



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 6:7-15

Topic

Jesus gives us a model for prayer that reminds us to daily depend upon God to care for us as our Father

Title

"Daddy Day-by-Day Care"

Introduction

A four year old girl was reciting the Lord's Prayer before bedtime when she said, "and lead us not into temptation, *but deliver us some e-mail.*"

If God were to send her family an e-mail, it might be to remind them that what we commonly call the Lord's Prayer was never meant to be recited over-and-over again as a prayer.

It's a model for prayer, given by the Lord to His disciples.

It is therefore sometimes called the Disciple's Prayer, but that still leaves you thinking it is a formal prayer. It isn't. It is a radical new way of praying that eliminates formalism altogether.

As a model for prayer, one thing you immediately notice about it - something obvious but exhilarating - is that it first transports you to Heaven and then takes you back to living on the earth to await the Kingdom of Heaven to be established.

One minute it's as if you're seated next to your Father in Heaven, and the next it's as if He's standing next to you on the earth.

I will therefore organize my thoughts around two points: #1 When You Pray Take A Seat Next To Your Father In Heaven, and #2 When You Pray Take A Stand Next To Your Father On Earth.

#1 When You Pray
Take A Seat Next To Your Father In Heaven
(v7-10)

Historians say that it was common for religious leaders to teach their disciples formal prayers by which they would have a sense of their uniqueness.

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, followed that tradition. One day Jesus' disciples came to Him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). It was in response to that request that, in Luke's Gospel, Jesus gave them not a prayer to pray, but this model for praying.

*How interesting that Jesus had not taught His disciples **any** formal prayers.*

They may have felt somewhat second-rate. Here they were, committed to following Jesus – yet they had no formal, identifying prayers. John’s disciples would be reciting formal prayers; so would disciples of various rabbi’s. Jesus’ disciples had no such prayers. When they went to the Temple, or synagogue, it would be embarrassing.

Jesus was not interested in formal prayers, or formal praying. He would introduce an intimacy in prayer that was radical and revolutionary.

Mat 6:7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

A little historical research reveals that the "heathen" priests of Roman deities were required to offer formulaic prayers with absolute accuracy. If they omitted even one word an entire festival might have to be started over. If their prayers were perfectly recited then the deity had to respond, as if the words themselves were binding spells. They were the most formulaic prayers Jesus could use as His example.

Mat 6:8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

The warning against “vain repetitions,” combined with the understanding that God is your Father, ought to put an end once-and-for-all to formalizing and ritualizing prayer.

Nevertheless it has become popular again to formalize prayer. The three hottest trends to encourage prayer among Christians are Prayer Labyrinths, Contemplative Prayer, and Soaking Prayer.

I won't go into them. I just want to point out that all of them are ways of formalizing prayer that claim to bring you to a greater intimacy with God.

According to Jesus, formalism and intimacy are mutually exclusive. God is my Father and delights to hear from me the way any earthly father ought to want to spend time with his kids.

And prayer isn't always about asking for things. Like any good earthly father, my Heavenly Father is aware of my needs so prayer can go beyond needs to a depth of communion that can only be described using the word intimate.

We could compare our praying to our heavenly Father with the growth of communication we see in our earthly families.

- It begins with crying. You know what your baby needs. He needs to eat, or to have his diaper changed, or to sleep. He cries anyway and you do something about it. You meet the need - even if it is the 'need' to let him cry because nothing is really wrong.
- As your child grows, he continues to ask you to do things for him. Sometimes over and over and over again! You deal with him, knowing the real needs and not just the wants. Your decisions on what to provide and what to withhold shape his thinking and his future.
- As your kids mature all the asking can turn into a real conversation. Needs are not as important as the joy of relating to one another, of enjoying one another's company.

What we call "prayer" is really talking to God as our Father that brings us gradually into maturity.

Mat 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

Jesus transports us to Heaven. It's as if we are seated right next to our Father.

Because of Jesus, **we are** - spiritually speaking - seated next to our heavenly Father. The apostle Paul understood this when he said, "[God] raised us up together [with Jesus], and made us **sit together in the heavenly places** in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

OK, so we've got a seat at the table, but what kind of table is it? Is it a formal board room - or a family dining room?

"Our Father" captures the sense of intimacy we should have. Intimacy is something precious, something personal. Anyone can call me Gene, or Pastor Gene. Only my kids can call me dad or daddy.

Is God **your** Father? You can only address God as Father if you have been born into the family of God by believing on Jesus Christ to save you.

Your Father is "in Heaven," above the atmospheric heavens. He is seated over the heavens, overseeing and supervising everything that occurs beneath Him.

When you see things from the vantage point of Heaven, everything looks different. Seated with Him you have no doubts everything is working for good for them that love Him, and that His plans for the universe are being accomplished by His providence and power.

"Hallowed be thy name," more correctly translated, would read, "Let your name be made holy." Seated in Heaven I comprehend God's holiness, or if you prefer, His 'perfectness.' I see mankind's sinfulness and understand that history is God working-out His plan of redemption to save sinful men.

