

Message Series Title: **A Prayer like No Other**

Message Title: **Prayer Begins with God**

Scripture Source: **Matthew 6: 5-13**

Teacher: John Garner

Date: Sunday, September 13, 2020

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### **An Instinct Within...to pray**

Most of us have experienced that deep stirring and compulsion to pray, to look up, to long for a spiritual connection with God, especially when life is hard or incredibly good. Illustrate: we pray for people in different kinds of crisis, for wisdom in significant decision making situations, for practical provisions in the face of scarcity, we plead for forgiveness for sins committed, we give thanks to God for mercy and goodness... the reasons to pray to God are almost limitless. Can you remember a time recently when you simply had to pray?

### **How Not To Pray: Matthew 6:5-8**

Jesus often taught using contrasts...don'ts and do's. This topic of prayer certainly manifests that approach. With probing brevity and candor, he instructs people how not to pray and gives compelling reasons for his heartfelt and thoughtful instruction.

1. Don't engage in a performance driven religious performance intended to impress others. Matthew 6:5. The issue is not primarily public prayer; the issue is motivation. Jesus is deeply concerned about the 'why' behind the 'what.' In his time, Jewish prayer times involved times of public prayers, sometimes announced with the call of a trumpet. Some people loved to be seen and heard as they offered their prayers...but who was their 'audience'? In too many cases, people...not God.

Jesus clearly states that the applause of others is their sole reward. Heaven is silent, unmoved by the religious performance.

Rather, take time to pray privately...just you and God. Honest private times of prayer can help us cultivate a humble and honest 'practice' of prayer in public settings where others are involved.

2. Don't think that volume of words is of primary importance to God or impresses him. Again, Jesus is not condemning prayers that are recited; rather, motivation matters...and how we perceive God. Do we think we can gain his favour by the kinds of prayers we pray? Jesus flatly says 'no.' Consider Ecclesiastes 5:2

### **How to Pray: Matthew 6:9-13: recite together**

An overview of this timely prayer: "There are six petitions in this prayer. The first three concern God directly: his name, his kingdom, his will...the following three...have to do with man directly: our daily food, our sins and our temptations." (D. Carson - The Sermon on the Mount)  
Genuine prayer to God acknowledges the majesty and gentle strength of God. What a way to begin prayer, with and to God!

#### **# 1. Matthew 5:9: 'Our Father':**

Jesus teaches us about how God yearns to be understood and related to by humans. "Our Father" By addressing God as Father, Jesus is doing something quite extraordinary in his day. "...how exceptional and how stunning Jesus' uses of this form of address must have been to his first followers. The Jews of this period preferred exalted titles for God, like 'Sovereign Lord', 'King of the Universe' and the like. Jesus called him Father. Matthew 11:25, 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36, John 11:41, 17:1...Abba...an Aramaic term used by children to address their father." (D. Carson)

Pause with me: How do you see and understand God? There are many perceptions and misperceptions 'out there' and within our minds and hearts. What have you been taught? Especially the truth of God being 'our Father?' That can be a hard concept to embrace if the experience...our

experience of an earthly father was...is...painful and difficult for any number of reasons. Trust may have been eroded or broken. How then do we learn to trust God as a heavenly Father?

We will need to address these very real barriers in our minds and hearts with a wise friend or Christian counsellor. Please understand that when we place our faith...a thoughtful faith, in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, we become a child of God. John 1:12. 1 John 3:1

God longs for you to see him primarily as Father, not a condemning Judge or an indifferent cosmic force 'out there', but as a good and wise Father.

### **# 2. Matthew 6:9: "in heaven"**

Our Father is a majestic, transcendent God. We need to remember and reflect upon the greatness of God.

Pause with me: I find Isaiah 40 tremendously instructive and at times corrective of my tendency to minimize the greatness and majesty of God. I also find Psalm 139 help me grasp the wonderful blend of 'majesty and mercy.' You may discover significant insights in these passages for your spiritual journey going forward.

### **# 3. Matthew 6:9: "hallowed be your name"**

This brief statement speaks of treating God with thoughtful respect and reverence. The word 'hallowed' means to "reverence, honour, consider holy and acknowledge the name of God, and therefore God himself." (D. Carson) In biblical times the names of God spoke directly to his attributes, his character. Illustrate:

Pause with me...how we need to cultivate a deepening reverence for our God and his Word. How we need to speak wisely and well of him. He is not 'the big guy upstairs.' He is our majestic and merciful Father God, revealed beautifully and powerfully in Jesus of Nazareth...his life, death and resurrection.

### **A Prayer Like No Other**

What have you gleaned this morning, from music and message that can help you pray more honestly and hopefully? What truth do you want to spend more time considering? And seeking to weave into the fabric of your heart and mind?

I want to encourage us to ponder this prayer on a daily basis for the next few weeks. Take note of how your understanding of God matures and even shifts to be more in line with Scriptures. Ask God to help you grow in being a person of faith, hope and love, rooted and shaped by this precious and potent prayer.

## **'BE AT HOME QUESTIONS' - Questions for Personal Reflection and 'Table Talk' Conversation**

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### **CONNECT:**

What does prayer mean to you? What do you find challenging about prayer?

### **ENGAGE:**

Matthew 6:5-13

1. Note in this passage the 'don'ts and do's' of prayer as spoken by Jesus. What gets you attention...and why? Matthew 6:5-8

2. Jesus addresses God as 'our Father' in Matthew 6:9 - How does this description 'sit' with you? Is this a comfortable or uncomfortable description? Why?

3. The phrase "in heaven" is rich with mind stretching potential. Read Isaiah 40 to grasp both the 'majesty and mercy' of God. What stands out to you from the phrase, 'in heaven' and a reading of Isaiah 40? How can these truths affect your prayers?

4. "Hallowed be your name" The word 'hallow' mean to treat with great respect and reverence. The different names of God, especially in the Old Testament speak of the richness of God's character. What does it mean to actively 'hallow' God in the ebb and flow of life? What could that look like and sound like in your day to day life?

### **RESPOND:**

What one truth do you take away from God's word and this message for application in your here and now life?