

**MAKING THE LORD'S PRAYER, OUR PRAYER**  
**Matthew 6:7-13**

**(Read Matthew 6:7-13)**

**Intro:** *Amazing Grace* is a familiar hymn. Many, many people, even those who do not consider themselves religious, probably know the words of at least the first verse, and for sure, the first line, *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound . . .* It is ubiquitous, on TV and in movies where its words are often sung and its tune is familiar as a bag pipe standard. A lot of people know it.

It might not be as prevalent as *Amazing Grace* in our increasingly post-Christian culture, but The Lord's Prayer is another vestige of Christianity that is somewhat familiar to more than a few people. I find it interesting how a preacher or priest might end a funeral meditation or even a Sunday sermon with prayer and as he concludes his prayer he refers to Jesus and smoothly segues into, ". . . who *taught us to pray, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name . . .*" and by the word "hallowed" practically everyone in the room has joined him in the Lord's Prayer. People know it.

It's at the very least a memory from Sunday School or catechism class. In my home congregation in Southeastern PA we had an opening session prior to Sunday School class. The teens and the adults met in the sanctuary and the children in the basement. I loved it when I graduated to being upstairs for the big people opening – it was a rite of passage. In about ten minutes attendance was taken, announcements were made, a song was sung, and then as we readied for dispersal to our Sunday School classes, Sunday School Superintendent, Harold Neumann would lead us in the Lord's Prayer. I was so proud that I knew it and that I could recite it. I can still hear it in my mind's ear over 50 years later, forty or fifty voices in unison, it sounded like a bee hive as those many voices droned on. Yes – I remember it as a bee hive more than I remember the words. I wasn't thinking about the words. I don't think everybody was that way, but I wonder how many in my home church and in countless situations before and since have recited the Lord's Prayer by rote and never at all considered the meaning and power of what they were saying? I'm thinking a lot. I'm praying that today and every day we have remaining, we will look at the Lord's Prayer in a completely different light. Let's make the Lord's Prayer, our Prayer.

As we do that, let me read it to you from The Message. Listen,

*"The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:*

*Our Father in heaven,*

*Reveal who you are.*

*Set the world right;*

*Do what's best—*

*as above, so below.*

*Keep us alive with three square meals.*

*Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.*

*Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.*

*You're in charge!*

*You can do anything you want!*

*You're ablaze in beauty!*

*Yes. Yes. Yes. Matthew 6:7-13 (The Message)*

First . . .

**The Lord's Prayer is what genuine prayer should look like**

- We had a pastor in my home church who could pray loooooong prayers. My brothers and I timed him one time and his prayer was SEVEN – MINUTES - LONG! A veritable eternity! We had no idea what he prayed about but we knew his prayers were interminable. Now, we were kids, and I know Pastor Leshner's prayers were not empty phrases or vain repetition (King James wording). He was a true man of God and

his prayers were full of substance – I just didn't listen to them. He also has nothing on me since I've supposedly been clocked at 20 minutes or more. I think someone's stopwatch was faulty, but I do not think that my prayers are vain ramblings either.

- But vain ramblings were obviously a problem for pagans who cried out to the gods cajoling them to answer their prayers. One commentator refers to this as *"the slot machine principle. You put in words and get out answers"*. Another wrote, that it was *"the pagans who believed that the longer a prayer, the more efficacious it is."* And then she adds parenthetically, and I think she grinned as she wrote it, *"Is it only the pagans who believe this?"* As I think of this I'm reminded of the prophets of Baal whom Elijah confronted on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18. I'll read it to you:

*And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention. I Kings 18:26-29 (ESV)*

No one answered the prophets of Baal; no one paid attention to them. Because NO ONE WAS THERE!!!!

- We don't have to pray longer or louder – we just need to pray. R. T. France says *"We don't have to badger a reluctant deity into taking notice of us. We have a Father who cares."* Prayer is a conversation with the God who is there and with whom we have a personal relationship. He already knows what we are going to pray and what we need and what we are going to ask. To that some would ask "Why pray?" and Suzanne de Dietrich replies, *"The prayer which Jesus teaches his disciples answers this question. It is less a request than an act of faith and of praise, a giving of our whole selves to God in order that his will may be done in us and by us. This prayer focuses on God, on his kingdom; it aims at putting our whole being and its desires in tune with God, as one tunes an instrument so that it may give a pure sound."* (End Quote) Prayer is fine tuning our relationship with the God of the universe.
- That's what prayer is supposed to be. So let's look at Jesus's prayer. Notice . . .

