



## The Person of Prayer

Matthew 6:9: *Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.*

### I. INTRO

- A. Happy 4<sup>th</sup> to you. It does seem a bit more somber this year...as recent events are shining a light on some of our nation's shadow sides.
1. My understanding of Scripture is that every person on the planet has a shadow side – and every nation does as well. The Church of Jesus Christ does as well. **What's important** is that we own it, confess it, and sincerely repent, and we make appropriate amends wherever needed.
  2. Having said that, we have much to celebrate and be grateful for as a nation. I would only add that a democracy requires our active engagement. Please identify and research the strategic issues facing our nation and vote your conscience this Nov.
  3. As a church I can assure you that we won't be endorsing any political party or candidates. I would, however, encourage humble, prayerful, and respectful dialogue among us about the issues we are facing and how to best address them. It's a good way to practice our reflective and patient listening skills!
- B. We will be celebrating the Lord's Supper together at the conclusion of the sermon...
- C. I used to play a game at home when my children were younger – much younger. In this game they might have asked for money when they heard the ice cream truck coming, or we may have been playing a board game – I would have what they wanted in my hands – perhaps some Monopoly money, or dice, or something – and I would pretend to suddenly fall asleep.

1. They would start giggling and laughing and crawl all over me while attempting to pry what they wanted from my hands.
  2. Those were some beautiful moments of giggles and joyful laughter and mutual longing – they were longing for the things I held in my hands; I was longing for our closeness, our innocence, and wanting those fleeting moments of sheer joy to last forever.
  3. As I reflect, those times have become **a picture of the activity of prayer** – we are sometimes focused on the gifts in God’s hands rather than the Giver of those gifts. (Someone described it as seeking the hand of God but not the face of God.) We pray fervently for the **new job**, or the **return of health**—and when we gain the prizes we are delighted and, often, our focus turns to the prize—and **away from the momentary closeness of the good Giver Himself**.
  4. This is a primary focus in our prayer series... **learning to delight more in the Giver of all good gifts—than the gifts themselves**.
- D. One of the first things we should notice about the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6 is that it is strategically placed at the center of the SOTM.
1. This prayer is curiously relevant to all people in every culture and life circumstance throughout history. It is a work of both literary and sacred genius. (I don’t know who said that...)
  2. The Lord’s Prayer is best used as a model for prayer –or, we could think of it as template – to launch us out into a place or a perspective of adoration, reflection, confession, and gratitude.
  3. Our objective – as individuals, as couples, as community groups, and as a church is to move from *ordinary prayer* to *extraordinary prayer*.
  4. Why? Because we believe that God is up to something big in this weird moment in time and we want to wholeheartedly respond.
- E. Let’s turn our attention to our one verse for today... *Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name*. (Mat 6:9). Let’s consider four words...
1. *“Our”*
  2. *“Father”*

3. “Heaven”
4. “Hallowed”

F. We’ll look at them one at a time...

1. “Our”
  - a. Last Feb in our Back to Basics series we spoke about the **Visible Church** and the **Invisible Church** (actual theological terms).
    - 1) The **Visible Church** includes every believer around the world who is alive today—and who professes faith in Christ with evidence of that faith in their lives.
    - 2) The **Invisible Church** is the Church as God sees it—consisting of all believers’ past, present, and future whose hearts are His.
  - a. So, the word “Our” addresses the Invisible Church as our family.
  - b. Another implication of the word “Our,” is as **one author** put it, “We have left the land of ‘me’ and entered the land of ‘we.’”<sup>1</sup>
    - 1) The Lord’s Model Prayer begins with the acknowledgement that we have been invited out of isolation and into **both** the joy and the challenge of community. This is where we call to mind the Greek word for fellowship – koinonia -- a deep and safe sharing of ourselves with others.
    - 2) Some people find it helpful to think in terms of a cross, with our relationship with God signifying the **vertical** and our relationships with each other signifying the **horizontal**.
    - 3) Subsequently, the word “Our” in the Lord’s Prayer is **all about engaging and pursuing both the vertical and horizontal aspects of faith**. And what it appears to be

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<sup>1</sup> Shane Claiborne and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove. *Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers: Prayer for Ordinary Radicals*. 18.

saying is that we can't have the vertical without the horizontal (???)

- 4) Unless we see ourselves as part of a larger family of believers (who acknowledge and desire to deal with our dysfunctions), we will have limited, or restricted, access to the vertical. That's heavy...and that's important.
- 5) Let me take another run at it...It would be a betrayal to pray "My Father," for the prayer of Jesus is not only a declaration of a heavenly parent, but initiates a new perspective of family intent on forsaking the land of "ME" and entering a promised land of "WE." (Which is why we're not in a huge rush to meeting at the church building on Sunday mornings, at this time.)
- c. In this "We" land of promise the God of the universes has reached down to us with an invitation to know and be known.
- d. With the opening word of the model prayer, Jesus is welcoming us into both the Visible and Invisible community of active and intentional Jesus followers—and Jesus is our older brother (Heb. 2).

## 2. "Father"

- a. Jesus and His contemporaries spoke Aramaic (not Greek) and the word for Father in Aramaic is Abba. (Not the Swedish super group of the 70's...) Abba was a familial affectionate phrase similar to "daddy," or "papa." [cul-de-sac]
  - 1) **Romans 8:15 (NASB):** *"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons<sup>2</sup> by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"* ["Daddy-Father" – the phrase is important]
  - 2) **Galatians 4:6:** *"Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'"*

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<sup>2</sup> This is NOT a sexist pronoun. In Paul's writing he elevates the role of women to co-inheritors with men.

