

Text: Matthew 6:7-15<sup>1</sup>

Title: Hallowing the Name of the Father

Date: October 23, 2011

Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

People pray. It's amazing that in a culture as secular as ours, people still pray. And they do it in great numbers!

A recent Gallup poll in the US found that over 90% of women pray and over 80% of men still regularly pray in some form or other.

Harvard University researcher, Herbert Benson, has spent 25 years studying the relationship between prayer and healing. He concludes that people are "wired for God."

**"So our circuitry seems to be made for this act of trying to establish intimacy with God. If we don't develop it, at some point or other, we feel the hollowness. You hear the sound of that reverberating everywhere in the modern world, the sound of hollowness and hunger and thirst for more."**

But although prayer is a drive of the human heart, it's a drive that needs direction and Jesus gave his disciples direction with a prayer that is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer." As I mentioned last week, as we were thinking about Jesus' prayer in John chapter 17, we should properly call Jesus' instruction to his disciples about prayer, "The Disciples' Prayer" because that is exactly what it was. This week I'm going to move us away from Jesus' personal prayer in John 17 and think together with you about "The Disciples' Prayer." I'm reading this morning from **Matthew's Gospel, chapter six, verses seven to fifteen**. This is God's Word for us this morning. Jesus said...

<sup>7</sup> **"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for 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 like this:**

**"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 lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

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**<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 their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

There's a wrong way to pray – Jesus tells his disciples not to pile up empty words in prayer, thinking that God is impressed by the volume of our prayer or by its elaborate technique. In contrast, the prayer that Jesus shares with his disciples here is wonderfully simple, but also holds such great truth in a few words.

Don't get Jesus wrong.

Jesus would affirm that there's a place for long periods of prayer – He himself sometimes spent the whole night in prayer. (Luke 6:12)

And he would even agree that there's even a place for repetition in prayer – He prayed the same thing three times during one particular prayer vigil. (Matthew 26:44)

But the real heart of prayer, Jesus teaches us here, is simplicity before God.

#### **“Pray then like this...” Matthew 6:9**

Jesus' instruction is to pray “like this” – not “**what** you should pray.” Jesus gives us **a model to follow** to build our own prayers upon.

It's not wrong to speak these words as a prayer in itself. In Luke's Gospel, his quotation of Jesus is slightly different. He quotes Jesus as introducing his teaching on prayer with these words: **“When you pray, say... “(Luke 11:2)**

**Matthew's** wording emphasizes the use of this prayer as **a model**. **Luke's** wording justifies the use of this prayer as **a form**. Either is acceptable to God, provided the heart is right!

#### **“Our Father in heaven...” Matthew 6:9**

When we say, “Our Father in heaven” we place side by side **two important truths** about God that need to be kept in balance – on one hand, we have the closeness (immanence) of God in His love and mercy, and on the other hand, we have the majesty (transcendence) of God in His power and holiness.

**First, notice that God is “Our Father” – He is close.**

The problem with the many-worded prayers of the Gentiles was not their length or their many words, but their view of God.

They thought God was a distant, impersonal being who needed to be browbeaten or impressed by religious show to cause him to pay attention to human need. But for those who have come into His family through faith in Jesus His Son, he is “Our Father.”

Jesus brought God close. He even used the contemporary term of endearment for fathers, “**Abba**,” which roughly means “dearest father,” in reference to God and the apostles followed his example. (Mark 14:36; Galatians 4:6)

**How do you become a child of the Father?** The Bible says that Jesus makes everyone who puts his or her trust and faith in him a child of God. John tells us of Jesus that...

**“to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” John 1:12**

A man once recounted one of the most memorable days of his life. His newly-adopted 5 year old son, who had come from an overseas orphanage, was riding next to him in the car and suddenly placed his hand on his new father’s leg and said with great thought, “Father, son.” It was a wonderful day for that father but even more significant for that little boy. The day that we come to realize, “Father, son” or “Father, daughter” is one of the most important days in our lives!

Is God your Father in heaven? Are you one of His children through faith in Jesus His Son?

If you are, then He loves you and wants you to come to him with your needs in prayer.

