

I want you to open your Bible or iPad, iPhone this morning, to Matthew chapter 6, and I just want to read a couple of verses there in Matthew 6 in the Sermon on the Mount.

As you know, we're in a series currently about worship and for a few weeks we will talk about prayer and worship.

I want to begin by looking at Matthew 6:9 and 10, these familiar words of our Lord.

"Pray then in this way, 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'"

Very familiar words to us. This is the substantive, foundational, basic teaching that our Lord gave us on how to pray. This is "How to Pray 101."

We spoke last week about the cosmic coke machine concept of worship, Sometimes we view prayer like a take away Chinese food order.

It works like this: know what you want; believe you will receive it; visualize its arrival; and speak it into existence on the phone then send someone in the family to do the pick up. This is essentially becomes the principle of prayer. Know what you want, that's where it starts. If you don't know what you want, this thing isn't going to get off the ground. Believe you will receive it. Visualize its appearance. And then your words in that context can speak it into existence. This is called the law of attraction; you will attract what you create by your faith expressed in is this how is supposed to work?. One writer says, and I quote, "It works every time; just place your order." In fact, they tell us that when you pray that way, you shift the universe to make your desires happen for you. This is how millions of people are being taught to pray around the world, decide what you want, believe you're going to get it, visualize receiving it, and speak it into existence. You create whatever you want.

The list is all material: health, wealth, success, prosperity, privilege. You speak in this kind of prayer faith-words that bring into existence what you want. God is just sitting up there waiting to be activated.

Let me have you look with me at James chapter 4 for a moment, James chapter 4. Here is a perspective that I think these people need to have, and it would do you well to have it as well, lest you be drawn away by this. In James chapter 4 and verse 3 we read familiar words, "

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions
"You ask and do not receive." You ask God and you don't receive. Why? Because you ask with wrong motives. What is your wrong motive? You want to spend it on your desires.

So here's a new principle that I would like to advocate. Whatever you ask simply because you desire it, you may not get. James says you ask and you do not receive because you are asking to satisfy your own pleasures.

What does that mean? We have deviated from your true love, who is God, and you're having an affair with the world.

So I just want to talk about that for about a half an hour, a little bit, and show you some illustrations of the appropriate kind of praying.

just to begin, prayers in the Bible are for the most part very brief, very brief.

I've been reading through Psalm 119, and you might consider Psalm 119 as a prayer. Certainly there are statements made in that psalm, of course, from beginning to end, that are directed at God about His Word, it isn't technically a prayer; it is simply a recitation of the psalmist's love for and trust in the Word of God. But it certainly has components of prayer in that he praises God for

His Word, and he acknowledges his sin and all of that. But it's not technically a prayer. It's a...it's a...it's sort of a prayer of praise for the glory of Scripture.

If you eliminate Psalm 119 in the sense of a prayer, the longest prayer in the entire Old Testament is Nehemiah chapter 9, and it runs from verse 5 to verse 38, and you can read it in seven minutes. The longest prayer in the New Testament would be John 17--the prayer of our Lord Jesus--and there's 26 verses, and you can read it in less than seven minutes. Those are the longest prayers in the Old Testament and the New Testament. So I'm saying to you that prayer in the Scripture tends to be brief. The longest in the Old, seven minutes; the longest in the New, perhaps less than that.

For example, here's a prayer,

Luke 18:13, the prayer of the publican: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Amen." Here's another prayer,

Luke 23:42, the thief on the cross: "Remember me when You come in Your kingdom.

Here's the shortest prayer in the Bible,

"Lord, save me."

Remember who prayed that prayer? Peter when he was sinking. He didn't get very verbal; it was pretty simple, "Lord, save me." Most of the prayers in the Scripture are very brief, very terse, very pointed, very specific, very simple, and very clear.

Yes, we know that Jesus prayed longer prayers to His Father. Yes we know, according to Luke 6:12, He spent all night in prayer, and He did that frequently with His Father in that divine communication. We don't have any records of those prayers.

