

Matthew 6:1-18

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[0 : 00] Commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. And we've been spending the last couple of weeks on the matter of prayer and how Jesus modeled for us to pray.

Today's text is going to be Matthew 6, verses 11-18. But the larger context, I think, is really going to serve us well this morning.

So, I'm going to begin reading in verse 1 of chapter 6 and on through verse 18. So follow along with me. But before I read, beloved, let me remind you that this is God's Word to us.

It was written for His glory and our good. And we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Matthew 6, beginning in verse 1 and following.

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them. For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets.

[1 : 10] That they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. So that your giving may be in secret.

And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners. That they may be seen by others.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, 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.

And 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.

Pray then like this. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

[2 : 15] And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 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. And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others.

Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face. That your fasting may not be seen by others, but by your Father who is in secret.

And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. As we saw over the past two weeks, Jesus teaches us that those who can call God Father can approach Him because of the personal work of Jesus Christ boldly, with reverence and awe, and make their requests known to Him.

And so we worked over the past two weeks on verses 9 and 10. And I gave you four points from that, which contained in them the exhortation to pray.

[3 : 33] We ought to be people who pray. And we should pray like Jesus, our Father in heaven. Our Father in heaven.

We should be approaching Him with bold reverence. Because we belong to Him. We are His children and He cares for us. We then noted that the first three petitions of Jesus' model prayer are aimed Godward.

They're not aimed at us in our praying. They're aimed toward Him. So our second point in the first petition was, Pray like Jesus, hallowed be Your name.

Your name be known. Your name be praised. Honored. Reverenced be Your name. The second petition and our third point was pray like Jesus.

Your kingdom come. As those who belong to the kingdom of God and are sojourning in this place, we ought to want to see the full fruition of God's reign in this world.

[4 : 42] We want to see this come to pass. And the fourth point and third petition, don't feel like you have to track me through that. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

There are people who long for that, to see God's final and full reign here on the earth. So the first three are Godward.

They're aimed at His acclaim, His fame, His glory. The final three petitions all speak to our great dependence on this God.

How much we need this God to act. I hope that you know enough of yourself and enough of God to see your great need of prayer.

Sadly, too many of us pray too little, which can be a great sign of arrogant self-sufficiency. You think far too much of yourself if you don't find yourself pleading before God everything.

[5 : 55] We functionally say that we do not need God's presence or power. We have it all figured out on our own. And what a terrible deception this is.

We are utterly dependent upon God for our very being. He is our creator and He is our sustainer. And we accomplish no good thing apart from Him.

David writes, King David, in Psalm 62, verses 5 through 8, For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him.

He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress, I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory, my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

Trust in Him at all times, O people. Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us.

[7 : 03] God is a refuge for us.

Which reads, I read it to you previously, verse 1. Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them. For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

And the teaching on fasting comes up most certainly underneath this overall exhortation of Jesus in verse 1. And so last week, as I won't be here next week and Clay will be preaching in my stead, I said to Clay, Hey Clay, why don't you preach the text on fasting?

And he said, Well, it kind of goes with what you've been talking about. You started off and you've referenced it already. And addressing Matthew chapter 6, verse 1. And we had a good conversation about that.

And I said, You know, I'll handle it. I'll take it and let you move on to the beginning of verse 19. And Clay said, That'd be great because that's a great text. I'm looking forward to doing that. So I was kind of thinking, like, I'm just going to pick up the pieces, kind of the leftover parts of this.

[8 : 33] Wrongly, I thought this way. I thought, Well, somehow I'll make this work together. In fact, I thought it'd be a little sporadic. Okay, there's going to be three unrelated points this morning.

But not at all. Upon further reflection on the text, I noticed that it is chiasmic. This is your big word for the day, chiasmic.

This means that if you look at the text and you took it and you folded it on verse 13. Can you imagine taking the text and folding it on verse 13?

The beginning of the text, verse 11, and the end of the text, verses 16 through 18, are reflexive of each other.

They communicate together. They're topically thematic. And then you take a step in on the text as well. And the same thing happens until you arrive at the very center of it, being verse 13.

[9 : 32] Let me show you what I mean using the text itself. So if we were to label, which are in my notes, I know that you can't see. But if we were to label verse 11 as A, right? Give us this day our daily bread.

