

Matthew 6:5-15  
 Praying the Way of the King  
 Tampa Covenant Church  
 25 January 2026

Proposition: Because our heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask, Jesus teaches us to offer prayers that align our hearts with kingdom priorities over our own.

FCF: We are prone to practice righteousness to be seen by others over being rewarded by the Father in secret.

RHF: Jesus Christ is our true righteousness who perfectly submitted to the will of the Father; enabling us to pray and live in the way of our king to the praise of his glorious of his name.

### **(#1) Introduction:**

In Matt 6, Jesus opens this section of the Sermon on the Mount with a clear warning: His disciples must guard against practicing their righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, because the Father doesn't reward "look at me" righteousness. Jesus then applies this warning to three religious practices that were common in that day; giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting. And in each case, the pattern is the same: *when you give, when you pray, when you fast*; do not be like the hypocrites, seeking the approval of others.

Jesus is drilling down on motivation; why we do the things we do. And the point is clear, when we seek affirmation in the here and now over the Father's promise of reward in the life to come, our kingdom priorities become misaligned. If we are to walk in the way of the King, our spiritual practices must flow from a heart of gratitude and love for our king in light of his great love for us. And it's with that framework in place that Jesus teaches us how to pray. So today, we'll focus on the section commonly known as the Lord's Prayer and discover how Jesus teaches us to offer prayers that align our hearts with the priorities of God's kingdom over our own.

### **Warning:** *Don't be like the Hypocrites and Gentiles*

Jesus begins this instruction **(#2) on prayer by saying:** *when you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. They love to pray in the synagogues and street corners; to be seen by others.* Jesus is not condemning their piety but he's going after the motive of their hearts.<sup>1</sup> They're seeking their own glory rather than the glory of God. In the ancient world, a "hypocrite" referred to an "actor", someone on stage, pretending to be something they were not for the sake of an audience.<sup>2</sup> That's what these religious leaders were doing and Jesus is clear; they're receiving their reward in the form of shallow, fleeting and empty praises. And the **(#3) antidote to** this hypocritical behavior: *is to "go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* The word "room" here denotes an "inner room"<sup>3</sup>, like a storeroom, or closet; meaning it's private. And it's there the Father meets us. It's there his presence is with us; it's there we fellowship with him...that's the true reward and it points to the heavenly reward awaiting us in a new heaven and new earth.

**(#4 Blank) We know this** very well but there's that thing inside all of us that wants to be seen and validated. And when that selfish desire creeps into our prayer lives; the scale tips and we shift from sincerity before God in prayer to putting on a show for others. Jesus is not condemning public prayers. Rather, he's teaching us that it's better to rest in the Father's approval in prayer than to play to an audience. True prayer begins in secret. If we're not regularly seeking the face of the Lord when no one is watching; we run the risk of putting

on a show when others are. And so, if we want to become a church that's vibrant in prayer then the call for us is to go into our inner rooms and seek the face of our heavenly Father and then witness how it all overflows authentically into the life of our covenant community and beyond.

**(#5) Now in vv.7-8,** Jesus adds another warning. This time it's against babbling in prayer that treats God like the pagans treated their gods. He says, *"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. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."* Notice, Jesus says they think their prayers will be heard because of the high word count. It's like that anxious child, repeating themselves over and over to get their parent's attention; thinking they're being ignored. Jesus is saying; it's not necessary because our heavenly Father already knows what we need before we ask.

**(#6 Blank) Therefore, we can** rest assured he hears us and this should calm us down a little bit. The idea of God knowing<sup>4</sup> our need before we ask means he not only "knows" but he also "understands." Think of the last time you spoke to someone and every time you opened your mouth they responded with *"I know, I know."* You'd get the sense you're being dismissed; leaving you pretty frustrated. And you find yourself thinking or saying, *"You know everything but do you understand what I'm saying?"* It speaks to the fact we sometimes hear what another person is saying but we're not listening to understand. Our Heavenly Father doesn't dismiss us with *"I know, I know."* Even though he knows and understands us better than we know ourselves; he still takes the time to patiently listen to us whenever we approach him in prayer.

**Teaching:** *First Three Petitions (Kingdom Priorities)*

With those warnings in mind, Jesus now tells his disciples and us; pray then like this. Now he's not giving us a formula to repeat but a model of prayer that's meant to shape the way we pray in aligning our hearts **(#7)** according to his kingdom priorities:

"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.

