

St. George The Martyr Anglican  
Adult Sunday School Class  
April 13, 2002

The Gospel of Matthew

6:1-19 With Emphasis on the Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:1 "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. 2 "Thus, when you **give to the needy**, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 5 "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. 6 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. 7 "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. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. 16 "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. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 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.

# Outward Versus Inward Righteousness 6:1-18

Matthew 6:2 "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Matthew 6:5 " And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. 7 "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

Matthew 6:16 "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. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 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.

Matthew 6:1 "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.

Does this contradict 5:16, "...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" ?

Against our human cowardice Jesus says, "let your light shine".

Against our human vanity Jesus says, "beware of practicing your piety before others to be seen".

One commentator says it well, "we are to show when tempted to hide, and hide when tempted to show". Our good works should be public as a way of letting our light shine; our acts of devotion (giving, praying, fasting) should be secret lest we slide into the sin of self-righteousness.

Jesus sets forth a general principle with three illustrations:

Almsgiving, vv.2-4    Praying, vv.5-6    Fasting, vv.16-18

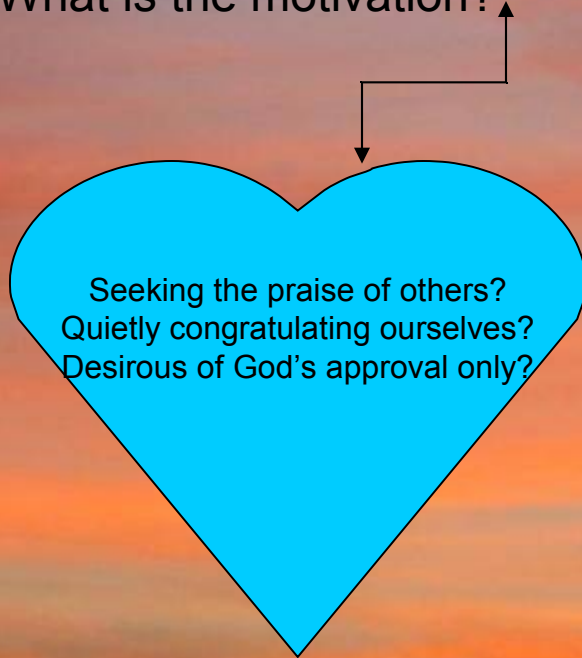
Jesus expects his disciples to do these things ("when"); his objection has to do with manner ("before other people") and with motive ("to be seen by them").

Matthew 6:2 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

- "When you give"

An act of "practicing our righteousness" vs. 1

What is the motivation?



The word originally meant a theatrical "actor". Someone who is consciously acting a part; draws attention to his/her act in order to be praised; they were out of touch with God's understanding of "righteousness".

What was their reward? The praise they sought and nothing more. The word "received" was often used as a technical term for receiving payment in full, nothing more was to be expected.

For the disciple, yet future but sure; notice "will reward" and the phrase in vs. 1 "Father who is in heaven".

Matthew 6:3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

We must be careful that our self-conscious act does not deteriorate into self-righteousness; dwelling on it in our own minds to the point of congratulating ourselves.

Our acts of mercy can become acts of vanity when our primary motive in giving is not the benefit of the recipient and because of our love for God, but for our own image.

The focal point is God and his approval, not what others will think, not even ourselves. The disciple should be satisfied with having God as his only witness.

John Stott says it well: "...our Christian giving is to be neither before men (waiting for the clapping to begin), nor even before ourselves (our left hand applauding our right hand's generosity) but before God, who sees our secret heart and rewards us with the discovery that, as Jesus said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Matthew 6:5 "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. 6 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."

When they prayed, they wanted to be seen and heard, as prayers were often said aloud; even private reading was generally in an audible voice, a kind of mumble. Matt.23:6 describes the Pharisees as ones who love the places of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogue.

According to Dan.6:10 devout Jews prayed three times a day; there does not seem to have been set times as in Islam but in Acts 3:1 and 10:30 there is a reference to praying at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour (3PM).

probably in reference to a storage room which was very small, like a broom closet. In that secret place the disciple will meet his/her God who is in secret. That room becomes the Holy of Holies.

Public prayer is not an occasion to try to display one's "spirituality" or righteousness. Prayer is to be directed to God, not others.