The only private prayer we have of Jesus is John 17, those 26 verses.

Well, what was He doing all night? Well, there's no question about the fact that He was communing with the Father as one member of the Trinity to the other, and in some kind of divine conversation that would be beyond our comprehension. It wouldn't have been one long, multi-hour prayer, but it could have been a series of short, punctuated, brief, passionate communications with the Father. He spent all night in prayer. He loved the solitude when He could commune with the Father for a prolonged period of time. But those were the private prayers; those were the closet prayers. His public prayers were all very short, very brief, very plain, very direct, like this prayer that we read about in Matthew 6. And I only read you the first half; the last half goes,

"Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses"...our sins..."and lead us not into temptation"

--very brief, very to the point.

This is not to say that there's no place for long prayers, pouring out the heart. The prayers that you see in the Bible are prayers of passion, prayers of urgency, prayers of eagerness, prayers of zeal. And they tend to be short and to the point.

The disciples come to Jesus in Luke 11, even after they've heard the Sermon on the Mount and heard the instruction I read to you in chapter 6. They come to Him later in Luke 11 and they say, "Lord, teach us to pray."

How is it that we can learn to pray the way You pray? So this is public, that they've heard Him pray. He can't teach them to commune with the Father all night in that intra-Trinitarian communion, but He can teach them how He prayed in front of them. So they ask in Luke 11:1, "Teach us to pray." And He gave them this short prayer that you can recite very quickly.

It is succinct; it is unpretentious; there are no wasted words; there is no repetition; there is no ostentation; there is no ceremony; there's no redundancy.

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us our bread. Forgive us our sins. Lead us not into temptation"...

That's the prayer.

And it starts with worship!!!

Big thought!

Worship and prayer are connected

I will go so far as to say they can not be separated.m

The Lord's Prayer is a pattern for praying that starts with worship and guess what, finishes with it too. It's a pattern for praying pointedly, directly, specifically, clearly, simply. That's the big picture. But I want to narrow that down. But primarily--and this is what I'm after today--primarily it is an expression of worship, and as it is the prayer Jesus teaches us, it is our template for prayer.

But first the sinner is a worshiper, a worshiper.

As I said, Sometimes I think we would think of worship as different than prayer. But it can't be divorced, you can't worship without communing with God and communing with God is prayer.

True prayer is the distilled essence of worship, while many think of prayer as nothing more than a way to get what they want, reducing prayer to some kind of a selfish superstition.

If prayer is anything, it is the highest form of worship that an individual can participate in because prayer is saying,

"God, Your name, Your kingdom, Your will be elevated; not my will, not my kingdom, not my name."

The disciples' prayer then is instruction on how to worship, and when you worship personally it's in this way.

Prayer is said to be the highest form of worship, the highest form of worship.

And along the way,

1 John 5:14 says, "You can have this confidence, that if we ask anything according to His will. He hears us and we have the petitions we ask, according to His will."

Do you want something God doesn't want for you? I want everything God wants for me. Godly prayer is worship, acknowledging His sovereign will and our utter dependence, confessing His glory and our sin, affirming our reliance on His wisdom, His grace, His power, His preservation, His protection, and confessing our own impotence and weakness. The God-centered nature of the disciples' prayer is obvious--Your name, Your kingdom, Your will.

. The purpose of all prayer is God's honor, God's purpose, God's glory,

Not ever yep never to advance my name, my enterprises, my desires, my success. That, dear friends, is taking the Lord's name in vain, and God will not hear that kind of prayer.

Let's go to the Bible and look at a few, very briefly, of the really amazing prayers. Go back to Jeremiah 32, Jeremiah 32. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. Why was he called the weeping prophet? Because he was crying all the time. Why was he crying all the time? Because nobody would listen to what he said. Was he crying because he took it personally? No, he was crying because he understood what would happen to the people because they didn't listen. He was a prophet and warned people of consequences if ignoring God. He wasn't crying because he wasn't popular, he was crying because judgment was going to fall on their heads and they were going to be destroyed in the Babylonian captivity when the Chaldeans invaded, and that's exactly what happened. Jeremiah preached again and again, and again and again to the people. They wouldn't hear him; they wouldn't listen to him. Instead they listened to false preachers; they listened to false prophets; they listened to lying prophets. They wouldn't listen to the truth.

