

God's Kingdom & Gaining My Life

Thomas Robinson, *Shaped by Jesus for Life 2*, February 17, 2019

Matthew 6:5-13

⁵ “And when you pray, you mustn’t be like the play-actors. For they love in the synagogues and at the corners of broad streets to stand and pray so that they may be very visible to the people. Truly, I tell you, they’re getting their wages right now.

⁶ But **when you pray**, go into your **inner room**, and when you’ve shut your door, pray to **your Father** who is in that **secret place**. And **your Father who sees in secret** will give in response to you. ⁷ And as you pray, don’t pile up empty phrases as so many peoples do, for they think they’ll be heard for their long strings of words. ⁸ Don’t imitate them, for **your Father knows** what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then in this way:

Our Father in the heavens, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ **Let your kingdom come, let your will become reality, as in heaven, so also on earth.**

¹¹ **Give us** today our daily bread,

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

¹³ And don’t **lead us** into testing, but deliver us from evil.”

Matthew 16:21-28

²¹ From that time **Jesus** began to show his **disciples** that it is **necessary** for him to **go to Jerusalem** and **suffer many things** from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and **be killed**, and on the third day **be raised** (Isa 53:1-12).

²² And **Peter** took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Mercy, Lord! **This will surely never happen to you.**”

²³ But he turned and said to **Peter**, “Get **behind me, Satan!** You’re a **stumbling block** in front of me. Because you’re not **thinking the things of God**, but the **things of humans!**”

²⁴ Then **Jesus** told his **disciples**, “If anyone wants to **come behind me**, let them **deny themselves** and **take up their cross** and **follow me**.”

²⁵ For whoever wants to **save** their life / soul (*psyché*) will **lose** it, but **whoever loses their life / soul / self** (*psyché*) **for my sake will find it**. ²⁶ For what will a person profit if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life / soul (*psyché*)? Or what will a person give as an exchange for their life / soul (*psyché*)?

²⁷ For the **Son of Man** is **about to come in the glory of his Father with his angels** (Dan 7:9-14), and then he’ll give out to each one according to their actions. ²⁸ Truly, I tell you, some standing here will not taste death till they see the Son of Man **coming in his kingdom.**”

1 Corinthians 1:21-24 The Message of the Cross

²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know God, God decided through the foolishness of this proclamation to save those who trust it. ²² For Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach a crucified Messiah (Anointed king) – to Jews, a stumbling block and to Gentiles, foolishness ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, a Messiah who is God’s power and God’s wisdom.

Philippians 3:7-14 Paul’s Quest to Know Jesus

⁷ But whatever gains I had, I have considered as a loss because of the Messiah. ⁸ And what is more, I consider everything as a loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Messiah Jesus my Lord. Because

of him I have forfeited all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may have the Messiah as my gain⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that is from Law, but that which is through the Messiah's faithfulness, the righteousness from God that is bestowed on faith.

¹⁰ My aim is to know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming shaped by his death,¹¹ that by whatever path I may arrive at the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I already obtained this or have already been brought to perfection, but I press on to make it my own, because Messiah Jesus has made me his own.

¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have made it my own. One thing rather: forgetting the things behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Jesus.

Simple Reality in a Relationship with God

Jesus: *"Change your way of thinking, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!"* (Mt 4:17).

"*Kingdom*" points to God's "*Anointed king*" – Messiah – Christ. A challenge to every other kingdom: Herod, Rome, myself, the world. But the kingdom is of God's realm, "the heavens," permeating all reality, but unrecognized. To people, "kingdom" meant power, conquest, glory, taxing. In SoM Jesus shows God's Kgd: self-giving love, grace, generosity.

Through teaching prayer, Jesus takes us to the heart of a relationship with God – simple, real.

It's heart is the secret place, pointing to the inmost self. God's heavenly realm is there in secret. "Your Father" is present, sees, knows, and responds. God's glory is not for show.

But the dialogue of prayer is profound, all-encompassing! We speak our desire to change our thinking to align with God's will: God's Kingdom coming on our earth as in God's heavens.

The union of God's rule with God's creation becoming reality personally and universally.

Learning to Think and See from Behind Jesus

Mt shows the challenge of all this when Peter affirms Jesus as Messiah/King. Peter's sure he's leading Jesus into his glorious future. But when Jesus tells that future in terms of God's Suffering Servant (Isa 53), Peter hears only death & corrects him. Jesus is better than that!

Jesus tells Peter to get behind him. The possibilities of God's future are far more powerful than Peter imagines. Let Jesus lead, even into suffering, being killed, being raised. So every disciple must stay behind Jesus to learn the future: deny self / change thinking (not asceticism), take up cross (as rebel to all empire), follow Jesus, God's Anointed King.

In vv 27-28, Jesus retells the same future in terms of the Son of Man in Dan 7. It sounds so different that we often read it as "second coming," but it's Jesus' death, resurrection, & enthronement with all authority (Mt 28:18-20). The King gives fittingly to each person.

The ultimate gift is our life/soul/self (*psyché*)! We think we know it & can save it. But we can hardly imagine what our Creator can do. Get behind Jesus, follow and experience.

The Quest to Know Jesus and in Him Know Myself

In Phi 3, Paul tells his own experience of this adventure. He had rejected Jesus! But he was confronted by the crucified & risen Jesus. Through Jesus, all of life's aims looked different:

"The power of his resurrection" – that our fragile human life can be united to God's eternal life, starting now by his Spirit. *"Shaped by his death"* – God's self-giving love defines a life of grace. We're always behind Jesus, called to gain our life as a quest that he leads!