And then verse 12, this prayer of forgiveness as B. And then verse 13, this prayer for deliverance from evil as C.

So we've got this progression A, B, C. Then you come back out of that fold of verse 13. And you see verse 14 and 15 is again about forgiveness.

Right? So notice verse 12 and verse 14 and 15 and the way that they communicate. The same content here. Jesus expands upon this idea he presents initially in verse 12.

And then the same thing, I believe, happens beginning in verse 16 and through the end of the text, going back to give us this day our daily bread.

[10:31] So the text is chiasmic. And there's lots of these chiasms in the Scripture. And people can take them and do all kinds of bizarre things with them. I'm not suggesting that at all.

The text still means what the text means on its surface. But it helps us to see the beauty of Jesus' mind. Right? He is just speaking this. And he uses this very common chiasmic literary structure just in his regular speaking.

It's just a fascinating thing to see the way that all of it's intertwined together. So, in our points today, we'll take verse 11 along with verses 16 through 18, verse 12 along with verse 14 and 15, and verse 13.

And I'll walk you through that this morning. So, the first point for this morning is pray like Jesus. Give us this day our daily bread.

Give us this day our daily bread. The first of today's petitions in Jesus' model prayer, it's the fourth in the total prayer, but the first of today's petition is for our very basic physical need, food.

[11:44] For our very basic sustenance. And the request, the way Jesus teaches us this, draws upon God's provision for the Israelites found in Exodus chapter 16.

Familiar with the story of manna from heaven. In verse 2, we can read Exodus chapter 16, and the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the people of Israel said to them, Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

They said, we would rather be back in Egypt and die at the hand of our oppressors and have full bellies than to be out here in the wilderness and starving. And then in verse 4, Then the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day that I may test them whether they will walk in my law or not.

So, they were to gather up just enough to eat for that day. And on the sixth day, they were to gather two days' worth so that they could rest on a seventh day.

[13:09] And this was enacted. God intended for them to do this to see if they would trust Him and walk in His commandments. And we know they didn't, and manna rotted, and the story goes on from there.

In the evening, He provided quail, and they were able to eat meat as well. So, Jesus is drawing on this type of image. Give us our daily bread, our manna from heaven.

And we, in the same way, are meant to be trusting God in that way. Each and every day, trusting that He will provide for our physical needs.

So, in the case of the Israelites, sojourning in the wilderness, God provided bread and this meat miraculously. Amazingly, the dew would lift and left behind would be this bread that they would turn into cakes.

Is this the way that normatively God provides today? It's not, right? But by what means does God normatively provide our daily bread?

[14:15] Through work. He gives us work. And we apply ourselves in the energy that He gives us to work. And in most cases, your employer gives you money and you use your money to go buy your bread or whatever else you may buy to eat.

But we make a grievous mistake when we don't think that comes from God above. When we don't pray in this way.

When we are not concerned at all about where our provision is coming from because our kitchens are so fully stocked. When we think that it's by the labor of our hands that these things have been gained rather than seeing that it's God employing means to His great ends of provision.

And so remembering that we're to pray like Jesus in this way helps us to look to the one from whom all good things come. To trust Him in all things.

It only takes a few moments when you feel any anxiety for the provision of your life to think back across all of the days that you have lived. And I would challenge you to take a calculator and multiply 365 by how many years you've lived and say God has provided this many days.

[15:34] And He will continue to provide for today and tomorrow and the next. And on. A Spurgeon quote on your bulletin today says, God sends every bird its food but He does not throw it into the nest.

He gives us our daily bread but it is through our own labor. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 28. Paul writes the following and it's believed by most that he's directing what he says in verse 28 to those who are part of the church and were not working but were receiving the benefit, the benefit, the generosity of those in the church.

They were coming and eating meals with the church but they weren't providing anything for those meals. And Paul writes this, Ephesians 4 verse 28. Let the thief no longer steal but rather let him labor doing honest work with his own hands.

And I find it fascinating the way Paul concludes this verse. Not so that he can eat for himself but it goes beyond that even so that he may have something to share with anyone who is in need. Certainly there's provision for himself but he's to work, to labor if he's able so that he has something to share with others. So we in the same way are meant to pray not just give me my daily bread but give us this day our daily bread.

