

November 26, 2023

“Praying for Our Needs” Matthew 6:11-15

FCF: Our hesitation to go to God with our needs

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Jesus tells us to pray to our heavenly Father.
(magnet) That changes the focus of our prayers.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Some people just have a hard time asking for help. Wanting to stand on their own, some young adults hesitate to go to their parents. Thinking themselves to be a burden, some older parents hesitate to go to their children. Many of us just have a hard time asking for help.

And that principle applies to prayer. Many of us hesitate to tell and to trust God with our needs. We hesitate to go to Him and to ask for help. We doubt He will hear. We question if our needs are significant enough. We wonder if we are significant enough and if He actually cares.

Jesus speaks directly to this in our text, the second half of the Lord’s Prayer.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Matthew 6:9-15](#) (vv.11-15)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Let’s go to the land of Oz. How are we introduced to the Wizard? The smoke clears and a giant head shouts (**READ**), *“I am Oz, the great and terrible! Who are you?”* Dorothy tries to respond but the Wizard booms, *“Silence! The great and powerful Oz knows why you are here! Step forward, Tin Man...You dare come to me for a heart, you clinking, clanking, clattering collection of caliginous junk?”* To the Scarecrow, *“You have the effrontery to ask for a brain, you billowing bale of bovine fodder?”* To the Lion, *“And you, Lion?”* At which the Lion faints.

Some see God as like the Wizard – great and powerful but not approachable. How do we see Him? Our view of God shapes and forms our prayer to God. Jesus says God is “our Father in heaven”. Why is that important? Who we pray to drives both how and what we pray. Jesus tells us to pray to our heavenly Father. That changes and shifts the focus of our prayers. The how and what are set forth in these six petitions, the first three of which we looked at last week.

Those first three have to do with God’s name, God’s rule, and God’s will. They come first. His concerns are to be our concerns, our priority. But a true understanding of God does not eliminate our coming to Him with our needs. It establishes it. It opens it up. So then having had our heads cleared and our compasses calibrated, we are then ready to bring forth our needs. Jesus sets them before us in three categories – our provision, our pardon, and our protection.

I. OUR PROVISION

Looking at our needs, we see the first prayer is for our provision (**READ Matthew 6:11**).

A) *All of Life*

This is a prayer for God’s provision, relying upon His supply for all of life.

1. Bread as essential

Bread is for the physical body, a staple for most. But it is also a symbol for all our food.

2. Essentials of life

In that sense, bread is essential. And it stands for the essentials of life. As Martin Luther wisely said, it stands for (READ) “everything necessary for the preservation of this life, like food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, wife, children, good government and peace.”

B) *For Each Day*

So we look to God for His provision for all of life. And we are to do it for each day.

1. Not amassing

This is not a prayer of amassing. It is not “*Give us today a storehouse full of bread.*”

2. But immediate

It is a prayer for the immediate. “*Give us today our bread for tomorrow.*” We are to be living a day at a time, looking to the Lord. Just as the Israelites were called to do in the wilderness as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land, daily gathering the manna from heaven.

(READ Matthew 6:11) This means asking God for our provision.

Application:

What does it mean to pray like this? It does not rule out our working for a living. For God works most often through ordinary means. So we should be thankful to Him not only for the fruits of our work but our ability to work, through which He has been pleased to supply.

It means we are to live and pray with a dependence upon the Lord. This was obvious in the 1st century when days without work meant hunger and disaster for an ordinary laborer. That is veiled from us today. Ask folks where their food and clothes come from and all they can say is WalMart and Amazon. But we are just as dependent now as Jesus’ hearers. Every bit as much.

We should pray, “*Father, we need your provision*” and then come with specific needs in mind. Jesus tells us to pray to our heavenly Father. That changes the focus of our prayers.

II. OUR PARDON

He then moves from our physical to our spiritual needs (READ Matthew 6:11-12, 14-15).

A) *The Nature of Sin*

We get some important insight here as to the nature of sin. This is worth noting.

1. As a debt

Sin creates a debt. Given who God is, we owe Him our obedience. Every sin – whether a sin of omission or commission – puts us in debt to Him. It puts us further in the hole, deeper in the red.

2. As a trespass

So sin creates debt. It’s also a trespass. Which, of course, assumes that God has established and stated His standards – lanes in which we are to live and lines we were never meant to cross.

B) *The Necessity of Forgiveness*

Which, given that we are trespassing debtors, creates our need for forgiveness.

1. A definition

In a sense, forgiveness means writing off a debt, absorbing the damage of the trespass. And God, in His mercy and grace, does this without strings. Even at a great and horrible cost to Himself.

