

# Jesus and Our Life of Prayer

Thomas Robinson, *A Message for Discussion*, January. 24, 2016

## 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 synagogues and on the street corners to be **seen by others**. 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 keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of 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> “This, then, is how you should pray:

‘**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 the evil one.’

<sup>14</sup> For if you **forgive others** their **offenses**, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses.

## Mark 1:35

<sup>35</sup> And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he (Jesus) departed and went out to a desolate place, and **there he prayed**.

## Matthew 14:23

<sup>23</sup> And after he had dismissed the crowds, **he went up on the mountain by himself to pray**. When evening came, he was there alone.

## Mark 11:25

<sup>25</sup> And **whenever you stand praying, forgive**, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your offenses.

## Matthew 25:34-36

<sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For **I was hungry and you gave me food**, I was **thirsty** and you **gave me drink**, I was a **stranger** and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was **naked** and you clothed me, I was **sick** and you visited me, I was in **prison** and you came to me.’

## **Seek First the Kingdom of God**

At the beginning of the year, we started with Jesus' fundamental guidance: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."* [Mt 6:33] A way of seeing everything with God at the center of reality. Seeking that reality amid all claims for other gods like Mammon.

Prayer for Jesus is a profound expression of that seeking. Prayer is engagement / connection with the God of the universe. Jesus, himself, often had refreshing, renewing times of prayer.

## **"When You Pray" – Taking God Seriously**

Even truly good things are vulnerable to corruption/distortion from little gods. When prayer is for public display it becomes work for pay, fully paid. A closed circle, no God involved.

Jesus urges a core of private prayer. The "Father in heaven" is not far away but very close. Trust God as knowing and caring. He is intimately acquainted with us and loves us.

## **"Our Father" – Intimacy and Awe**

We approach "Abba" with the intimate connection of a young child with a powerful parent – boldness, assurance of acceptance. And also with an adult perception of holiness and glory.

God is always God. He welcomes and adopts us by his grace. The nature of our whole relationship to God and his creation is shaped by his welcoming love. We get God.

## **Your Kingdom, Your Will – "On Earth as in Heaven"**

Jesus calls us to a commitment of direction in life – God's reality/love/will/rule – even long before we understand it. Trust. This world is the realm where God has withheld his control to give space for human freedom/growth/maturity, but also sin/corruption.

Seek God's way on a large scale – kingdom – and intimate scale. Jesus in Gethsemane.

## **"Give us this day..." – All is a Gift from God**

Aren't we "breadwinners" who "earn" our daily bread? Thus we "worry" about it. Jesus models prayer that sees even the most basic needs as gifts from God. Every luxury, every necessity, every breath/heartbeat is a gift we could not create. We live in daily, growing gratitude.

At the same time we participate in God giving that gift to others: *"I was hungry, you fed me."*

## **"Forgive us...As we Forgive" – God's ways inside us**

Here God's heart becomes our heart. We expect God's forgiveness but have trouble with our forgiving. Jesus speaks of forgiving debts/offenses – just claims against someone, where revenge or punishment would be justified.

Here, our engagement with God reaches deepest. We let go our fair demands in favor of grace, as God has with us. Here Jesus is most insistent. We want God's grace, but that grace is transforming. We pray with a commitment to change.

## **"Lead us not..." – Vulnerability and Deliverance**

Jesus knows that tests, trials, troubles, temptations come. He urges us to pray knowing our vulnerability and never thinking we stand by our own strength. It is never a weakness to depend on God. We are always creatures/God's children and our greatest maturity is there.

We learn to pray for and desire his strength and deliverance from temptations. Real victory.