[17:09] Pray on behalf of others and to provide for others. So then how does the fasting piece connect to this? As I've said that this is chiasmic.

He goes on to give some very specific instruction about how we shouldn't and how we should fast. His predominant instruction here as previously stated ties back to chapter 6 and verse 1.

So he is once again confronting the hypocrisy of his day and ours. Fasting was a thing that was paraded about.

It was habituated in Jesus' day that on the second day of the week and on the fifth day of the week which were also the market days were also the fasting days. And so the religious elite who had nothing else to do but parade around their self-righteousness would actually disfigure themselves. They would put on makeup. They would look poor and pitiful and put on quite a show that others would see how pious they were in front of others. It was quite a production.

[18:19] And I wonder today if there's anybody amongst us who puts on a show and comes together in the gathering hoping that others would see them and praise them.

Jesus here is dismantling the false religion that so easily entangles us. The desire to be recognized by man and to forsake seeking the pleasure of God.

That he would be pleased with us and be our rewarder. Jesus tells us that when we fast we should have the outward appearance of normalcy.

That's what this washing of the face and anointing the head was about. Right? The oil was typically perfumed so it made people seem less smelly in the day.

So wash your hair and wash your face and don't look gloomy so that your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

[19:16] Now Jesus does not say if you fast but rather when you fast which would suggest that fasting should be a part of the healthy Christian life.

Normative. It should be normative to the Christian life. Many faithful men and women of God in the Bible fasted. Moses, Samson, Samuel, Hannah, David, Elijah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Anna, John the Baptist and his disciples, Jesus, Paul, and many others fasted.

There's an abounding amount of examples of this in the Scripture. Fasting, however, is only commanded in the Bible one time.

And it's commanded in connection with the day of atonement. And you can read about that in Leviticus chapter 16 and verse 29 and Leviticus chapter 23 and verse 27.

It's nowhere else commanded by God but it is commended by God. All of these men and women fasted. So, we should view it as a beneficial but non-compulsory act.

[20:39] a beneficial but a non-compulsory act. And so, the encouragement to you is that you should consider, have a clear understanding of what fasting is and employ it in your Christian walk.

But it's not a command to you this morning and you should fast. But I think you ought to really consider the benefit of it. John Calvin wrote, many for want of knowing its usefulness undervalue its necessity and some reject it altogether as superfluous while on the other hand where the proper use of fasting is not well understood it easily degenerates into superstition.

Fasting is depriving ourselves of food. A lot of people do a lot of kind of fasting. This is not what the word means in the Greek language.

And I'm not saying you can't deny yourself other things. There could be a lot of good health and staying off social media for a while as an example. But when the scripture talks about fasting it's talking about denying ourselves food for a particular amount of time for a particular purpose and it is

always accompanied by prayer.

It's always accompanied by prayer. One can pray without fasting but you cannot fast without praying. It always walks hand in hand together and here you start to see some of this chiastic significance.

[22 : 19] Fasting is to be accompanied by prayer. And we have a number of examples. I just want to give you a few of them. I don't believe this is exhaustive but times that we see particular purposes of fasting in the scripture during times of sorrow David fasted to pray for the first child of Bathsheba which eventually died.

2 Samuel chapter 12 and verse 16. He was grieving for the life of this child. He pleaded with God for the life of this child and he accompanied that prayer with fasting.

During times of great danger King Jehoshaphat which we want to talk about just because it's fun to say Jehoshaphat proclaimed a national fast in Judah when they were threatened to be attacked in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 3.

We see fasting in the Bible during times of repentance when the Ninevites heard the preaching of Jonah the king of Nineveh decreed a fast this Jonah chapter 3 verse 5 and following.

And during the need for clarity we see fasting the beginning of ministry and the continuation of ministry we're familiar with Jesus fasting for 40 days and 40 nights before beginning his ministry that one's mine Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights before beginning his ministry before the church in Antioch set Paul and Barnabas apart for a missionary trip they were doing what?