- When my perspective is earthly, I wonder about all the evil and all the terrible things that happen.
- When I remember I am seated in Heaven, I see a thrice-holy God saving a lost world by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Mat 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

The word, "come," is in a verb tense meaning *come once and for all*. The "kingdom" is a reference to the literal ruling of this planet by Jesus Christ.

We believe Jesus is coming back and, when He does, He will rule over the earth for one-thousand years. After that He will create a new earth and new heavens and rule them forever.

As a side note, the Lord's Prayer has a shelf-life. Once the kingdom comes - once Jesus is ruling from Jerusalem - we won't be needing to pray "Your kingdom come."

Your prayers are to be influenced by the future hope of the Lord's return. From your vantage point in Heaven you realize that the ultimate help for this earth and all the people on it is the return of Jesus to establish His kingdom. When earth is ruled the same way Heaven is ruled, only *then* will peace and prosperity be attained and maintained.

“Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Heaven is in great shape. There are no problems there.

The earth is a mess. It got that way because Adam and Eve sinned and have passed-on their sin to their offspring. Human history is the story of God intervening to save the human race from Hell for Heaven. Your prayers should be influenced by God's longsuffering with mankind, not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to eternal life before it's too late.

You **do** have needs on earth, and we're going to look at them in a moment. First, *linger in the heavenlies*. God is your Dad. Seated right next to your Dad, in Heaven, you embrace the big picture.

#2 When You Pray

Take A Stand Next To Your Father On Earth

(v11-15)

In the remainder of this model for prayer Jesus gave His disciples a perspective on their lives on earth: Live as though your Father were standing right next to you.

Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

The particular word “daily” can mean both “today’s bread” and “tomorrow’s bread.” If you’re praying in the morning, you need today’s bread. If you’re praying at night, you need tomorrow’s bread.

The point is that you can live in total dependence upon your Father to provide what you need on earth.

You can't help but be reminded of the bread God provided on a daily basis back in the Old Testament. After He delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, He gave them manna from heaven. They were to go out each morning to gather it. They gathered twice as much just before the Sabbath Day. Everyone had enough; there was no lack.

Bread is a basic staple of life. In the context of Jesus teaching you how to pray, you are to be confident that your Father knows what you need and can provide it.

Your Father is standing right next to you on earth, to help you with other people.

Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

Your personal fellowship with God is what is in view, *not* your eternal salvation. If you are a Christian, your "debt" of sin has been paid once-for-all by Jesus on the Cross. Nevertheless we still sin, and we will until we are no longer in these bodies of flesh. When we sin we ought to ask God to forgive us (First John 1:9).

"As we forgive our debtors" is such a stunning remark that Jesus will give His own commentary on it in verses fourteen and fifteen. We will talk about it in a moment.

For now it is worth noting that there are no singular pronouns in this prayer; they are all plural. It begins with "OUR Father." When we pray, we must remember that we are part of God's family of believers. Our relationship with God isn't lived-out in private but as members of a family.

Mat 6:13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

The word for “temptation” means *a trial or testing which, if yielded to, will lead to sin.*

God does not tempt you to sin. Temptation comes from "the evil one." It's a reference to the devil and his demons who are at war with God.

That's not to say you are always (or ever!) being attacked by the devil himself. It is a general observation.

Satan – not God - tempted Adam and Eve. They yielded, and it led to sin. Their encounter with the evil one in the Garden of Eden set the stage for you to be tempted.

Why did God allow temptation in the first place? Mankind must exercise free will in order for true love to exist. God cannot force us to love Him and still call it love.

Your Father is standing right next to you on earth to help you resist the perils of temptation. You can be confident that none of the temptations that He allows are beyond your ability to resist, provided you will depend upon Him and not your own strength.

Even if you were to be tempted by Satan himself, the Bible says if you simply resist the devil, he will flee from you (James 4:7).

“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” In the Second Coming Jesus will establish the “kingdom” of God on the earth. After the thousand years we will enjoy a new earth and new heavens for eternity.

As we wait for it, we can focus on “the power” and the “glory.”

- “The power” reminds me I can do all things on the earth, endure all things, through Jesus Christ who strengthens me.
- “The glory” reminds me that my life on the earth is not my own but is to be lived in such a way that it points to Jesus and gives God the glory He deserves.

The model for prayer ends with “Amen,” which is a word of agreement. Your Father provides what you need; and He is standing there to help you in your problems with people, and through your perils. When those principles guide you, you depend upon His power to reveal His glory.

Jesus next commented on your relationships, specifically on your forgiving others, to clarify what He meant in verse twelve. He encouraged you, in your prayers, to ask God to forgive you your “debts” as you forgive your “debtors.” Here is what He meant by forgiving your debtors.

Mat 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Mat 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

This is one of those times where we must tread very carefully.