- 3) As I said, “*Abba*” approximates “papa” or “daddy,” which implies **unwavering trust** on the part of a child.
  - 4) “*Father*,” on the other hand, expresses **intelligent comprehension** of the relationship.
  - 5) When the two words, “Abba-Father” are put together they reveal BOTH the trusting love and intelligent confidence of a secure son or daughter.
3. “*Heaven*” [Our Father who is in heaven...]
- a. It may be helpful in our thinking about prayer to view heaven more as a **perspective** rather than a **physical place**. Why? Because God is active, and God is everywhere. The theological term is omnipresent (always present everywhere).
  - b. God’s omnipresence reminds us of His transcendent nature. Transcendence is a theological and philosophical term referring to the relationship of God to creation—God is wholly independent.
    - 1) Isa 55:8-9 “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,*” declares the Lord. “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.*”
    - 2) This simple understanding of God’s **omnipresence** and **transcendence** makes our privilege of approaching Him intimately as a son or daughter, all the more humbling and worshipworthy.
    - 3) Because God is omnipresent, you and I are never, never, never alone.
4. “*Hallowed*”
- a. The first thing Jesus tells us to **ask God to do** is to cause His name to be *hallowed*. What does that mean?
    - 1) The word “*hallowed*” means ‘to make holy’ or to set apart. The words hallowed and holy are derived from the same Greek word.

- 2) The phrase *“hallowed be Your Name”* is a plea that God would cause His name to be *‘hallowed’* in our hearts AND in the hearts of all people.
- 3) 2 Peter 3:9: *“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”* When you and I pray, *“Hallowed be Your Name,”* this is what we are praying for.
- b. \*\*Here is one of the most important concepts that we will ever hear about moving into extraordinary prayer: The first, and all-pervasive, all-influencing, all-controlling concern in prayer is to plead with God that God would make His name supremely treasured in the minds and hearts of people.

## II. CONCLUSION

- A. As we make our way toward celebrating the Lord’s Supper together, here’s the bottom line: \*\*We don’t need to make bigger commitments about prayer, what we REALLY need is to think and then to believe truer thoughts about God -- thoughts that are shaped by the gospel, by what Jesus Christ has already done on your behalf.
- B. The virgin birth, the ministry, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus Christ is all designed to specifically and intentionally reconcile us to God. Prayer is the celebration of our reconciliation.
- C. If you’d like to know more about a personal, passionate, and intimate relationship with God, PLEASE reach out to us; we would love to talk with you.
- D. Pray...

Grab your elements, go to the bathroom – 2 minutes...

### Communion Meditation:

2 Cor 5:18 (NIV, ESV, & NASB) *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”*

I mentioned this a few weeks ago – in my 40-years of ministry a lot of fluff has found its way into the western Church.

Here's what I'd like to ask you as we prepare our hearts for communion – **Where's the fluff in your life?** Here's another way to ask the same question: **Where are you pretending?** And do you have the courage to ask and answer that question within your household? (And, if you live alone, who can you invite into that dialogue?)

Here's what I came up with as I contemplated this for myself...There have been times/seasons where I have worked and ministered out of my own natural gifts and abilities. Is it a sin to have natural gifts and abilities? No. What's sinful is to be content with that.

Here's another impacting confronting insight for me recently, **it's not enough to be non-racist anymore, I need to become anti-racist.** And if you're thinking, "Pastor's just gone political on us!" I haven't. Do you know what the **second biggest** sin of the first church was (after Ananias and Sapphira lied and died)? It was racism. Acts 6:1: "a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food." The "*native Hebrews*" were racially discriminating against the Greek widows – and the church leaders **moved swiftly to own and address** the problem. It should not take 400-years.

The American Church has been complicit in ongoing racism aimed at Native Americans, African-Americans, Latinos, and Asians – and I would add, Women.

If you're an active and intentional Jesus follower there **two things** you need to know as we approach the communion table:

1. You've been reconciled to God. You've been freed from every past, present, and future sin (as hard as that is to comprehend). **THAT** is what we're celebrating at the communion table.
2. What's the second thing? According to the Apostle Paul, you and I have been given the **ministry of reconciliation**. Where will you be active in that ministry? Certainly, our oikos, it may be as a missionary, a therapist or counselor, or working on behalf of the poor and marginalized, it may be community organizing, or law and politics... For Paul, this is not an option, it's an assignment.

If you'd allow me, I'd like for us to go into reflection mode for two minutes. I'd like for us to close our eyes and get before God and ask Him, "Where's

the fluff? “Where am I pretending?” “Where is my reconciliation assignment?” Now I don’t expect you to receive big, profound answers in two minutes – but **do you have the courage to tell God you really want to know?** I’ll time us and then we will partake together...

### Discussion Questions

1. Share a bit about your relationship with your father? Has that hindered or helped in your relationship with God?
2. Have you ever found yourself more focused on the gift rather than than the Giver?
3. What do you think is the difference between ordinary prayer and extraordinary prayer?
4. Wat are the implications of seeking to distinguish between “Our Father” and “My Father”?
5. How might God’s omnipresence and transcendence affect your prayer life?
6. How has your perception of *“hallowed be Your Name”* changed as a result of this sermon (e.g., that God would make His name supremely treasured in the minds and hearts of people)?
7. Why is prayer ultimately a celebration of God’s reconciliation?