

KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH (UCC)

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:5-15

Pastor Danny Han

Sunday, October 30, 2022

1. WELCOME & OPEN

A warm welcome to all of you. My name is Danny Han, and it's very nice to be with this church family this morning. Some of you may remember me and my wife Kyunghee because we were here in May, and I gave a message on prayer from Luke 18. I believe the main title was Keep On Praying with the sub-title: And Never Give Up. And it was the parable of the persistent widow from Luke 18. I'm honored to be asked to come back, so I think you like me, and I like you.

Can you guess what today's message is going to be about? Hint. It's the same topic as last time: prayer.

I gave this message to my church family at Kaimuki Christian Church earlier this month because prayer is incredibly important for the believer. We were going through rough waters with our Lead Pastor's 16-month-old daughter needing a 12-hour open heart surgery – one of the rarest of its kind, and on a baby, no less. She made it through just fine, but you can be sure we were praying. So, during that early part of October, prayer was especially on our hearts. And one that should remain in our hearts.

This discipline of praying regularly with God is so important. But I'm not going to preach it the same way today. I want to go deeper than the first time I gave it because I think this church family would appreciate a deeper expounding of the passage today from Matthew 6. You know it as the Lord's Prayer, and it's your invocation here at Kailua Christian Church.

I wanted to look at this prayer today with a fresh perspective or perhaps a RE-freshed perspective on the priorities outlined in that prayer. Maybe to even come to a place where we might admit that perhaps we never really learned how to pray with the proper perspective and priorities that Jesus taught. If that's you, and you've been a follower of Jesus for a long time, don't feel bad. Because even though Jesus' disciples prayed every day, they asked Jesus to teach them to pray. So, I hope today's message will teach, inspire, and invite us all to pray just like Jesus.

Let me read from Matthew 6, starting with verse 5. These are the words of Jesus.

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 6:5-15

5 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 in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. 9 This, then, is how you should pray: 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, but deliver us from the evil one. 14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others of their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Kailua Christian Church, will you pray with me?

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen.

MESSAGE

Those opening words in verses 9 & 10 make up the familiar Lord's Prayer. But to give it the treatment it's due; it's necessary to give some context.

Now what's beautiful about the gospels is that they tell similar stories but have details and perspectives that are not rubber-stamped across the three synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Jesus had just finished praying in solitude. It's not mentioned here in Matthew 6, but Luke 11 gives us a glimpse. Previously, John the Baptist had taught his disciples how to pray, and so Jesus' disciples wanted Him to do the same thing.

Let's turn there real quick.

Luke 11:1

1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Again, Jesus' disciples wanted Him to show them how to pray. That's an important point right there. To model means to display. So we can't model something that we are not doing. But that doesn't mean you can't start right now. I hope this message will inspire you to do that.

Jesus spent much time in prayer. This is all throughout the gospel accounts, so there's no question that Jesus modeled what he taught.

By the way, the parable of the friend at midnight is a parable that has deep meaning. I encourage you to take a look at that later – not now! – afterwards, maybe this week. You'll find that parable in Luke

11:5-13. Read that and consider it parallel-able, a parable, parallel to what we're learning today.

So let's come back to Matthew 6, because here in this gospel, we get some additional context. Here, Jesus is NOT talking in parables – He's giving a clear discourse on prayer. Clear instructions on the topic of prayer.

But let me start with this. Jesus and even John the Baptist were making it very clear that God's kingdom – heaven on earth – was at hand. John the Baptist said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

And Jesus said it also. After He was tempted in the wilderness, Jesus set out on His mission and began to preach,

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

I want you to remember that. Right off the bat, Jesus clarified that heaven was much closer than anyone realized. And Jesus would preach and teach the nature of God's kingdom to His people, and, indeed, for us to understand.

But let's turn our attention to what Jesus said about hypocrites in Matthew 6.

Jesus talked about the hypocrites who made a public spectacle of their prayers to show how religious and righteous they were. They were modeling the wrong way to pray – which was legalistic and not God-focused. They were trying to please people and themselves, not God.

The religious leaders would pray multiple times a day (they were good at doing this – like clock-work), but their hearts weren't in it. Their priorities were just wrong. And because their prayers were insincere, Jesus said, don't pray like those guys, DO NOT BE LIKE THEM as he says in verse 5.

