



RELIGION RESTORED - Restored Prayer - Matthew 6:9-13 - March 6-12

Main Idea: The practice of prayer brings us back to a complete and utter dependence on God.

Look Back

Last week you were challenged to look into one of the disciplines (giving, prayer, fasting, etc.) and ask about the relationship behind it and the motivation that drives it. What did you come up with? What did that exercise teach you about your relationship with God?

Look Up (Wrestle with the passage itself)

Read Matthew 6:9-13 aloud. (If most of your group knows The Lord's Prayer by heart, try reciting it together!)

Hallowed. Kind of spooky sounding, isn't it? The word hallowed, or "to be kept holy," will play a key role in our understanding of the main idea of Jesus' prayer - to pray, and in doing so, remember who God is and who you are. In the opening line, Jesus prays "Our Father in heaven..." gathering us with himself under the identity of belonging to the Father and the Father belonging to us. What kind of Father is this that Jesus, and ourselves, belong to?

We see what kind of Father God is by seeing what Jesus prays for and seeing it in light of God's holiness. In her new book, *Holier Than Thou*, Jackie Hill Perry writes, "If God is holy, then he can't sin. If God can't sin, then he can't sin against me. If he can't sin against me, shouldn't that

make him the most trustworthy being there is?" (pg 2) This logical train of thought guides the heart of Jesus' prayer - God is wholly other (holy) and therefore he is the true and perfect definition of love, justice, goodness, and power - and we are those who need all of those things. We are completely and utterly dependent on God for everything we need, and the good news is that God is the perfect Father. He is always consistent within his own nature. If he ever stopped being perfectly sovereign, loving, just, good, powerful, or forgiving, he would stop being God. Jesus' prayer remembers who God is and who we are. Therefore, the practice of prayer in the way of Jesus, should do those same things as a love response to a Holy Father.

Discussion Question: When you think of God's holiness, what comes to mind? Why is it important that God's purity and consistency within himself are true for this prayer?

If we break down the elements of Jesus' prayer into a bulleted list, here's what we have:

- God is our Father.
- God is near.
- God is holy.
- God's will, done in heaven all the time, is something we want on earth.
- God gives us what we need.
- We need God to forgive us.
- Because God forgives us, we forgive others. God's forgiveness motivates us to forgive others in the same way.
- God protects us.
- God is just.

The prayer carries an essence of the two greatest commandments, to love God and love others (Matthew 22:36-40). Our faith is communal. A beautiful thing about Jesus' prayer is that it stays plural the whole time - always *our*, *we*, or *us*. It's not just our little bubble we are praying for; we want God's kingdom, provision, forgiveness, and justice to come in all the earth. When we pray like Jesus has, we are asking God to bring his beautiful reality to all of his creation.

Discussion Question: 1.) What is an element of Jesus' prayer that you often leave out of your prayers? Why? 2.) How does God's holiness make it possible for you to move past that fear or reservation and ask him for what he is willing to do?

Look Forward (Challenge to do something with it)

Discussion Question: How do you pray? What themes do you notice and do they correlate with those in Jesus' prayer?

Challenge: Plan to incorporate that missing element into your prayer practices this week. Maybe it's telling God how you love who he is before asking him for anything. Maybe it's a time of confession and asking for forgiveness, or asking him to help you forgive. Whatever it is, remember that God is the most trustworthy being there is.

Prayer Challenge: It may seem weird to pray about prayer, but let's try it anyway. Spend time in your group asking that Jesus would teach you how to pray, and rest in the faith that his Spirit is working in you.