

## Part Two: The Lord's Prayer

### *What Do We Pray*

Matthew 6:10

March 2, 2008

<sup>9</sup> Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored. <sup>10</sup> May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us our food for today, <sup>12</sup> and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. <sup>13</sup> And don't let us yield to temptation, but deliver us from the evil one...(NLT Matthew 6)

<sup>NRS</sup> **Matthew 6:1** "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup> "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. <sup>5</sup> "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. <sup>7</sup> "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup> "Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. <sup>14</sup> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

This is the second sermon in the series on *The Lord's Prayer*. The focus this morning is on Matthew 6:10 -- <sup>10</sup> *Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...*

The **question** that I posed last Sunday was, "***Why Do We Pray?***" This week, I would ask us to consider **another** question, "***What Do We Pray for?***" These questions are **more important** to us than the one most frequently asked, "***How Do I Pray?***"

The **beginning of prayer** is the recognition of who God is and who we are in relationship to the divinity. Jesus saw **confusion** all around him about prayer. Some were praying out of the **traditional piety** that required constant prayer in certain forms. At a minimum a very devout person, such as a Pharisee, would pray at least three times a day. In chapter 6 Matthew makes clear in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus saw the relationship of prayer for his disciples as something different than those who practiced prayer openly and in a way that focused attention on themselves. Jesus questioned the motivation of praying to be seen and to **receive an earthly reward**. He reminds us of the challenge that faced Job, who was pious in prayer and even assumed the responsibilities for his children. His wealth, his reputation, his large estate, family and wisdom all were attributed to his devout piety and righteousness before God. People saw Job in this traditional way. When he lost everything, it was immediately assumed that he had sinned and needed to get right with God first in order to re-establish a relationship with God.

Jesus in effect, says that is crazy! To be seen for your prayers and to assume a public reward of respect may be an earthly need but it **does not affect a heavenly reward**. He even went so far as to say that those who prayed for earthly reward and recognition were "**hypocrites**" wearing two faces in conflict with one another. We do not own God as our own. It is not "My Father in heaven;" rather it is "Our Father in heaven..." We worship God together universally for everyone, excluding no one who would seek to follow Jesus and take up his cross.

That is why this prayer is so universal. It is prayed all over the world by every Christian denomination from Roman Catholic to Greek Orthodox to Coptic Orthodox to Presbyterians to Baptists to Lutherans to independent churches and even to United Methodists.

Disciples needed to be **taught another way and another meaning** of prayer. Honoring God, placing our life before God,

and recognizing that each person as a **child of God had access** to God as the most powerful force in life.

That is **why we pray**. Now with **our motivation** focused on **our relationship with God**, the next question has to be, "*What do we pray for?*" The answer that follows is both simple and mind-boggling. We should pray as disciples, "*thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...*"

**What is this Kingdom** that Jesus wants us to pray for? Where is it? How do we get into it? **Who is the ruler** of this Kingdom? It is the most frequently mentioned focus of Jesus' own sermons, yet the **most misunderstood idea**. In the **shortest** sermon that Jesus ever gave, he said, "**Mark 1:14-15** <sup>4</sup> Now ... *Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God,* <sup>15</sup> *and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."* Elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke Jesus is compelled to say, "**Luke 4:43** "*I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose."* <sup>44</sup> *So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.*"

Yet, in so many places where Jesus makes reference to this Kingdom of Heaven, there are only glimmers and glimpses that come through his teaching of parables about His **Kingdom**. For instance, we hear Jesus say, the kingdom of Heaven **is like "a mustard seed,"** for example. **Or** the Kingdom of Heaven **is like someone who sows good seed in a field,** or it is **like yeast** that a woman takes to leaven bread; or like a **treasure hidden** in the field; or a **pearl of great value** that has been **lost and then found**; or **like a net thrown into the sea** and caught fish of every kind, and on and on. It is as if we can only cock our head to the side and **see just a small degree** of the **larger image** of the Kingdom of heaven.

**Bishop Joe Pannel** said once when preaching at the Capitol Steps for our March for Children said that the kingdom **of heaven is God's dream**; and he declared that God's dream is so much **larger than any dream you or I have**. How true that is, I

believe. We dream small out of our fears and anxieties, while God's dream is **beyond our imagination and our resources!** The kingdom of Heaven is **not a place above or below** the clouds or off in a distant universe. The kingdom of Heaven, however, is **happening as Jesus comes to us, reveals** this Kingdom and **demonstrates** to us what it is and means. Earthly kingdoms come and go. Princes and rulers of this world live only a short time and they pass on. Kingdoms of this earth are often **built around powerful self-focused figures**. Hitler, Mussolini, and other tyrants, even perhaps Vladimir **Putin** of Russia wants to be the ruler of a kingdom on earth. Some get this kingdom by fear and violence. Others **inherit** it and do with it what they will for good or bad, most **often for the bad**. This is **not** the Kingdom of Heaven. God's Kingdom is *past, present and future*.

