

# The Prayers of Jesus

Thomas Robinson, *On Earth as in Heaven, 1*, August 19, 2012

## Matthew 6:5-15

<sup>5</sup> *“And **when you pray**, do not be like the hypocrites, for they **love to pray** standing in the assemblies and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward/wages in full. <sup>6</sup> But **when you pray**, go into your **inner room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is in the secret place**. Then your Father, who sees in secret, will give back to you.*

<sup>7</sup> *And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think 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**.*

<sup>9</sup> *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 today 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 / testing,***

*but **deliver us from evil**.*

<sup>14</sup> *For if you forgive people their offenses, **your heavenly Father** will also forgive you.*

<sup>15</sup> *But if you do not forgive people, neither will your Father forgive your offenses.”*

## Exodus 4:22-23a

<sup>22</sup> Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, <sup>23</sup> and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.”

## Luke 3:21-22

<sup>21</sup> Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

## Mark 1:35

<sup>35</sup> In the morning, while it was still dark, he got up and went out to a **deserted place**, and there he prayed.

## Mark 14:35-36

<sup>35</sup> And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> And he said, “**Abba, Father**, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

## Romans 8:15, 26

<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received **the Spirit of adoption as sons**, by whom we cry, “**Abba! Father!**” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. ... <sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For **we do not know** what to pray for as we ought, but the **Spirit himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words.

## Luke 23:34, 46

<sup>34</sup> And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” ... <sup>46</sup> Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

## From Jesus to Us – A Life in Prayer

Our Retreat: *On Earth as in Heaven – The Flow of Prayer in Daily Life*. We want to explore how we can live in our everyday world in a vibrant relationship with the God who created us and loves us. The title begins with the phrase at the center of the Lord's Prayer, pointing to a desire for uniting the realm of God and our world. As he often did, Jesus trusts us to explore what these words mean in the center of his instruction on prayer. Jesus is talking about various practices of piety – giving to the poor, fasting, prayer. All are good but are easily distorted so that they cease to draw us close to God and become an empty “religious” display without God. Jesus expands the section on prayer. The aim is not more rigorous practice or better technique, but prayer that is simple and authentic. He models that simplicity by giving a short prayer, easily memorized, recited. But it is a teaching prayer – each word is like a parable, chosen, challenging us to see Jesus' vision of God, ourselves, past/future, everyday life, relationships, struggles. It takes us into the real world as Jesus knew it. The Gospels don't spend a lot of space on Jesus' prayer life. Our glimpses start at his baptism (Lk 3). Jesus goes alone to deserted places away from crowds at night to pray (Mk 1; Lk 6:12). Once long after Jesus' Sermon, the disciples came to Him at one of these times of prayer for further instruction. Jesus gave them the same prayer, even simpler, shorter (Lk 11:1-4). He could also share an extended prayer (Jn 17). In Gethsemane Mark records the detail that in Aramaic Jesus called God, Abba, expressing intimacy with God even as he wrestled with the horror of the cross. On the cross, he prayed simply: *“Father, forgive...”* Prayer is the natural expression of life seen through Jesus' eyes. He wants to help us see that reality.

### “Our Father” – Sought by God, Seeking God

The first phrase is crucial – Greek *Pater*, Aramaic *Abba*. Sometimes we emphasize the intimacy of *Abba* as a child's word ('daddy'). It was both intimate and dignified, regularly used by adults – a deep belonging. Our human experiences of parents (father or mother) are often very difficult and hurtful. Jesus' expression of God as a loving, self-giving father creates an image that is a challenge and ideal for every human parent. “Father” is both the starting point and goal of all life in relationship to God. When God's life has its full, mature realization in the disciple's life: *“You shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.* (Mt 5:48). But the idea of *God as father is not new*, rather Jesus recaptures an ancient expression of God's grace – the work God has been doing with his people through long history. As God intervenes to deliver Israel from slavery in the Exodus, He affirms that He is Israel's Father (Exod 4). The Father is deliverer, redeemer. So also when God through David promises his people a coming Messiah, to lead, deliver, embody the people, He promises to be his Father (2Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7-8). Messiah means son of David, son of God. Jesus as son of David and Messiah brings the disciples and the world to a renewed, more profound Exodus, celebrated at Passover; deliverance from sin, injustice and death through cross and resurrection. *“Our Father”* expresses a reality created by God's grace seeking our deliverance, intervening personally in Jesus to bring it to fulfillment in God's kingdom. It also expresses for us the ultimate goal of our being adopted into that grace, learning to be God's child, in weakness growing toward God's fullness (Rom 8).

### “In Heaven” – Majesty and Intimacy

This phrase expresses a fundamental difference between us and God – He's “in the heavens,” we're on earth. People have often thought of this as inaccessibility, majesty uninvolved with us. The ancient scientific view of the world (Ptolemaic) had the earth at center, surrounded by spheres of the planets and stars. Beyond the stars was the realm of God and His heaven. Earth was the most distant place in the universe from God. Not so with Jesus. Rather Heaven is the realm (dimension) of God that pervades all of God's creation and beyond. It is always present, everywhere. The Father in heaven is not a distant power, uninvolved, dealing with people only from afar. His majesty is that he can be and is with us and around us always. He clothes the lilies, feeds the birds, counts your hairs. Your inner room can close out the world, but not heaven. In His prayer, Jesus leads us into a vision of the real world with the real God at the center of the meaning and purpose of all life. There a simple, authentic, life-giving, relationship with God can grow through prayer.