They finally took Jeremiah and they captured him and they imprisoned him. When you come to chapter 32, he's been thrown in prison. He's a prisoner. It's a sad end to this amazingly faithful man. He has been abused, mistreated, maligned, and now thrown in a pit, in a pit. For all he knows, they're going to kill him. No measurable success, nobody listening to him; he says, "Your words were found and I did eat them. They were in me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." I heard; I believed; I rejoiced in Your truth, no one else.

In response to that, in the pit he prays. And I want you to see the character of his prayer. He's praying in the pit. Now from a charismatic standpoint, what he needs to do is speak a new reality into existence. First of all, he needs to decide that he doesn't want to be in a pit; he wants to be in a palace. And then he has to believe that he can be in a palace, he has to visualize himself in a palace and then speak it into existence.

That's not what he does. Verse 17 is his prayer, I want you to notice the nature of this prayer-- hungry, if not starving; lonely; devastated because he knows a crushing judgment is going to fall on his people.

Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you

He affirms that this has happened to him within the will of God because God is almighty, all powerful.

Not only that, he's kind and loving.

Look at this (18-19)

You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds

What's he doing? What's he doing? He's worshiping God. He's praising God.

"Hallowed be"...What?... "Your name."

This is praise.

Interesting, Do you see any requests there? There aren't any.

"No Lord, get me out of this pit. No, Lord, why are You letting this happen to me?"

None; there is no request.

There's nothing about his pain; there's nothing about his suffering; there's nothing about his rejection; there's nothing about his dilemma; there's nothing about hope for the future. He celebrates the power and the sovereignty and the lovingkindness and the justice and the judgment of God.

"And the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying,

'I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?'"

You're right, Jeremiah. Jeremiah rested in the sovereign decisions that God would make, that they were just, they were loving toward the faithful, that nothing was outside His power--no requests.

An even deeper dilemma is found in the story of a man named Jonah. Go to Jonah chapter 2. In chapter 1, Jonah gets picked up, according to verse 15, and thrown into the sea. The sea stops raging and God appoints a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah's in this thing for three days and three nights. This is unbelievable. A man in the toxic, acidic belly of a great fish for three days and three nights--this could generate some prayer requests. "Get me out of here." If Jonah knew the positive confession approach, all he needed to do was decide that he would rather be in a cruise ship, believe he could be in a cruise ship, visualize a cruise ship, then speak it into existence.

So Jonah prayed. He starts to pray in chapter 2:1 to 10.

“I called out of my distress to the Lord, and He answered me. And I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice. You had cast me into the deep, in the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me.”

He’s looking back and describing the event of praying there.

Then in verse 4 he says, “So I said,” so here’s his prayer. “I have been expelled from Your sight.” That’s the first thing he said, “Lord, I’m down here in this fish, a long way from where I can be seen.” “Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.” Wow! “Water encompassed me to the point of death,” he says, looking back, “and the deep engulfed me, and weeds were wrapped around my head and I descended to the roots of the mountains”—you know, the mountains in the sea, all the way down to the foot of the mountains, down in the depth of the sea. “The earth with its bars was around me forever, but You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. While I was fainting away”...Here’s his prayer...“I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple. Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, but I will sacrifice to You with the voice of”...What?...“thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord.” He’s having a praise service down there.

Did you notice there’s no request here? There’s not one request in this prayer. He doesn’t ask for anything.

That kind of theology and that kind of worship was too much for the fish and it vomited Jonah up. Not one single request. He just recognized God--God is sovereign; God is holy; God in His temple; God high and lifted up--all for the glory of God.

