

Matthew 6:9-13; Psalm 18:1-6,25-30
"Our Father"

Introduction

Since last week, we have been studying the Bible with a focus on prayer. This is because many of us are frustrated and conflicted because of the coronavirus epidemic that has been going on for over a year. We are often overwhelmed by loneliness, and feel tired and unmotivated.

What do we need at a time like this? Prayer. To be still before God, to meditate on His Word, to pour out our hearts in prayer. To rest in God and pray for His will to be done... This is what will give you the strength to live, and from prayer comes joy and hope.

However, even though we know that prayer is the most basic thing in our life of faith, we may not have the habit of praying. We may not know how to pray, or we may not have the energy to pray. How about you? Let's go back to the basics of prayer. Let's take up the Lord's Prayer as taught by Jesus. And let's renew our prayers in the light of the Psalms, the bible of prayer.

Matthew 6:9-13; Psalm 18:1-6,25-30

Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Psalm 18:1-6

^{18:1} I love you, O Lord, my strength. ² The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

³ I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

⁴ The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me;

⁵ the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.

⁶ In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help.

From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

Psalm 18:25-30

²⁵ With the merciful you show yourself merciful;
with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;

²⁶ with the purified you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.

²⁷ For you save a humble people,
but the haughty eyes you bring down.

²⁸ For it is you who light my lamp;
the LORD my God lightens my darkness.

²⁹ For by you I can run against a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a wall.

³⁰ This God—his way is perfect;
the word of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

Today we will focus on "Our Father in heaven. I want to remind us of the kind of God who hears our prayers. First, we need to be taught to pray. Let's notice the grace of God who hears our prayers even though we are weak and sinful in prayer.

Second, God, who is "our Father," listens to our prayers as children and does what is best for us. And third, God "in heaven" who hears our prayers, creates and rules the whole world. Let's pray and trust in God's great power and wisdom.

1. Teaching on Prayer

When Jesus taught the principles of prayer, he taught his disciples how to pray, the form of prayer, so to speak. He said, "Pray like this," like a parent showing a child how to pray.

What we can see from this is how kind and compassionate God is towards us. Prayer is a basic and essential part of human life. Yet, we don't know how to pray, what is appropriate to ask for, or what will benefit us. Jesus is well aware of our spiritual plight.

It is just like when a child goes to his parents for help when he is worried or anxious about something. God is inviting you once again today to come and seek Him in prayer. Not only that, God will fill us with His power to pray, the motivation for prayer, and even the words of prayer that we lack.

The Lord's Prayer, so to speak, is like a manual for prayer. He clearly shows you what is good to pray, what you can expect from God, and what you need to pray for. Jesus taught us orally the perfect prayer, with nothing lacking.

You probably work with a manual to become proficient at your job. If that is true, then why don't we in the same way use biblical prayers (not just the Lord's Prayer) to become proficient in prayer?

The popular view of prayer is that it is the fulfillment of our wishes. In other words, prayer is a means of self-realization. You pray to have your needs, plans, and future fulfilled according to your wishes. In other words, God is just a tool to make your will come true.

Another common definition of prayer is that it is a kind of life practice. It is understood to be the act of transforming oneself through meditation and contemplation with the aim of becoming one with the cosmic truth in order to succeed in life. In other words, it is a means of self-transformation. Jesus tells an interesting parable about prayer in Luke 18.

Luke 18:10-14

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

In short, our prayers tend to be self-centered tools of self-fulfillment and self-transformation. Even in prayer, we are sinful. We pray only what we want to pray, and when our prayers are not heard, we feel that it is useless to pray, we lose the motivation to pray, and finally we stop praying.

Therefore, let us learn again from the prayers that Jesus teaches. You may have misunderstood something. There are many things that we understand in our minds but don't put into practice, which is why it doesn't go deeper into our hearts.

2. Our Father

Now, Jesus tells us to begin our prayers with an intimate greeting, "Our Father in heaven." This is because it is easy for us to worry about ourselves, for our hearts to be torn apart and our minds to be overwhelmed with anxiety.

It causes us to focus our mind, which is stirred up and disjointed by the daily affairs of work, family, money and relationship problems, on God. Otherwise, as you pray, your thoughts will scatter to your own problems and things that are disturbing your mind. As a result, we don't hear God speak to us. This is the essence of our sin. We are so full of ourselves rather than God that even when we come before the holy God in prayer, we are so self-centered that we cannot focus on Him.

John Calvin, a religious reformer, said, "Prayer is in a sense an interchange between man and God." In prayer we hear what God is saying and doing, and we enter into the treasure house that God has prepared for us. Prayer is like a key that opens God's treasure chest.

The important thing is to have faith that you are in the presence of God when you pray. First, close your mouth. Before you open your mouth with all your wishes, worries, and prayer requests, take a breath and turn your mind and heart to God, "Our Father in heaven."