He told the crowd that was listening to him: Don't be like the hypocrites when you pray.

That's a lesson for us. If our focus is on ourselves, our prayers will not be heard. And it may not take the form of standing on a street corner or making a big show. But it might be more subtle. Praying like He's a genie in a bottle or only when we need help. If there's any of that, Jesus wants us to change, just like those religious leaders needed to change.

I want to make clear that Jesus isn't relegating prayer to only behind closed doors. I know some people have taken this verse to shy away from praying in groups or with others, but I don't believe that's the application here. I believe Jesus contrasts the hypocrisy of the religious leaders whose REASON TO PRAY was to look good in front of people. I mean, the Bible exhorts us to pray TOGETHER in earnestness to the Lord, wherever we are:

Matthew 18:19-20

Ephesians 6:18

Romans 8:26 and so on ...

Let me ask you something.

Have you heard the expression, prayer changes things? I've seen those words overlaid on a beautiful image of a mountain or a sunrise, probably on Instagram. You know what I'm talking about. It's like an inspirational quote that gives us good feelings inside.

It sounds good that prayer changes things.

Yes, prayer can change things, but not to the extent that it surprises God. God is omnipresent and omniscient, so from His perspective, nothing changed because He knew what would happen. God declares the end from the beginning, from ancient of times to what is still to come. There is none like Him, as it says in Isaiah 46.

So instead of looking at prayer as changing THINGS, let's see prayer as changing US by changing our PERSPECTIVE and PRIORITIES.

To put it more directly ...

Prayer SHOULD change our perspective and priorities.

And Jesus showed them how, and He shows us how.

Jesus said to his disciples, "This then is how you should pray," and these four words set the correct frame of reference when it comes to prayer.

Our Father in Heaven.

But let me read verses 9 and 10 together.

Matthew 6:9,10

9 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, 10 Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

The Intimate Relationship We Have

Jesus is telling his fellow Jews that God was here among them. Remember, the kingdom of heaven is near. Our father in heaven ... that was a clear signal, but many did not see it that way.

God was not so much a relationship, but a religion. And a proud religion at that. With rules and regulations that only made it harder for people; not easier.

And back then, God was not addressed with affection or endearment, but Jesus came on the scene and changed that. Jesus was using a term of endearment that a child would have for their father. Not an absent father, but a present father. The kingdom of heaven is near.

I like how Craig Keener puts it. He's a theologian and professor of New Testament studies:

First, Jesus preaches [the Lord's prayer] ... on the basis of an intimate relationship with God: Father.

This is a relationship that denotes both respectful dependence and affectionate intimacy.
–Keener, C. S. (1997). Matthew (Vol. 1, Mt 6:9–13). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

These words tell us about the intimate relationship with our Father in Heaven there in verse 9. This is where our prayer life begins. With our Father – who is near.

We take those words for granted because I think we're used to hearing them.

Like the time I was in Korea in 2010. My inlaws are from Korea, and that's where they live. They don't speak English, and I don't speak Korean. I remember asking my father-in-law (with my wife Kyunghhee translating) how to address him with proper respect and with the right Korean word for father, and he replied,

'Appa.' He smiled at me, and he did like this and said saranghaeyo!

I repeated it ... appa, saranghaeyo! Gamsahabnida!

Little did I know that 'appa' is what children call their dad in Korea. I mean little kids! Nooo ... he didn't give me the correct word a grown man would call his dad. I found that out one day when I was trying to get my father-in-law's attention because I was getting lost in a crowd at a rice festival, and I was running after him with my one-year-old daughter and waving like a madman, yelling,

“Appa! Appa!”

Everyone was staring at me, I mean young people, old people, little kids, babies ... just staring at the MAN CHILD who's running around, flailing his arms like a wild person yelling the equivalent of “Daddy, Daddy!” while holding a crying baby of his own. It's a pretty ridiculous scene, but it's a true story.

But it's kinda cute if you think about it. I'm sure my father-in-law enjoyed it, hearing those words,

“Appa! Appa!”

But what about our Father in Heaven? Do you think He would love to hear those words?

