

Our World in Jesus' Prayer

Thomas Robinson, *On Earth as in Heaven*, 2, August 26, 2012

Matthew 6:5-13

⁵ “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. ⁶ 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.

⁷ 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. 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 today our daily bread.*

¹² *And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

¹³ *And lead us not into temptation / testing,
but deliver us from evil.”*

Matthew 6:33

³³ “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Exodus 3:13-15 *God reveals Himself to Moses at the Burning Bush*

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”

¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘LORD (Yahweh, Kyrios), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever.

Ezekiel 36:23-28

²³ And I will hallow (sanctify) my great name, which has been profaned among the nations.... And the nations will know that *I am LORD (YAHWEH)*.... ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. ... ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ... and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Philippians 2:9-10 *The End of a Hymn about Jesus*

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that *Jesus Christ is LORD (Kyrios)*, to the glory of God the Father.

Matthew 4:17

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 26:42 *Jesus in Gethsemane*

⁴² Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”

Jesus' Wide Open World of Prayer

We are in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching about how religious practices (giving, fasting, prayer) can easily lose all relationship to God. He gives the disciples a brief prayer that teaches them simplicity and depth, A teaching prayer for reflection and learning as well as memory and active prayer, God is Father – a relationship initiated by God (Israel, Messiah), sustained by the One who knows our needs, and the goal of all our growth and maturity, to be children of God, perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

"In heaven"/ "On earth as in heaven"- Jesus wants his disciples to sense and know that they are continually interacting with Heaven, God's realm/dimension of God's whole creation. Both vast, glorious and always present and intimate. We don't live on a flat plain of earth, but in multiple dimensions of reality created by God. We can't see the true importance of our everyday life/relationships/work/struggles on earth until we know that we are part of that larger reality of Heaven-and-Earth, interacting on every level, one whole.

This physical world, "Earth," is the both God's creation and the realm of God's self-restraint. He creates a space for human freedom so that even we tiny creatures can have a real relationship of love and trust with God. Here we can make a difference for good, and can also make a destructive mess, for ourselves and others. We take God's gift of freedom for his absence/impotence. Jesus shows that God is working everywhere.

The World of God's Name and Story

Why start with hallowing God's name? One of the most natural human religious instincts is to divinize ourselves and our physical world – pantheism in many forms. Everything (us too) is god, impersonal, undemanding.

Jesus weaves his prayer into the specific scripture narrative of Israel and God's revelation to Moses. God is creator of everything, but outside creation, intervening in distinct, often unexpected ways. He is *"I am," Yahweh (Jehovah), Kyrios/LORD*. He chooses one people through whom to deal with the brokenness of all. He makes his name holy by specific, surprising means. He makes promises and demands. He give his Spirit.

Through Jesus' life, crucifixion, resurrection, the overwhelming realization of the disciples was that God had again revealed himself in Jesus, that the hallowed name above every name belonged to Jesus. The story continues. As God's name was hallowed in the temple, now people from every land are "holy," part of God's temple.

God's Kingdom Breaking In

The first description of Jesus' preaching is *"Start thinking differently, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."* God was intervening in our world in a long-promised but completely surprising way. The Sermon on the Mount gives Jesus' distinct vision for that inbreaking, and his whole ministry, crucifixion, resurrection are the embodiment of God coming among his people. The Kingdom breaks in but not by armed conquest or rebellion, but with a humble king on a donkey, crucified, resurrected. Apparent defeat is unimaginable strength, creating new life, defeating death, opening to people God's spirit, sharing in God's own life.

Praying for God's kingdom to come recognizes that it came uniquely in Jesus, but that its coming continues until the last enemy, death, is completely destroyed. We pray for ourselves to live in the Kingdom vision of his sermon, with the love, healing, service of his life and death, with the boldness and life of his resurrection.

The World of God's Will and Purpose

"Your will be done!" One characteristic elements of much modern philosophy is to remove purpose (teleology) from the world, history, science, etc. Everything develops from past causes without direction or meaning.

Jesus affirms purpose, meaning. The creator has a will for things, the life he created has a meaning. That we pray for God's will to be done points to the fact that we often rebel and ignore or frustrate God's will. We imagine that our lives will be better with ourselves or something we want at the center. Jesus challenges us to a new vision – realizing God's will leads to our full maturity, loving relationships, healing service to others.

We are called to live God's Kingdom/God's will on a broken, dangerous, challenging earth. The challenge of *"Your will be done"* is seen in Gethsemane in Jesus' harrowing struggle with the cross and all that it meant. But where Heaven shapes Earth and God's will is done, there, even through our struggle, God creates life.