You need to take a moment, not just a breath, and reflect on who God is to you. Only after you have established your relationship with God will you be able to pray meaningfully. Otherwise, you will end up talking to yourself, complaining, making excuses, or just doing a bunch of mechanical prayer tasks.

As Jesus said, God, as our Father, hears our prayers with love, kindness, faithfulness and power. He will answer your needs to the best of his ability. We are able to make God our Father only because Christ Jesus, God's only Son, has accepted us. John 1:12 says, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Christ, the Son of God, has given Himself to us as our brother. Therefore, all the good things that are the privilege of being a child, which were originally given only to Christ, are given to us as grace, because we are made children of God. However, it is only by accepting this grace with faith that it can be given to us.

Therefore, the more deeply and abundantly you know the grace of God, the more the joy and vitality of prayer will abound in you. The clue to experiencing the power of prayer is through knowing the power of the atonement and resurrection of Christ Jesus on the cross. The more you study the Bible and meditate on it in the Holy Spirit, the more you repent of what a deep sinner you are, and the more you believe in the great sacrifice Jesus made for you and how He loves you abundantly, the more you will be compelled to pray.

In Psalm 18, David expresses the richness of prayer by praising, thanking, and rejoicing in God. The secret to the joy of prayer that fills this psalm is hidden in the title. In other words, he has experienced the grace of God, and because of that grace has been rescued from Saul. He has hope and energy in prayer, praising and thanking God.

"To the choirmaster. A psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who addressed the words of this song to the Lord on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said: 'I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.'"

So I ask you, when you begin to pray, "Our Father in heaven," remember the salvation that Christ has accomplished for you. Think about who God is.

"What we are sorely lacking is any awareness of this relationship between us and God. ...Prayer means talking to God, forgetting ourselves and becoming aware of God's presence."(Lloyd-Jones)

3. Our Father in Heaven: The Almighty and Transcendent Father

When Jesus calls out "Our Father," he adds, "He is in heaven." Our Father can be understood against the background of the very close and loving father figure we meet on earth. Jesus Himself said the following. Gospel of Matthew 7:9-11.

"Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

But unfortunately, many of you may not have known a loving father. If all you know is a father who abused his children or wife, is an alcoholic or drug addict, or is selfish and has no regard for his family, it may not ring true to you at all when you are told that God is your father. In fact, you may have a bad image of God and your prayers and faith may be hindered.

Therefore, the image of a bad or sinful father that we know through experience needs to be constantly realigned by the Bible. It was the same in the society around Jesus in the first century AD. That's why Jesus calls him our Father, "who is in heaven." By "in heaven," I want to remind you of the fact that the God you are meeting is the Father of Jesus.

In other words, let us remember the glory and greatness of God and His almighty power. God is the creator of all things, and all things are clear in His sight. Because God is omnipotent, you can trust Him. He can do what you pray for.

God, the Father of Jesus, raised Him from being dead on the cross to prove His perfect love for you and your salvation. Those who pray to this almighty and powerful God have hope even in the face of death.

Psalm 18:4-6

"The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears."

And by all means, don't forget God's holiness, truth, and perfect righteousness. There is nothing that you can hide from God, and He knows the depths of your heart. If the words of your prayer do not match the thoughts of your heart, God knows it well. Your sins and deceptions cannot be hidden from God.

Psalm 18:25, 26

"With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous."

But let us be thankful. For though all things are manifest before God, and we ought to be burned up with his holy righteousness, yet we are saved and can walk in the light of Christ. If you acknowledge your sins and suffer from the pain in your heart, the light of Christ will heal and restore you.

Psalm 18:27,28

"For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. For it is you who light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens my darkness."

Powerful prayer, prayer that brings you rest and joy, comes from establishing a relationship with God, who is "our Father in heaven" from the beginning of our lives all the way to the end. God, the almighty, holy and loving Father, is eager to bless you.

When things don't turn out the way you prayed, you probably lose faith, thinking that God won't bless me. That is not true. The truth we find in the Word today is this: God wants to bless you far more than you want to be blessed.

We are already prepared for God's blessing through Christ. Think of Christ, and think of who God is. Then pray freely and without any hesitation, like a child.

(PRAYER)

"Dear Heavenly Father. We praise Your holy name. I thank You that I can call You Father and pray to You intimately. I repent of being self-centered and seeking only self-fulfillment, forgetting who You are. I remember your love and holiness and pray like a child. Please know my needs. We praise You for Your glory. Forgive us our sins and mistakes that hinder our prayers. Lead us by the Holy Spirit to a time of prayer where we can enjoy intimate fellowship with you. Give me the strength for prayer. I pray and ask only that Your will be done. In the name of Your only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus. Amen."