I think He would because that's what Jesus did. He called him “Daddy.” Can we cry out just like that to Him? To hold on to Him with our very lives? Yes, I think so, because if Jesus could do it, so can we!

Appa! Abba! Father! Daddy!

Can we change our perspective on prayer so that it brings us back to the kind of intimate relationship we have with our Father in Heaven? Not unlike a child to his father. Or a son-in-law towards his dad.

God's with us, and He cares about us; we must never treat prayer as a means to an end, like some transactional conversation of gimme, gimme, gimme, but one that's relational through and through.

We are talking to our Father in Heaven, who is affectionate towards us and on whom we depend. We need to start with that perspective in mind. So remember that. It means a lot to Him. It should mean a lot to us. Father in Heaven. I love you. Saranghaeyo! Gamsahabnida!

And if we can start there, then the rest of our prayers can flow out of the love, intimacy, and thankfulness of that relationship with Him.

And then we start to understand the rest of that verse – Hallowed be Your name.

He's our Father, but He's also divine. And that means He commands the highest honor and respect. He's the king of kings, Lord of Lords, who's honorable, holy, and good.

Hallowed be Your name. In other words, Father in Heaven, you are worthy of all praise and worship. Hallowed be Your name.

And that's the first point of the message. After setting our perspective on our Father in Heaven, we must ...

Pray that God's name is glorified.

We must shift our priorities so our prayers and petitions glorify our Father in Heaven.

Father God, allow me to glorify Your name today. Father God, in this need that I have, I pray that my priority would be to glorify Your name.

Hear me on this. These are not platitudes or nice sayings, but there is Scriptural support for this. And here it is – before you were ever born, He planned for you. He made you.

King David expressed it well:

Psalm 139:13

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

But most of all, He made you to glorify His name. I repeat: God made you to glorify His name.

Psalm 102:18 tell us:

Psalm 102:18

Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord.

Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord.

Think about that. He DID create you to glorify Him. Those are not empty words whenever you hear that. Like an artist who displays his beautiful works. God is the potter who shaped you into a beautiful vessel that He has put on display because He's proud to show it, and it demonstrates His

majestic creativity. All artists leave fingerprints on their work, and your life is no different. You are one of the primary proofs of God's existence, not to mention creation itself, as the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 1:20.

We were meant to glorify God's name. The Lord's prayer is a reminder of that.

Our father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

2. God's kingdom is expanded.

Jesus doesn't stop there. He shows us the following priority:

That God's kingdom is expanded, that it would be advanced here on earth.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

In the same way that we want His name to be famous and glorified, we want His kingdom to be famous. Father in Heaven, show me how I can make your kingdom famous today. I want to pray that I dare to advance your kingdom for Your glory.

Whatever you're praying – Give it to Him that whatever happens will cause His kingdom to be expanded here on earth.

And finally, the last priority must be God's will.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

I realize that this one is a little hard, because we encounter moments when we don't know what to do, and we are asking God for help and wisdom, like maybe how to talk to a friend in grace and truth about something difficult, or which school to enroll in, or what job to take, or who to marry. But here's what I would say. Those are instances of God's specific will. But before we can discern God's specific will in matters about our own lives, we have to know and obey His general will.

And God reveals His general will to us through His Word. Here are a few examples of God's general will:

2 Peter 3:9

God doesn't want anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

1 Thess 5:16-18

God wants us to rejoice always, to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all circumstances, for this is His will in Christ Jesus.

1 Thess 4:3

God wants us to stay away from sexual immorality and to live in holiness.

1 Peter 2:15

God wants us to do good as a testimony to Him.

Praying the priority of God's will to be done starts by knowing and doing God's general will, but unless we're in His Word, we won't know what that is. We have to be in His Word.

When we know God's Word, we'll know His ways. When we know His ways, we'll know His will. When we know His will, we'll know what to do.

We have to be in God's Word.

You see, that's how we understand God's character and His ways. When we do that, we'll know his general will, making it easier to discern His specific will in our lives.

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, but deliver us from the evil one.

Even though this is not the main theme of today's message, we must understand as believers in Christ Jesus that we cannot hope to pray with God's perspective unless we recognize God's practical presence in our lives.

