But this petition breaks the cycle of hate and anger, of vengeance and spite. Forgiveness is offered. We have been relieved of our debts. Now, we must live as though it were true, giving to others what we know God has given to us.

LEAD US

Prayer can be described as a kind of light, and, as a way of seeking the light. As our light shines, it may not always give *us* any more illumination, but, like a beacon, it can give light for someone else who may need light. Prayer becomes a guiding light that leads us safely onward. And, as a lighthouse leads ships away from dangerous rocks and guides them safely into the harbor, so also do we, in the house of God, pray, *"Lead us... not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."*

We pray for God's Word to be our guide, for the Way of Christ to be our way – *The Way, the Truth, and the Life*. (John 14:6) There are three dimensions of guidance invoked by the idea of leading. First, it includes direction – where to go, what road or pathway to take. A map can lead us in this way. Secondly, it includes the idea of going before, in order for others to follow. A third dimension of being led is into the future, not from the past only, but from the present. This includes having goals to guide us, and promises to fulfill. One other aspect of God's leadership is the notion of a *Calling*. There is a call we hear, a word that comes to us that beckons us. And we are meant to respond. For some, the call is inward and compelling. For others the call is from an external source and inspiring. But that call, that voice of truth is leading us in our faith.

NOT INTO TEMPTATION

"Lead us ...not into temptation." Give us endurance, keep us on course, don't let us give in to the tug of evil. What are our temptations? What is it that draws us off course? Something that tempts us lures us. It lures us away from faith and pulls us into the occasion for sin. What makes you forget

God? I would wager that God is usually forgotten when we put ourselves before His Kingdom. When we become self-serving. We want the Kingdom to serve us, rather than us serving the Kingdom.

Temptations are tests of faith, stumbling blocks to service, and trials that weaken us. To ask God to lead us away from temptation is to ask God to prove our loyalty, confirm our conviction, maintain our commitments, and stay the course.

The whole theme of the Bible is that of deliverance. We pray that we will be delivered not only from the things that constantly lure us away from what is good, but from those evils that try our faith, those pains and frustrations, those accidents and errors that push us over the brink. We pray these words because we cannot deliver ourselves. One of our greatest temptations is to think that God is not in control, evil is. To pray this petition is to claim that God is in control. God holds *us*, we don't hold God.

Deliver means to hand over – as in the mail; give forth – as in delivering a sermon; liberate, release, save, redeem. But it is always in a sense of coming *from* something else, as in being delivered *from* evil. But also understand the word *deliver* as in the beauty of birth. Babies are delivered at their birth. Such delivery is into life, into a new world. We are not delivered from anything evil when we are born, but that deliverance makes us alive to the world. When we are born anew, we are delivered into a spiritual world, a world of faith, a world where we become a part of God's Kingdom. So, as we pray this prayer, we are praying for us to come to God's Kingdom.

THINE IS THE KINGDOM

The Lord's Prayer in the Sixth Chapter of Matthew seems so unfinished. So a doxology, attached through tradition, is added when we pray its words to round it all out. The emphasis is on how it all belongs to God. The bridge that opens the Kingdom to us is determined for our crossing by the relationships we have. IT ALL BELONGS TO GOD!

THINE IS THE POWER

The power of faith is not ours. Faith is not our power but God's!

THINE IS THE GLORY

Near the end of His journey, Jesus said, "*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*" (John 12:23) And then He began talking about His Death: "*Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*" (John 12:24-25) Then, rather than praying for God to save His life, He prays for God to glorify His Name. So God is glorified as His Son dies... but He died in order to be raised, to prove the power of God, to manifest the Kingdom of faith, giving life to all who believe!

Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory...**FOREVER**, eternally, without end either in time or in space, for the Kingdom is for all people of all time, and the power is for the love that it inspires.

AMEN

It is as it's said when it's said as the truth! Amen!!!