[24 : 01] They were praying and fasting in Acts chapter 13 verse 2 and 3 and then they commissioned Paul and Barnabas to go as missionaries to the Gentiles and as Paul and Barnabas are going about this work it's recorded that they are praying and fasting as they appoint elders in the churches that they found Acts chapter 14 and verse 23 and so fasting can be very helpful to remind us of our great need of God right as you feel the hunger in your belly you say who is it that sustains me even as I'm hungry it is my father who is in heaven who gives good gifts to his children and I ought to flee to him in prayer so I very rarely like to use myself as the model and I think that I can grow in how much and how well I fast but I set aside periodic times for fasting when there are big decisions that need to be made there's something looming on the horizon we're doing planning

Doug and I right now for next year for the church and I've already taken some time a day of not eating and devoted prayer for that purpose Lord help me to see it drives me to my knees right as I feel this lack of sustenance to go to the sustainer right and to aim my praying at something very particular most every Sunday morning I fast it's the rare Sunday morning that I'll go I'm just too hungry I gotta go into the service without but often my fast is broken right from the night before when we have the Lord's Supper together in our Lord's Supper gathering before and it helps me it sets my mind moving in the right direction right I need right physical food to fill me up I need God's spirit more than that for this day right and then sometime after you guys I'll leave at 1.30 or 2 I go I need lunch absolutely starving right but I do these things

I purpose these things to help bring my focus to big matters that definitely need God's sustaining work so the connection to this prayer of our daily bread depriving ourselves of daily bread serves as a reminder from whom our daily bread comes from and therefore how dependent we are upon our heavenly father for all things right isn't that cool that chiastic structure there so pray like Jesus give us this day our daily bread and I'll add to that and fast from time to time to help you pray in this way secondly pray like Jesus forgive us our debts pray like Jesus forgive us our debts this is verse 12 and then verse 14 and 15 verse 12 says and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors and then verse 14 and 15 elaborates on this 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 heavenly father forgive your trespasses so this is a difficult text because taken on its surface it would seem that

Jesus is here teaching that our forgiveness is dependent upon our willingness to forgive others that we must first forgive and then God will extend forgiveness to us right this would seem to present a works based version of salvation that our salvation is dependent upon our willingness to forgive others is this what Jesus is teaching here no oh may it never be that that's what he is teaching here what he's rather teaching in interesting language is that if we are forgiven we will be forgiving and we must look at larger context to wrap our brains around that here so turn with me if you will to Matthew chapter 18 and verse 21 the parable of the ungracious servant beginning verse 21 and following then Peter came up and said to him

Lord how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him as many as seven times Jesus said to him I do not say to you seven times but seventy seven times so he's essentially saying an infinite amount of times you will forgive your brother therefore he launches in this parable the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants when he began to settle one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents and ten thousand talents would have been an unpayable debt this would have been lifetime upon lifetime upon lifetime of income that's meant to jump out to the listeners of Jesus parable talents what is a talent we don't get that billions and billions and billions of dollars you need to understand this is unpayable debt in verse 25 and since he could not pay he would not be able to pay his master ordered him to be sold with his wife and children all that he had and payment to be made so the servant fell on his knees imploring him have patience with me and I will pay you everything and out of pity for him the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt but when that same servant went out he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii and seizing him he began to choke him saying pay what you owe now a hundred denarii was also a lot of money this would have been a denarii was a day's wage this would have been a month's worth income still a lot of money so his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him have patience with me and I will pay you he refused and went out and put him in prison until he should pay the debt when his fellow servant saw what had taken place they were greatly distressed and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place then his master summoned him and said to him you wicked servant [30 : 50] I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you and in anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt so also my heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart so the grace that we have received should it necessarily makes us gracious having been saved by the grace of God and been given his spirit he works in us mercy grace the mercy of God toward us should find us humble and forgiving our willingness to forgive others evidences the forgiveness that we have received Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 32 be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving one another as