Standing was the normal Jewish posture for prayer.

→ One commentator paraphrases the sense of the verb in this context this way: "they love to pray positioning themselves conspicuously in the synagogues."

Matthew 6:7 "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.<sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Prayer does not inform God of our needs (see also 6:32).

Possibly in reference to long lists of divine names used so that the correct name of God might not be omitted during the attempt to get God's attention. One Greek writer named Catullus in his prayer to the goddess Diana lists all the names and qualities of the goddess, concluding with "hallowed be thy name, whatever name you prefer."

This was an attempt to manipulate God with repetitive words or phrases.

6:6-7 give us two things we are not to do in prayer:

1. Don't pray for show, because God meets us mainly in the secret places. Some want to show their "spirituality" by their public prayers, but to whom are they really praying?
2. Don't go on and on for God already knows our needs. Martin Luther gives good advice when he said: "prayers should be brief, frequent, and intense." You do not have to pray long or eloquent for God to give his attention to your prayer. See Eccl.5:2

<sup>ESV</sup> Matthew 6:16 "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. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> 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.

The Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12); John the Baptist fasted regularly, but the disciples of Jesus did not (Matt.9:14).

As with giving (vs.2) and praying (vs.5), it is assumed that the disciple will fast; the issue is not whether but how. Not as the "hypocrites...[to] be seen by others..."

What is in view here is the private, voluntary practice of fasting. This is the only place in the NT where fasting is actually taught. We see examples in Luke 2:37, Acts 13:2-3; 14:23 where it linked with prayer. Interestingly, no verse of the NT encourages fasting for believers.

probably referring to making their faces dirty with ashes and a generally disheveled appearance.

a reference to personal grooming and a sign of happiness that was forbidden on fast days.

Fasting in OT was a way of humbling oneself before God (Ps. 35:13; Is.58:3,5). Fasting was called during times of national crisis or for mourning over national sins Neh. 9:1-2

<sup>ESV</sup> Matthew 6:9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread, <sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

The closing doxology ("for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.") in the traditional form of the prayer is found only in the later manuscripts of the NT. The early church possibly added it from I Chronicles 29: 11-13.

Though called the "Lord's Prayer" it might better be called "The Disciples' Prayer" or "The Model Prayer" since it is a prayer Jesus never prayed nor could have ("forgive us our trespasses"). The words "pray then like this" or "in this manner" suggest a pattern for prayer, not just a set form of words to be prayed, though in early church it was a part of their liturgy.

## The Kaddish Prayer

"Exalted and hallowed be his great name in the world which he created according to his will. May he let his kingdom rule in your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime of the whole house of Israel, speedily and soon. Praised be his great name from eternity to eternity. And to this say: Amen."

An Aramaic prayer that was spoken at the end of the preaching part of the synagogue worship service. It closely parallels the first part of Jesus' prayer for his disciples. No doubt the disciples were reminded of the Kaddish by Jesus' words.

Opening Address:

*Our Father in heaven*

Three clauses about God and his worship:

*May your name be held in reverence;*

*May your kingdom come;*

*May your will be done, as in heaven so also on the earth.*

Three Petitions for our own needs:

*Give us today the bread we need for tomorrow.*

*And forgive us our debts as we, too, have forgiven our debtors.*

*And do not bring us into testing, but rescue us from the Evil One.*

The first three petitions are really expressions of worship, associating ourselves with God's purpose in the world. God's honor, kingdom, and purpose should come first in our prayers, then our own needs are set within the priority of God's will.

Not all aspects of prayer are expressed in this model of prayer. There is no explicit confession of sin, no thanksgiving for blessings already received, no intercessions (even for our persecutors, 5:44). But meditation on this prayer would certainly lead to such expansions. The starting point of prayer, however, is worship, then petition.

The prayer is a forward-looking prayer anticipating the day of God's final manifestation of his kingdom. One commentator's paraphrase, "Set apart your holy name  
Bring your eschatological kingdom;  
Cause your will to be fulfilled."

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In contrast to the "Gentiles" who really do not know God; and since "your Father knows what you need before you ask him" there is no need for many words.

The Greek word here is "pater" which corresponds to the Aramaic form of address "abba". It was used by small and adult children when speaking to their fathers and also a respectful way of addressing old men. To use this form of address for God was unique and unusual. "Abba" was a word of love and affection, the most warm of the Aramaic words for father.