- On the one hand, we don't want to minimize the impact of what Jesus said. God's forgiving me seems to be conditioned, in some manner, on my forgiving others. I want to immediately say that can't be true, but the words are right there, spoken by Jesus.
- But, on the other hand, we don't want to put burdens on people they cannot bear by insisting that they immediately forgive every sin committed against them unconditionally. God Himself does not unconditionally forgive, otherwise the entire human race would be saved with no need of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

I could not find a single commentator who dealt with these verses in a completely satisfactory manner, even though volumes of books and articles have been written.

Neither am I going to be the commentator who resolves this to our complete satisfaction.

I'm not saying there aren't solutions that make sense. There are. For example we saw, in verse twelve, that you can distinguish between what is called God's *judicial* forgiveness and His *relational* forgiveness.

- God's judicial forgiveness is granted once-for-all when I am saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. All my sins, past, present, and future, have been forgiven.
- Relational forgiveness has to do with my maintaining fellowship on a daily basis with God as my Father, and with others in the family of God on earth. I still sin and, when I do, I cannot enjoy the intimate fellowship with God available to me.

So, in this case, I am saved but out of fellowship with God if I withhold forgiveness, whether it is asked for or not.

That's a reasonable, biblical approach to these verses as long as we realize that *these verse are intended to instill a positive fear in my heart.*

Let's approach this from a different perspective. Let's look at how Jesus understood this kind of relational forgiveness. Since He came in the volume of the Book (Hebrews 10:7), and since He is the way God in these last days wants to communicate with us (Hebrews 1:2), and since I am to be conformed into His image day-by-day, I want to see Him practicing what He preached.

Jesus told us to forgive others. Where did He do that?

Well, He certainly did it while hanging on the Cross when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

He was wrongfully tried, cruelly beaten, and condemned to death by the Jews. He was unjustly sent to execution by the Romans. Beyond the Jews and Romans, it seems that the scope of Jesus' prayer was for the entire human race - for all those ever conceived who, collectively, were the reason He was on the Cross.

In His Father's presence, in prayer, on a fallen earth, Jesus could see the big picture and understand that what was happening to Him, though intense beyond anything we could imagine, paled in comparison to the persons crucifying Him being separated from God for all eternity in Hell. To oversimplify, He cared more about each person than what they were doing to Him.

In our Father's presence, in prayer, on a fallen earth, we must see the big picture and care more about each person's eternity than about how they have sinned against us.

Make no mistake: they may have sinned against us - perhaps in unimaginable, horrific ways. Some of you have been terribly mistreated and horribly abused. Your suffering, if revealed, would make us weep.

But apart from repentance and faith in Jesus, the end for those who have sinned against you, if they are not saved, is merciless suffering in Hell. If they are believers, they cannot have fellowship with God while they continue in sin no matter their protestations to the opposite.

God the Father always answers Jesus' prayers. How does He answer this one? Does He forgive everyone, the whole human race, unconditionally?

No; that would lead, as I intimated, to universalism. He is *ready* to forgive everyone and anyone who meets the conditions He has elsewhere set forth - repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

If Jesus is my example - and He is - **then this is what He was talking about regarding my forgiving others.** I should care more about the person than about what they have done to me.

That's not automatic for me as a Christian, and it's not easy. Maybe that's why Jesus mentioned it as being a necessary part of my daily prayer life. It's a struggle that I need my Father to help me with so I don't give in to resentment or bitterness or anger or hatred.

In the everyday world, a person who has sinned against you **still needs to ask for forgiveness in order for reconciliation and the restoration of your relationship to occur.** Jesus Himself taught this later in Matthew, a couple of times - once when He said in response to being asked to forgive we should do so "seventy times seven," and again when He described church discipline.

I think if you look at all the verses about forgiveness, everything that Jesus and the apostles taught, this is the conclusion you will come to: You must gain God's eternal perspective on others, "forgive" them in the sense that what they have done to you pales compared to the potential consequences in their life, and be ready to be reconciled *if* and *when* they repent.

I should fear to withhold forgiveness. If I harbor bitterness in my heart; if I do not desire to forgive others; if I do not wish to be reconciled and restored with them should they repent; **then I am not being crucified with Jesus Christ on the Cross.**

At 'best' (and it's not really good in any sense!) that means I am not in fellowship with my Father in Heaven. At worst it might indicate I have never been born-again.

The context of Jesus' words is spending time in prayer with your heavenly Father. There, in prayer, everyday, whatever is going on in your heart and life will come up for discussion. If you have been sinned against by others, you're going to be struggling in your response because you still have your flesh, and the works of your flesh, to contend against.

When people sin against you, it hurts - sometimes more than you think you can bear. If you find that you can easily, automatically, forgive them without a struggle, *my spiritual hat is off to you.*

For most of us there is going to be an ongoing struggle between the flesh and the spirit.

Your Father is not going to condemn you for struggling. The struggle, in fact, is evidence you've been born-again and have His Spirit living within you.

Analyze life from your seat in the heavenlies and then ask and receive from your Father all the help you need while you remain on the earth.