This Kingdom is linked to the second phrase in this group – *thy will be don on earth as it is in heaven*. The heavenly kingdom is a society, a mind, a spirit of God's **perfect love becoming real** in our relationships **to God and to each other**. *Love the Lord your God with all your being and your neighbor as your self*. This is the **fulfillment** of God's dream. It is **God's will** – where love, justice and mercy **abide and rule**.

**What do we pray for?** We pray **not** what you or I want, but **what is the will of God** in this Kingdom of Heaven. When this Kingdom and God's will is in our hearts and minds, **then** our world will know how near Jesus Christ is to us. This is the encounter we have in Jesus. The Kingdom **comes** as Jesus comes near and we are changed. We get up and **turn away** from the **violence and hate and bigotry and self-centeredness**, the **greed** and the uncaring **attitudes** that **rip this world apart** and **divide us** into haves and have-nots, between the elite and the outcast and despised, between **citizens and immigrants**, friends and enemies.

Jesus teaches His disciples that **this Kingdom is in our heart** and spirit. It takes bold and **adventuresome risk-taking faith** to receive it and to live it. In other words, to be in God's Kingdom

is to **be willing to obey God's will**. You know the verses of *A Charge to Keep I Have* or *Here I Am Lord*.

**Dave Poole** and I have been talking about what this means in practical terms of **how we are members** of this church. God's will shapes our will to serve and to give toward this ministry of the kingdom. When we become **quiet and listen**, we may **realize that what God wants is different** than what we want.

We then have to **make a choice**.

Too often, we **lack trust and faith in God's will**. We are **afraid to let go and let God**. Too often we find that it is **easier to accept Jesus when Jesus does not disturb us**. But when we **open** ourselves to the will of God in Jesus, **we will be changed** and there is **nothing more frightening than change**, is there? Jesus is the **real thing, the real agent of change**. He wants our congregation to **value and to care for each other**. He wants us to **live in faith with openness to where a new path might take us**.

When we sit down and **consider** a program or a policy or a **budget or a mission** or even a sermon, **what do we need to do first?** What we must ask is "*what is God's will?*"

This is **not a glib and easy prayer**. We may pray for healing or the ability to buy a new house or the care of our parents and children, but these petitions are **second** to the question, "what is God's will?" Jesus in the **garden of Gethsemane** in the last hours of his life **as a human servant, son of God**, sweat large drops of blood, asking this question, "**Matthew 26:42** "*My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.*". It was God's will to **take the cross for our sins**. It is **still** God's will to **offer us the salvation from the power of sin and death through the cross**.

This is a **time of sacrifice**. What part of our life are we **willing to will** to God's use? What part of our life do we **give up** for the **greater good of God's work** in this Kingdom of Heaven on earth? A friend sent me a picture of a Tigress in a zoo whose baby tigers had died. Then the zoo keepers did an extraordinary thing. They put surrogate pigs with the Tigress to relieve her grief. Can you imagine piglets in the arms of a Tigress? This is a Kingdom of Heaven glimpse that we cannot imagine.

**Today** we will say this prayer again. **Tonight** you may pray it before you go to bed. Before surgery I will pray it with you. At your wedding, we will pray it for your new family. At your confirmation, I will pray it with you as you become joined to this body in profession of faith. When your last breath is gone and I **stand by the grave**, I will ask all of us to pray, "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...*" This is our **hope**. **Next Sunday**, the content of our praying is going to **challenge** us to the very core of our being. Can we pray for **forgiveness** to the one who has done wrong to us? Can we let this hurt go forever? We will pray, "*Give us this day our **daily bread**, **forgive** us our trespasses or debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors /sins against us.*"

This morning God offers you the holy elements of hope and salvation – *take this bread, take this cup*. When we reach out and receive, **what part of our life do we sacrifice** to take up the Cross and become a Disciple? Are you **willing now to receive fully God's will** at the Communion Rail? If we have free will, then it is our choice today or any day to follow Jesus and His incredible Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.