**Second, notice that God is “Our Father in heaven” – He is majestic**

The disciples were raised in a culture that referred to God with terms of high reverence. They were more used to terms like: “King of the Universe,” or “Sovereign Lord.” When Jesus introduced the term “Father” he created a revolution in the way that people viewed their relationship with God. They must have spoken their first, “Our Fathers” with great trembling!

They worshipped in the temple in Jerusalem where only the High Priest could enter the central chamber of the temple, the Holy of Holies and that only once a year to worship before the Lord. Entering that place in an improper way could spell death for the priest – and as the people stood outside and waited to see if the priest would emerge they trembled with a sense of awe at God’s holiness.

If the disciples needed the encouragement and warmth of Jesus’ “Abba, Father” to draw them into God’s presence, it seems to me that we need the corrective of

“in heaven” to balance our view of God. As Jesus himself prayed in John 17, we need to remember that he is...

**“Holy Father...” John 17:11**  
**“O righteous Father” John 17:25**

And as Jesus prayed later in Matthew’s Gospel...

**“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth...” Matthew 11:25**

As a child, I remember no fear being attached to the church building. Like the kids in our fellowship, I ran the back halls and even hid in the baptistery while playing tag with my friends – being in the church was always a warm memory for me – AND I HOPE IT IS FOR THE CHILDREN HERE TOO!

But we need to remember that our Father is still “King of the Universe,” and the “Sovereign Lord” over all the heavens.

He is all-powerful – He is able to answer our prayers.

He is all-knowing – He knows what we need even before we ask it.

He is ever-present – He lives in the heights of heaven and with those who are humble in heart.

He is holy – He is without evil or weakness.

He is unchanging & faithful – He keeps his promises to the end of time.

And when we pray, Jesus says, **our first priority** as His children is to seek **the Father’s glory**, not our own good.

**“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:9-10**

There are three prayers for the Father’s glory imbedded in Jesus’ instruction.

**First, we pray for the glory of His name -- “hallowed be your name”**

“Hallow” means to hold something in reverence, to set something apart as sacred. When we pray, “hallowed be your name” we’re praying “Father, may you be given all the respect and honour and praise that is due You as God”

How do we “hallow” his name?

**1) By “hallowing” Him in our understanding**

We must accept Him, not as we want Him to be, but as He has chosen to reveal Himself in His Word. And as our understanding of Him becomes fully Biblical, our faith in Him grows and our understanding of His will increases.

**“And those who know your name put their trust in you,”** the Psalmist wrote, **“for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.” Psalm 9:10**

## **2) By “hallowing” Him in our worship**

King David put it this way in **Psalms 34:3: “Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!”**

We do that when we sing His praise! Notice the words of the songs we sung this morning. Notice how full they are of Scripture and Scripture truth!

- **“By Faith”** – “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2)
- **“My Faith Has Found a Resting Place”** – “I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)
- **“Our Great Saviour”** – “Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.” (Titus 2:13, 14)
- **“Before the Throne of God Above”** – “Behold,” says the LORD, “I have engraved you on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:16)
- **“Speak, O Lord”** – “Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.” (1 Samuel 3:9)

These songs are not warm-ups for the sermon – they are at the heart of what worship is all about – hallowing and exalting the name of God together!

## **3) By “hallowing” Him with our lives**

When we say, ‘Hallowed be your name,’ we are praying, ‘May the whole of my life be a source of delight to you and may it be an honour to the name which I bear, which is your name.’” We find the same sense in David’s prayer:

**“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.” Psalm 19:14**

**Second, we pray for the glory of His kingdom – “Your kingdom come...”**

When we pray for the Father’s kingdom to come, we praying ...

### **1) that people will confess the Father as their King & Saviour**

Jesus was asked by a rich young man: **“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17)** Jesus told him to sell everything he had and follow him.

- We're told the man went away sad, and watching him walk away, Jesus said to his disciples: **"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."** (Mark 10:25)
- The disciples were troubled by this and asked Jesus, **"Who then can be saved?"** (Mark 10:26)

The young man wanted to know about **eternal life** – Jesus talked to him about **the Kingdom of God**.

Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God – the disciples heard him talk about **being saved**.

You see, at rock bottom, **entering the kingdom of God is being saved, receiving eternal life**, coming into relationship with and under the rule of the King of kings.

## **2) that believers will live like citizens of the Father's Kingdom**

Cf. **Col. 3:15** **"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts."** Now that we've come to know the King, he wants us to demonstrate the beauty of His rule in our lives before the world.

Does Christ reign in every area of your life? Are there areas that need to be surrendered to His rule?

## **3) that Jesus will return to completely establish the Father's kingdom**

When Jesus comes again He will finally bring peace & justice to this broken, hurting planet. **"Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"** (Revelation 22:20)

**Our third prayer for the Father's glory is for the glory of His will -- "your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."**

This, as Bible teacher Eric Alexander says, is the essence of all prayer. It cures us of trying to use prayer as a way of bending God to our will.

We submit to His will and pray that His will and purpose will be carried out throughout the earth.

It's not a grudging resignation to whatever happens as being "God's will" because we acknowledge that God's will is perfect & good. On earth, it is very difficult at times to see God's will in operation. The presence of human rebellion and sin has so marred the order of creation that at times it appears as if things are out of God's control. With this prayer Jesus releases us from the burden of fatalism by encouraging us to pray that God's will be done on earth in visible ways, as it is always visibly done in heaven.

This is not an easy prayer to pray. Let's bring the whole issue of God's will being done very close to home. Forget for a moment the trials of mass murderers and the tragedies of mudslides & disease – one of the prime zones of rebellion against the will of God is right here, in your life and mine!

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a Baptist preacher of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who prayed this prayer regularly:

**“Father, your will be done, and done in me.”**

**Does it make any difference for us to pray for God's glory to be accomplished? Will our simple prayers really make a difference?**

Brian Roennfeldt is a pastor in Perth, Australia. His wife, Angie, had attended a very rough high school in her youth. There were very few Christians there apart from one teacher, a man named David Bunton.

Dozens of his students eventually became Christians after graduation and years after he left the school, many of them entered the ministry as pastors and missionaries. Roennfeldt tracked down David Bunton, retired and in his 70s, to ask how he could account for this.

Bunton was choked with emotion when he heard about the many conversions since he taught in that school. How could his influence have brought such a harvest?

He told Roennfeldt that many times he had prayed softly over his classes as he sat back in his desk and watched them work. **But apart from this, he had done nothing to influence these students toward Christ.**

**“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”**

Our first priority in prayer is for God's glory, but **our second priority** is to pray for **our own good.**

**“Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Matthew 6:11-13**

There are three petitions directed to the Father's glory and three directed to our good.

**First, we bring our present needs to the Father – “Give us this day our daily bread”**

The affluence of our society blinds us to the utter dependence we have on God’s gifts to us.

But sometimes all it takes to remind us of how much of life is beyond our control is a quick, unexpected change:

- Natural disasters that destroy our source of livelihood
- Sudden injury or illness that rob us of the ability to work
- Economic changes beyond our control that steal our jobs

We really don’t have “control” of our lives. The only One who is in control is the Father whose throne is in heaven and His promise is that He **“will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”** **Philippians 4:19-20**

Our **needs**, not our wants, or our likes, or our wishes or our daydreams – our needs! God promises us bread, not dessert!

Do you need a job? A car? A house? Health?  
 Do you need help with moving? A new suit for a new job?  
 Do you need a babysitter so you can go to an important event?

A woman asked the Bible teacher, G. Campbell Morgan, “Do you think we ought to pray about even the little things in life?” Dr. Morgan wisely replied, “Madam, can you think of anything in your life that is BIG to God?”

Nothing is too little to bring to God.

**Second, we bring our past failures to the Father – “and forgive us our debts”**

Jesus says we have a debt. In fact, He says we have “debts.” **What debts do we owe?**

One day Jesus was asked a question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied...

**“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”** **Matthew 22:37-40**

Question: Have you and I, today, loved God with all you heart, soul and mind? If no, then we have a debt.

Question: Have you and I, today, loved our neighbour as ourselves? If no, then, we have a debt.