One of the joys in my life right now is listening to my grandsons pray: They usually start with *"Dear Lord..."* followed by a list of thank-yous: *Thank you for my mommy. Thank you for my daddy. Thank you for my brother. Thank you for my dog.* Then finally, the grandparents get a shout out! No doubt they lack the form of this prayer but the childlike sincerity of heart cannot be dismissed; that's what Jesus is getting at. And this prayer is a reminder that none of us are born knowing how to pray. We had to be taught and it's something we continually grow into by the grace of God.

**(#8) This prayer** consists of six petitions; the first three are “God centered” and the final “three are we centered.” And what’s beautiful about it is that it’s grounded in our relationship with God. Since we’ve been united to Christ by faith, **(#9) we now share** in his relationship with the Father. So, who the Son calls Father, we call Father; not because of bloodline but because of grace. Through the work of our triune God, we’ve been adopted into his family,<sup>5</sup> where we’re given the childlike language to approach him with love, honor and dependence.<sup>6</sup>

And when we recognize who we’re praying to; we don’t start with a list of our needs and wants. Rather, we begin by seeking to align ourselves with the kingdom priorities of **(#10) our heavenly Father:** That his name would be honored above all things, that his kingdom would come, and that his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The Shorter Catechism tells us, when we pray for God’s kingdom to come, we’re praying for 1) Satan’s kingdom to be destroyed (*everything contrary to the will of God*), 2) and that the kingdom of grace would be advanced; in ourselves and others. 3) and that the kingdom of glory would be hastened; when Christ’s reign would be fully revealed.<sup>7</sup> In other words, we’re acknowledging that a spiritual battle is raging, and praying for the light of God’s glory in Christ to continually break through darkness, and that grace and truth would prevail in us and through us.

**(#11) Puritan theologian** Thomas Watson once said, “*Many people aspire for the kingdom of glory, but they never look after the kingdom of grace.*”<sup>8</sup> It really does speak to how we can treat the Christian life like a lazy river at a hotel resort. Just kick back and float downstream as we await Christ’s return. That’s not how the kingdom of grace advances. **(#12 Blank) It advances** when we shut the door to the store room and sit with our Father in prayer. And it’s in the quiet places of prayer that we learn to know, obey and submit to his will in all things. Because if we truly believe that God’s kingdom has already broken into history in the person of Jesus Christ then we’re called to exemplify his reign in our lives; right here, right now.

In other words, the world should be able to look at the life of God’s people and catch a glimpse of what heaven is like; so much so that they’re drawn to the future kingdom we’re already living out in this present age.<sup>9</sup> When the kingdom of grace is being tended to in prayer, we live lives shaped in anticipation of the glory that will one day be fully revealed. With that, Jesus now moves to the next three petitions that teach us to trust in our heavenly Father as we seek to live faithfully in this world.<sup>10</sup>

**Teaching:** *Second Three Petitions (Dependence)*

**(#13) I look at these** three petitions and they all scream dependence; which can be an abrasive word in this self-absorbed and self-promoting culture we live in. One that catechizes us to take credit for just about everything: success, achievement, and even our morality. You know the narrative, “*work hard and you’ll achieve all your dreams*”, “*Don’t let anyone tell you can’t do something*”, “*If we don’t plan for the future, we plan to fail*”, etc... But Jesus is teaching us to pray as people who know better: 1) Give us this day our daily bread, 2) forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors, 3) lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. None of the petitions say “*we got this.*” They all say our heavenly Father’s got this. Again, he doesn’t dismiss us with “*I know, I know*” rather he knows and he understands our neediness. Daily bread reminds us that every good gift we receive comes from his hand. Forgiveness reminds us that we cannot clean up our act or justify ourselves before him. And the plea for protection reminds us that we’re not strong enough to withstand temptation on our own. Together, these petitions strip away the illusion of

independence and teach us to live one day at a time, totally dependent on our heavenly Father; trusting in his grace every step of the way.