2. A clarifier

But there is a clarifier. Jesus makes a strong statement about the tie between God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others. In fact, it is so important that He repeats it to reiterate the point. What does He mean? Understand that Jesus is not saying that God's forgiveness of us is conditioned on our forgiveness of others. That would be mercy by merit. What He is saying is that God forgives the penitent. A mark of the forgiven is a ready willingness to forgive.

(**READ Matthew 6:12**) This means asking God for pardon. That pardon has an effect.

Illustration:

The gospel is a message of God's grace to us. As His Spirit works that message into our hearts, it then frees us to be gracious to others. Imagine a traveler making their way with a guide through the jungle. After crossing a river, the traveler is horrified by the leeches attached to their legs and reaches to pull them off. But the guide stops them, warning of causing an infection. The best way to be rid of the leeches is to soak in a warm balsam bath. That will release them.

Bathing in the gospel is what releases the leeches of bitterness and resentment.

Application:

What would it mean to pray like this? We need to see that our relationship with God and with others is tightly linked. There is a relationship between the relationships. If we are crippled by an unforgiving spirit towards others, we need to reckon with the hypocrisy of our going to God and asking Him to forgive us. This is a hard teaching but it is what Jesus is saying.

There's something else. Are we actually facing the reality of our debts and trespasses? Do we believe we need to ask for forgiveness? Jesus is quite clear that we do. Pushing this even further, the cross is clear evidence that we do. But do we believe this? My friends, every one of us is in constant need of the Lord's provision and pardon, His forgiveness. Every single day.

Which is to say we should pray, "*Father, I need your pardon*" with specifics in mind. That is, specific sins of omission and commission, particular trespasses of thought, word, and deed. Jesus tells us to pray to our heavenly Father. That changes the focus of our prayers.

III. OUR PROTECTION

But this prayer for pardon then leads to a prayer for protection (**READ Matthew 6:11-13**).

A) From Ourselves

Our dependence on the Lord is in view. It's a prayer of protection, first from ourselves.

1. The reality of trials

The word translated here as "temptation" often means "trials". Now God never tempts us. But He will allow trials and times of testing in our lives. We have to reckon with the reality of trials.

2. The reality of our weakness

We know the trials will surely come. And, with them, the temptations. How will we respond to the trials? We know we are weak. We are broken. Our hearts are crooked and bent. So the prayer is, "*Let us not be brought into temptation, into such a trial that we would fall into sin.*"

B) From Satan

Protect us from ourselves. And from Satan – not just evil but the evil one himself.

1. What he is

We know Satan is a liar and deceiver, an accuser and tempter bent on our destruction. That said, Satan is but a fallen angel. He is no match for the Son of God. But we are no match for him.

2. What we need

And so we are to pray, *“Deliver us! Save us from his schemes to tear us apart and asunder.”*

(**READ Matthew 6:13**) This is a prayer for protection. Yet we think ourselves so strong.

Illustration:

I was driving home the other day and caught sight of a magnificent hawk flying down from its perch. But that wasn't all I saw. The reason that hawk came down was to grab a mouse in the grass and take him back to that perch. You and I are as helpless in this fight as that mouse. On our own, we are weak and exposed, vulnerable and susceptible to all forms of attack.

Application:

What would it mean to pray like this? We need to hear the emphasis on the reality of a spiritual war, our spiritual vulnerability, and our dependence on the Lord. Other places and times have known this so much better than the post-Enlightenment West. We can be so blind here.

We really do need to reckon with our weakness. We are still called to look to Jesus and to watch our steps. That may mean physical places, the company we keep, or things on a screen.

We should pray, *“Father, we need your protection”* and then come with specific needs in mind. Jesus tells us to pray to our heavenly Father. That changes the focus of our prayers.

CONCLUSION:

These petitions speak to all of life - both our seen and unseen needs. And our dependence on the Lord. Which ties back this – our view of God shapes our prayers to God. Which means we need a true view of God. We need to hear Jesus saying God is “our Father in heaven”. So, here's the question on which so much hinges. Do we know God is for us? And that He hears us?

Some of you have heard me allude to this before. I'm building off an image from Tim Keller. Imagine you are in training to become part of the staff in a royal castle. You are learning the skills. After the training comes the test. You open up your exam folder and see there is but one question. “Who dares wake up the king at 3:00 am for a glass of water?” Is it the prime minister? The general of the army? The admiral of the navy? The secretary of the treasury? No, the only one with such a right is the child of the King. That one alone has the King's ear.

Friend, if you are a follower of Jesus, you have that right. You have the King's ear. He is not ignorant, needing to be informed. He is not hesitant, needing to be moved. He is our Father in heaven. Having begun with a focus on our Father's concerns, our prayer then flows into our trusting Him with our needs. He wants us to pray. And, in His kindness, He shows us how.

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