One other illustration in this kind of praying, which is the epitome of worship, can be found in Daniel’s life in the ninth chapter of Daniel. In the ninth chapter of Daniel, Daniel, of course as you remember, is sort of caught in the transition between the Babylonian Empire and the Medo-Persian. The Babylonians had conquered Jerusalem, taken Daniel captive with his three friends when they were young. Eventually Daniel rises to power, as you know. There’s a transition during Daniel’s life. The Medo-Persians take over the kingdom from the Babylonians and so Daniel is caught in the transition between these two massive world empires and he’s interceding for his people. He wants his people to go back to the land and be restored. And that’s the nature of his prayer.

And what generates it is in chapter 9. He’s reading Jeremiah, according to verse 2. He’s reading Jeremiah the prophet and in Jeremiah chapter 25 and Jeremiah 29, Jeremiah says that the captivity will be seventy years. Jeremiah said that before it happened. And so he reads that and he says, “Wow, the seventy years are almost up so I’m going to pray--I’m going to pray that the Lord will deliver this people.” It’s been a horrendous issue. They were taken captive in three deportations, the last one in 586, thousands upon thousands, tens of thousands were slaughtered and massacred. Jerusalem was destroyed; the temple was destroyed; the people were hauled off captive from the southern kingdom of Judah. They had been in that pagan land, compromised as you know. And you know the whole story of the lion’s den and all of that and how they were mistreated. It’s a terrible story of what’s happened to these people.

Daniel decides to intercede. Since the Scripture says seventy years, he’s going to say, “Okay, God, would You honor that promise?” Verse 3, “I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, in sackcloth and ashes.”

He comes humbly in a broken way. Sackcloth and ashes was a demonstration of one's own humiliation. Comes fasting and he prayed.

Verse 4, "I You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds to the Lord my God and I confessed and said"Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments."

That's "hallowed by Your name," isn't it? "Your kingdom come, Your will be done." He's affirming the glory of God. This is the purest form of personal worship--prayer, prayer that praises God.

And the second component is, verse 5, "We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, rebelled, turning from Your commandments and ordinances." That's how you pray. You pray, "Your will, Your name, Your glory, and I'm a sinner, and I deserve nothing, be merciful to me." That's how he prayed.

By the way, the plural pronouns mean that he identified with the sins of his people.

"We have not obeyed, the voice of the Lord our God to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which was written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him."

He just goes back and forth between the sinfulness of man and the righteousness of God. That's the essence of true worship.

Here's the problem that Daniel has. God, Your reputation is suffering cause the nations are saying, "What kind of God is the God of Israel? He couldn't protect them from the Babylonians. The Babylonians came, wiped out Jerusalem, massacred tens of thousands of people, destroyed the temple, hauled the rest off in captivity. What kind of God is the God of Israel?" This is a shift because there was a long time there when everybody said, "You better be careful of the God of Israel; look what He did to the Egyptians." The God of Israel is the mighty God who delivered them out of Egypt. Now, all of a sudden, the reputation of God has changed in the pagan world. And Daniel is concerned about the name of God. Your city and Your name are a reproach.

Then look at verse 17, how he concludes the prayer.

"So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary"...

for Your name, Your kingdom, Your glory...

So how do I pray?

Whatever glorifies Your name.

Whatever advances Your name.

Whatever extends Your kingdom.

Whatever accomplishes Your will.

That's how we pray.

That's how Jeremiah in the most horrible of circumstances prayed. That's how Jonah in the most frightening of circumstances prayed. And that's how Daniel in the most desperate of circumstances prayed. That's how we pray.

These men, these three prophets, gathered up all praise, all adoration, all humiliation, all confession and brought it before God. The glory, the greatness, the majesty of God, the humiliation, sinfulness, the wretchedness, the unworthiness of man--that is the stuff of real praying.

So I say again, prayer is the most distilled essence of personal worship. And if it is to be worship, then it's going to be like this, where you're calling on God's glory and not your own promotion. Jesus said, "Father, glorify Your name." And the Father essentially said, "I have and I will."