**(#14) Notice here in** vv.14-15, Jesus circles back to this issue of forgiveness. He does so because nothing exposes whether we're truly resting in the Father's grace than how we respond when someone sins against us. Jesus says, *"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."* What we learn from Jesus' words is that forgiveness is a kingdom priority. So much so that the forgiveness we receive from God is evidenced in our forgiveness of others; there's an interdependency here.<sup>11</sup> Not in the sense that our forgiveness of others somehow earns God's forgiveness, but that those who've been forgiven much; forgive **(#15) much**. Recall the 5<sup>th</sup> petition, we pray to be forgiven of our debts; as we also have forgiven our debtors.<sup>12</sup> You see, just as we depend on God to forgive our sins, we also depend on his grace to enable us to forgive those who sin against us.

**(#16 Blank) When someone** hurts and wounds us deeply. In a moral sense, they become debtors and we the creditors. And as creditors, we want to collect and balance the ledger in wanting them to hurt just as much as we hurt. So, we sit in judgment and try the offense with questions like, *how could you do that? What were you thinking?* And for a time, those questions may seem pretty natural. But all we're doing is moving further and further into hypocrisy in acting as if we've never placed ourselves in anyone's debt. Again, Jesus offers us the better way and it's not the easiest route but whoever said discipleship is easy? If it was; we wouldn't need Christ. So instead of nursing a quiet grudge or keeping the offense tucked away for future use; we absorb the loss.<sup>13</sup> We release the debt and refuse to let bitterness take root in our hearts. And in so doing, we align our hearts with the priorities of the kingdom. The point is this; forgiveness of others isn't based on our personalities (nice person) or our abilities (don't get offended easy). Rather it serves as the evidence that we've been forgiven of a far greater sin debt owed to God and demonstrates the ongoing work of his grace in our lives.<sup>14</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

And we can all admit that there are seasons in our lives when we fall short in prayer. But there's a real comfort that comes to us in knowing our Savior never fell short. Jesus not only taught us to pray like this but he lived this prayer for us; both in life and in death. On the night when he was betrayed with the agony of the cross before him. He withdrew to the garden of Gethsemane. There in the secret place, he prayed, *"Father, if it be possible; let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."* And though he had no sin to repent of nor forgiveness to receive; he fully submitted to the Father's will by becoming sin for us.

As he hung on that cross, he absorbed our sin debt and bore the weight of our guilt and shame so that we might be forgiven and made new in him. As we daily orient our lives to his in prayer; we're free to honor the Father and live our lives in full dependence on him. And through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, we come before our heavenly Father with confidence; not because we pray perfect prayers but because we're covered by the righteousness of Christ and upheld by his grace in every season of life. And so, we answer the call today to pray and live in the way of our king as we look for the day when his kingdom of grace gives way to his kingdom of glory, all to the praise of his most holy and glorious name.

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- <sup>1</sup> Moisés Silva, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- <sup>2</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985.
- <sup>3</sup> Ταμείον occurs as a loanword in rabbinic texts (*ṭamyôn*). In Luke 12:24 it clearly refers to a *storeroom* (with → ἀποθήκη, “silo, barn”; cf. also Deut 28:8); otherwise, depending on the context, it refers generally to a room within a house that can be closed off and remain invisible from the outside. Robert Horst Balz, , and Gerhard Schneider. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990–.
- <sup>4</sup> οἶδα (*oida*). vb. to have seen, to know. *Refers to the past act of seeing with the present effect of knowing what was seen.* *Oida* often connotes not only having knowledge but also being able to understand that knowledge. Jeremiah K. Garrett, “Knowledge.” Edited by Douglas Mangum, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, and Rebekah Hurst. *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Lexham Bible Reference Series. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014.
- <sup>5</sup> John D. Barry, and Rebecca Kruyswijk. *Connect the Testaments: A One-Year Daily Devotional with Bible Reading Plan*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012.
- <sup>6</sup> David Turner and Darrell L. Bock, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 11: Matthew and Mark* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 100.
- <sup>7</sup> See Westminster Shorter Catechism questions, 102-103.
- <sup>8</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Lord’s Prayer* (Monergism Books, 2016), PDF e-book, 93.
- <sup>9</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, vol. 1, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Mt 6:9–13.
- <sup>10</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 277.
- <sup>11</sup> Timothy Keller, *Forgive: Why Should I and How Can I?* (New York: Viking, 2012), 3.
- <sup>12</sup> ὀφείλημα (*opheilēma*), **sin**, moral debts (Mt 6:12+).
- <sup>13</sup> Keller, 9.
- <sup>14</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 149.