This simple form of address would speak of God's nearness and love, as it would be with our earthly fathers, in the best sense of the word.

By addressing God as "Father" there is also the inherent promise of salvation. It is a prayer of God's children.

"You must not pray like the hypocrites but pray as follows as the Lord bid us in his gospel: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us today our bread for tomorrow; forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but save us from the evil one, for yours is the power and the glory forever.'"

From the ***Didache*** 8:2-3, an early Christian teaching manual from about 100AD.

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"Our Father" is an expression that Jesus gave to us of how we can address God in prayer, but it is not an expression that Jesus uses with his disciples to include himself. Jesus does speak of "my Father". But just as we say in our creed, "I believe in Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God." Jesus is a Son by nature; we are children of God by adoption.

The "our" speaks of the communal solidarity of God's family. St. Augustine says in one of his sermons: "Here there is also an admonition to ...those who in the eyes of the world are well-born, that when they become Christians they are not to lord it over the poor and lowly, because they are one in saying to God, 'Our Father', which they cannot say with true piety unless they recognize that they are brothers."

The Lord's Prayer plants a democratizing time bomb in culture; it is both a leveler and an elevator

This expression lifts and stretches the idea of Father. He is not only intimately "our Father", he is also immensely the God of the whole universe.

Erasmus beautifully states, "God is called 'Father' so that you might know him as kind and good; he is addressed 'in heaven' so that you might lift your souls there, neglecting earthly goods; he called 'our' lest anyone appropriate anything to oneself alone, since he brings his graces to all in one group, and so that in this sense there might be an equality between kings and servants."

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- "Name" is a term for God as He has revealed himself to Israel. His "name" is holy because God Himself is holy.
- We are to pray that God's be "hallowed" or be "treated as holy", that due honor be given to it

Martin Luther: "To be sure, God's name is holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may also be holy in us."

John Chrysostom: "God possesses...in himself the fullness of all glory nevertheless, he commands...that we ask that he also be glorified by our lives."

The clause is not a request that God's name be made "holy"—it is holy already (see Ps 30:4; 97:12; 103:1), because God is holy. Rather it is that people may recognize and acknowledge its holiness by giving God the reverence which is his due. God says of his people "that they will sanctify my name....and stand in awe of the God of Israel" Is 29:23

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Jesus is teaching us to pray for the coming of the new heavens and new earth, for the end of history and the beginning of the new, for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The coming of God's Kingdom in its fulness.

This understanding of God's kingdom pictures the kingdom as a great reality heading toward us from the future.

Mark 15:43 says of Joseph of Arimathea that he was "expecting the kingdom of God". The Kaddish prays for God's kingdom to come swiftly and soon.

There is an "already—not yet" tension in the NT concerning the kingdom of God. It has come with Jesus and the gift of God's Spirit; we are waiting for His kingdom to come in fullness all over the creation, when God's rightful reign is embraced by all.

The kingdom of God was actually already present (3:2; 4:17; 12:28) though not everyone recognized or acknowledged it. The parables of Matthew 13 will repeat this point; there is a hidden presence of God's kingdom which is preparing for a future manifestation.

There is a sense in which the Kingdom comes whenever and wherever God's will is acknowledged and obeyed on earth.

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In 6:33 Jesus says we are to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. We are to strive for the kingdom of God by doing the righteousness appropriate to it. In Matt.26:42 when facing the cross, Jesus prays "let your will be done". He was not only asking God to do whatever He wants to do, but Jesus was also asking for power to associate himself actively with this will of God.

It isn't just a surrender to an unknowable fate that we must accept by faith but we are asking that we embrace God's will. That his will be done in our lives as well.

This petition ("cause your will to be fulfilled") is essentially the same as petitions one and two. It looks forward to the accomplishment of God's will on earth and the overturning of the present world order with its spiritual darkness.

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This phrase ("as in heaven also upon earth") could apply to all three petitions. In heaven among the angels God's name is already and always hallowed, his kingship acknowledged and his will is done. So this prayer is that the heavenly state of affairs may also be reflected on earth.

For us to pray such a prayer is, of course, to commit ourselves to honor God's name, accept his reign over our lives, and be ever ready to do his will.