And we begin to realize the enormity of the debt when we simply understand that next Sunday and the Sunday after that and the Sunday after that for the rest of our lives, our answer to these two questions will be the same. No, we haven't loved God with everything we have. No, we haven't loved our neighbour as we should. **Our debts just keep growing!**

We need our debt cancelled. We desperately need forgiveness.

Here are some things that Bible says God does with our debts:

- ◆ **He casts them into the sea (Micah 7:19)**
  - ◆ **He takes them away (Isaiah 6:7)**
  - ◆ **He covers them up (Psalm 32:1)**
    - ◆ **He blots them out (Acts 3:19)**
  - ◆ **He puts them away (Hebrews 9:26)**
- ◆ **He remembers them no more (Hebrews 8:12)**
  - ◆ **He forgives them all (1 John 1:9)**

“and forgive us our debts, **as we also have forgiven our debtors.**”

Jesus' words here almost suggest that our forgiveness depends upon our forgiving of others. And in a way it does.

It isn't that we earn or deserve forgiveness by being forgiving. It's simply this – **the person who refuses to forgive is unable to receive forgiveness.** When we realize the enormity of our debt to God, how can we withhold forgiveness from someone else? A refusal to forgive is an indicator that we have never fully comprehended the enormity of our sin debt to God and our desperate need of His grace and mercy.

For those who are struggling with forgiveness – keep working at it. Some deep hurts can't easily be forgiven and this word isn't directed to you. But for those who **refuse** to forgive – **you stand on dangerous spiritual ground.** This is the second time in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus has touched on the need to be forgiving. Earlier he declared...

**“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Matthew 5:7**

And twice in Matthew 6, Jesus deals with the necessity to forgive those who have wronged us. He elaborates on the need to forgive others by saying...

**“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Matthew 6:14-15**

Do you think He’s trying to tell us something? Do you want forgiveness? Of course you do! Then forgive.

**Finally, we bring our future challenges to the Father – “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [OR] from the evil one.”**

Would God ever lead one of his dearly loved children into temptation? Let me focus the question even more closely: Would God ever lead His dearly beloved, One & only Son into temptation?

The answer is: **Yes.**

You see, Jesus, God’s beloved Son, is instructing his followers out of his own, personal experience. This is not an abstract, hypothetical kind of prayer that Jesus instructs his followers to pray. Just two chapters back in Matthew’s Gospel, at the beginning of chapter 4, we read these words:

**“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” Matthew 4:1**

Why would God do that?

James tells us that God tempts no man to evil (James 1:13) but God does test us. Temptation comes from the evil one who plays to our sinful tendencies to destroy us. And Jesus’ instruction to us is to pray that God will enable us to endure whatever temptation He would allow the evil one to bring us.

Satan tempts us to evil but God tests us to develop our character and faith. Moses told the people of Israel that the reason God had led them through a 40-year period of testing was ...

**“that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.” Deuteronomy 8:2**

A young man decided to grow peaches. He went all out, investing everything he had to develop the orchard. But disaster struck one spring when a heavy frost wiped out most of the peach blossoms. When Sunday came he wasn’t in church. The next week he was absent again. And the same thing followed true the following Sunday.

His pastor became concerned and went to visit him. The young man declared: "I'm not going to church anymore! Do you think I can worship a God who cares so little for me that He will let a frost kill all my peaches?"

The minister replied, "God loves you better than He does your peaches. He knows that while peaches do better without frosts, it is impossible to grow the best men without frosts. **God's objective is to grow men," the preacher said to him, "not peaches."**

This morning, would you join me in prayer? We're going to use the words most familiar to us all, the language of the King James Version, and we're going to include the concluding phrase that the ESV doesn't include.

I don't have time this morning to explain why most modern translations omit these words. Whether or not Jesus actually spoke the final phrase or not, it is a fully Biblical conclusion to this wonderful prayer. (Cf. 1 Chronicles 29:11-12)

Let's pray together:

**Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil:  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Invitation to Prayer Ministry**

**Final Song:** The Doxology (#815)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow.  
Praise Him, all creatures here below.  
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host.  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.  
Amen.**

**Benediction**