#### **Prayer puts God in his place and us in ours**

- *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*
- G. Campbell Morgan points out, . . . *first must come God's kingdom, and then our need.* And then he goes on, *"If we are praying that way we must live that way, we must work that way; not merely ourselves, but for our city, our nation, and the world, that everywhere God's name may be hallowed, God's kingdom come, God's will be done. We shall work along that line if we pray in that way. Then again, it is the prayer of trust. We need sustenance; we tell our father about it. We need restoration; we go to our father. We need discipline; we talk to him about it as we stand upon the threshold of it."*
- Prayer requires reverence. It's no joking matter. It's not a time to try to elicit giggles from others – we're talking to God. As we talk to him we are getting to know him better. Peterson in the Message, which I read to you a bit ago, says, *Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are.* As God does that, we know our place and that he knows our situation and that he cares
- So . . .

#### **We boldly take our needs to him**

- And it's important we know its "WE" and not "me". Morgan points this out. Listen, *"Notice the pronouns in the first person; our-us-our-us-our-we-our- us-us. There is not a pronoun in the first person singular. They are all plural. We cannot pray that prayer alone. There is no room for selfishness there. We are bound to bring somebody else in with us."* Even as we pray about our needs, we see that prayer is selfless.
- As we come to him with our needs we see that it's not a matter of telling God what we want, or what he should do. Instead, it's being in communication with him. As we approach him we acknowledge him as

the one to whom we can go in prayer. We are showing him to be the one who actually does something because he's the one who is actually there. That's why we can be bold in our prayers.

- As we ask for our daily bread we are acknowledging that he will care for today and also for tomorrow. As Jesus was sharing this prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, he was addressing people who didn't know from one day to the next where their next meal would come from. This is evident in the feeding of the 5,000 – they were not prepared and he fed them. We worry here in the First World about food prices that have jumped astronomically when, all the while, two thirds of the world doesn't know if food will be available at all for their next meal. He knows our need and we cannot out-give him. Our prayer acknowledges that.
- Another need we take to our Father in heaven is to learn the truth that. . .

### **Those who ask for forgiveness must be forgiving people**

- R. T. France writes, "*There is something inevitably reciprocal about forgiveness. To ask to be forgiven while oneself refusing to forgive is hypocritical.*" F. B. Meyer said it this way, "*When God forgives, he forth-gives; that is, he casts out of his hand and mind and memory every trace of our sin. We may claim that God should repair as well as forgive; but we must be willing to deal with all others as God has dealt with us.*"
- I was talking to a friend last Monday and he brought up the subject of forgiveness. I was telling him about my sermon two weeks ago on PRAYING FOR PEOPLE WE DON'T LIKE, and how I use the opening illustration about the couple who refused to pay for extensive work I had done some 46 years ago. I told him I had been rolling that memory around in my mind for the previous 8 days and had decided I've not ever forgiven them for it. It was a ZOOM call and he got up and I saw him walk across the room and retrieve a notebook and he began reciting some quotes from a sermon he had just finished watching online on the subject of forgiveness. He sent me the link and I spent the next 45 minutes listening to it. The speaker was John Bevere and he nailed me with this huge take-away, "*A PERSON WHO CANNOT FORGIVE HAS FORGOTTEN HOW GREAT A DEBT GOD HAS FORGIVEN THEM.*"
- *Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.* Or in Peterson's words, *Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.* Matthew 6:12 (The Message). So let me say it again for me and for you to chew on, "*A PERSON WHO CANNOT FORGIVE HAS FORGOTTEN HOW GREAT A DEBT GOD HAS FORGIVEN THEM.*"
- And finally . . .

### **Prayer helps us withstand the tests**

- *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* God doesn't lead us into temptation, but in our free will and in his desire for us to grow strong in our ability to stand up to evil, he allows us to experience temptation. It's nothing that Jesus had not been through himself. He spent 40 days being tempted in the wilderness – and he cast down every temptation with a blast of scripture. Read it for yourself – you'll find it in both Matthew 4 and Luke 4. Every temptation Satan threw at him Jesus answered with scripture.
- Yes, God is watching, but he is watching to see how we flex our spiritual muscles which grow as we push temptation and evil away. As we seek him he will deliver us from the evil one. James tells us, *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* James 4:7.

**Conclusion:** I must wrap up here.

If you're like me The Lord's Prayer you learned when you were a kid ended with *For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.* and whenever we pray it we add that on. But it's not here in our text because it isn't in the oldest New Testament texts used to translate our Bible. It's not left off because it's bad or wrong – it's just not there. It seems that it was added very early on as the Lord's Prayer was embedded in early church liturgy. And it's good! It's all true. As we go to pray to the God of the universe we can sure acknowledge him and give him what is already his, The Kingdom, The Power, and the Glory, FOREVER! And when we do that we truly make the Lord's Prayer our prayer. We are his so his prayer is ours too, Amen.