“Life in the Kingdom: And When You Pray”

Matthew 6:5-8

(Notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 1/22/23)

Do we want our prayers to matter? Of course. How then shall we pray? Jesus reminds His followers that true prayer is the freedom and pleasure to come to God as children come to their Father, just as they are. So vital and powerful is prayer that the enemy of our souls attacks this privilege relentlessly, tempting us toward self-focus and superficial piety in prayer. This week, we will focus on how not to pray.

My motives matter when it comes to worship. Matt. 6 contrasts a religion of pretense vs. a religion of purity. We are not to be like the hypocritical, outwardly religious scribes and Pharisees. The King’s subjects are to pray from the heart and not for show. A Christian is a person privileged to speak to the Living God. Prayer is the life-breath of the Christian. And let’s be honest: prayer is also often difficult.

A hypocrite doesn’t love to pray… he loves to be seen praying. Real prayer is genuine communion with God from a sincere and pure heart. A hypocrite’s prayer is a showcase of theology, or a show-off of vocabulary, or maybe just gossip wrapped up in religious talk. Real prayer has no pretending, no pretense, and no putting on of airs.

When Jesus says to head to your secret room to pray, He is saying go to the most private place available. Jesus had an extremely busy (yet ordered) life, but He got away to pray. He often got up early to get alone to be with His Father. It is not so much the location as it is a matter of the heart. Genuine prayer comes from a godward heart, not a self-elevating heart. Prayer is real when the real you meets with the real God. Anything else is like a lost letter that never reaches the recipient. Do you need to get back in the habit of getting alone with your Father?

Chapter 6 goes on to say “shut the door.” Shut out all the stuff you don’t want there. Shut out all distractions, including the ones that bounce around in our heads! Does God have your undivided attention?

Have you noticed that “your Father” is repeated 3 times? Maybe that’s important! We relate to God as a child relates to her father. Your Daddy doesn’t care if you use the right words! He just wants YOU. (John 20:17) The only way we have access to our Father is through Jesus, our King. Jesus was forsaken so that we would never be forsaken. Jesus makes possible this tremendous privilege of prayer with the Creator of the universe!

Matt. 6:8 tells us that our Father knows what we need. He knows it before we ask it, but He wants us to give voice to our needs. Our transformation, our worship, our effectiveness in the community… they all depend on prayer. The Father says, “I want to hear from you.” The unapproachable God is approachable because of what Jesus has done for us. May we be a praising and praying people, people who love to be in relationship with their Father. Amen.

**QUESTIONS**:

1. What two types of people (actions, not titles) are disciples NOT to imitate in prayer?
2. Why is it important to come to God as “your Father”?
3. Pastor Steve said, “The Lord’s Prayer is a model, not a mantra.” Explain.
4. If our Father knows what we need before we ask, why ask?
5. Pastor Steve asked if you need to get back to the habit of getting alone with your Father. “Habitual” is not the same as “contrived”. Why is regular prayer a good idea? What makes your prayer time rich? Philip Yancey said, “… spontaneity often flows from discipline.” (Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference? P.165-166) Do you agree?

“Praise Him! Praise Him!” (Fanny Crosby)

1 Praise him, praise him! Jesus, our blessed redeemer!

Sing, O earth, his wonderful love proclaim!

Hail him, hail him! Highest archangels in glory!

Strength and honor give to his holy name!

Like a shepherd, Jesus will guard his children.

In his arms he carries them all day long.

Refrain:

Praise him! Praise him! tell of his excellent greatness.

Praise him! Praise him! ever in joyful song.

2 Praise him, praise him! Jesus, our blessed redeemer!

For our sins, he suffered, and bled, and died.

He our rock, our hope of eternal salvation,

hail him, hail him! Jesus, the crucified.

Sound his praises, Jesus who bore our sorrows,

love unbounded, wonderful, deep, and strong. [Refrain]

3 Praise him, praise him! Jesus, our blessed redeemer!

Heav’nly portals loud with hosannas ring!

Jesus, Savior, reigneth forever and ever!

Crown him, crown him! prophet, and priest, and king!

Christ is coming, over the world victorious.

Pow’r and glory unto the Lord belong. [Refrain]