God in Christ forgave you becomes the necessary thing that we do because of the great forgiveness that we have received we need God's forgiveness and his continued grace to be forgiving so we should pray in this way I also think that we should be careful in the way we approach God in our prayers we should be careful in the way that we approach God in our praying as we come to him to make confession too often we come to him and we haven't gone and forgiven others we come to him entirely unmerciful asking for continued mercy ignoring the fact that he's been so gracious to us in Christ and not turning that out in graciousness towards others we come to him pleading more grace on our behalf don't forget just a chapter ago in Matthew chapter 5 verse 23 and 24 Jesus said so if you were offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you leave your gift there before the altar and go first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift so I think we should be careful about the way that we come and ask for the continuing forgiveness the day in the day out confession of our sin that we're careful that we're not harboring bitterness towards others as we do that very thing so we should pray like Jesus forgive us our debts deliver us from evil verse 13 says and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil Jesus tells Peter in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 41 and remember this is in the garden garden of Gethsemane and not too many hours before this at the last supper! Peter has proclaimed under his own power that he would never deny Jesus right self sufficient I would never do this thing and then Jesus finds him sleeping in the garden and he says watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak Sin is prowling around every corner and we should not think too much of ourselves that we won't fall victim to the very most egregious of sins it is but for the grace of God that we are not the absolute continually worst of sinners and so we need to pray that God would lead us away from evil and toward good Jesus prays this for us in what's called the high priesthood prayer in John chapter 17 verse 15 where he says I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one we would be a people growing in holiness for the praise of our God and our heavenly father is pleased to do this he seeks the good of his people for the glory of his name!

[35 : 25] Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 13 no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man right you do not ever find yourself in the middle of a temptation that no one else

has ever experienced there's never a unique temptation to you right you have no excuse to say well yeah God's been gracious in other circumstances but he doesn't understand this circumstance it's common we are all experiencing temptation right common to man but 13 goes on God is faithful God is faithful despite our unfaithfulness despite how often we are given to temptation and give in to temptation God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability his working in you ability but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it and so

Paul tells us that we can confidently pray confidently pray that God would do this on our behalf because God is faithful right the temptation you're experiencing is not unique to you pray that God would deliver you from it and act and move with the very impulse that he provides that you would be delivered from that evil to the praise of his glorious name as God's people we are meant to be set apart as unique in the world right we're supposed to look different we're supposed to be haters of sin and lovers of good we're supposed to be pursuing righteousness with all that we are and it's in doing this that we become the aroma of Christ right for some that's the aroma of death for others that's the aroma of life oh and we want people to come to life in Christ as they smell our lives right as they're witnesses!

to us who walk in the light and not in darkness and so we should pray like Jesus deliver us from evil one final observation we have noted that the prayers of God's children begin with our father I believe that the meaning of the use of the plural pronoun our is layered certainly in our corporate prayers it is proper for the one who is leading the prayer to pray for us on our behalf even as we join in the prayer too often we sit idly by while the person prays maybe processing a bit of what's being said we need to recognize that when somebody leads us they're leading us in prayer we are joining together in that prayer that's the reason that the church utters amens we're saying let it be we're agreeing with the thing that's been prayed the closing of a prayer if you agree with the things that were prayed sometimes we wonder when we lead public prayers we go

I hope everybody heard and was on board with what we prayed so it's part of that right there's a layer to it there's a corporate praying component but I also think there is a further meaning Jesus has just instructed times of secret prayer at the beginning of chapter 6 talked about going into a place that's secret and praying to a God in secret that God would reward so I would suggest to you that even in your private praying you should pray our father and that Jesus intends that we not forget even in our moments of solitude that God has saved a people and that we pray and we act for his people we have relationships with Jesus Christ I am a son of God that is an important thing to understand but maybe more important is to understand

I'm part of a family of God I'm part of a family of Christ right and to pray on behalf of others is very important notice that the plural pronouns have not let up in these final three petitions and Jesus doesn't do this because he said our father and he goes oh man now I got to use plural pronouns the rest of the time not at all what's happening here he's trying to teach us something he says give us this day our daily bread forgive us our debts deliver us from evil so we should be about praying pleading the cause of others this is called intercessory prayer do you pray in that way most of your prayers aimed at the glory of God and at others or at yourself so in conclusion our prayers should be aimed at the glory of God that his fame would be known that his kingdom would come that his will would be done our prayers should have our good in mind we certainly want to pray things on our behalf and

[41 : 09] God cares about the nuances of our day but also our prayer should be aimed! at the good of others we should pray like Jesus our father in heaven hallowed be your name your kingdom come your will be done on earth as is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil I hope that our time in this part of the text We're going to move on to some wonderful text in the coming weeks and finish the sermon on the mount before advent season begins I hope that you'll take time to really consider what a praying life looks like and if you don't find yourself praying what it says about you and what you believe about our

God