Unfortunately, many who call themselves followers of Jesus live as though He is not there. So instead of living in the practical presence of God, they live lives of practical atheism. In other words, they believe in God but live in disregard of Him.

When Jesus prayed,

“Give us today our daily bread,”

He made it clear that we depend on our Father in heaven, DAILY. Jesus didn't pray, “give us our weekly, monthly, or yearly bread.” He prayed for daily bread, which should help us see that we have to go to our Father in Heaven daily. We do that through reading His Word. And by praying.

Forgiving others is so important because if we don't, it hinders our prayers. To the point, that if we don't forgive others, God will not forgive us. Judgment belongs to God alone, and it's not ours to give. We have to remember that.

Matthew 6:14,15

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

God's Word keeps our hearts in check, so reading His Word and praying ... go hand in hand.

Psalms 119:11

I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

“Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer.” - John Bunyan

I invite you to read God's Word regularly. Start today.

I want to end my message with a story about the power of prayer.

Jesus once told his disciples that there are demons that only can come out by prayer. So make no mistake, there IS power in prayer to demolish strongholds of the evil one.

I want to read this section from Ephesians chapter 6. Paul the Apostle, the church planter, and the missionary was imprisoned in Rome. He was under house arrest and would face death under the rule of Emperor Nero only a few short years after writing these words to the church in Ephesus. Paul knew full well the power of prayer against the unseen powers and principalities that are at work in this world.

Ephesians 6:10-18

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

In preparing this message, I called a modern-day missionary, a friend of mine named David. He and his wife Marsha have been a part of my church family for many years. Still, before they came back to Hawaii to settle here, they were missionaries in the country of Eritrea in East Africa, just north of Ethiopia. David & Marsha have a lot of stories from the mission field about the power of prayer. Here's one story David shared with me.

In June 2005, the Interior Security of the government of Eritrea knocked on his door. Not a good thing. They promptly expelled him and Marsha from the country because they were Christians. For David & Marsha, this was devastating because they were just about to start a camp for the blind where they could teach English, and this thing was ready to go. One of the camp's goals was to introduce these blind students to Jesus in a country where that was very dangerous. David told me they had everything ready to go – all the attendees, the interns helping, the location, and the leaders in place, including themselves. Still, they got the ultimatum from the totalitarian government of Eritrea: get out right now, or else. They prayed for God's guidance and God's leadership. And concluded that God's will would be done, and they rested knowing that the leaders they had set up were ready to do this camp, even without them, as heartbreaking as that would be. Here's what's amazing. In all of the planning and logistics of this camp, none of those leaders, interns, or students were staying at their house. Imagine what would have happened if they had been there when that knock on the door

came. No one had any discernable connection to David and Marsha, so that camp happened as planned right under the noses of Eritrea's Interior Security. God's name was lifted, His kingdom was expanded, and His will was done – not for David & Marsha's glory, but God's glory.

Can you see when we pray with God's priorities, God's name will be glorified, God's kingdom will be expanded, and the will of God will be carried out?

Kailua Christian Church, I hope today we have comprehended the perspective and priorities of the Lord's Prayer. And how we can use that to pray as Jesus prayed.

Let's be people who pray with our Heavenly Father's perspective in mind. Can we begin to pray like that, starting right now? I'll lead us in that prayer.

As I pray and put into practice today's message, let this be your prayer and your practice too. Maybe you must start praying for the first time, or once again.

Let it start right now, and each morning going forward, putting into practice the perspective and priorities set forth by Jesus in the Lord's Prayer.

There are many needs. The recent devastation of Hurricane Ian. Massacres in schoolyards. Wars and rumors of war. The sick and hurting around us, including those right here in your church family.

Let's pray together. I'll lead us. You can make it personal and echo the words in your heart. So let's bow our heads.

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. You are our father in heaven, and your kingdom of heaven is near to us. You are present and always available to hear our prayers. You care about us, like a compassionate father towards His children.

Hallowed be your name. Today, would you allow me to demonstrate tangibly how glorious You are? And let me be aware of any opportunity to glorify Your name, and I ask for the courage to do so.

May Your kingdom come. Today, help me to bring your kingdom here on earth. You have prepared me in advance to do your good works for your glory. Let me be keenly aware of any opportunity to bring your kingdom here on earth, and I ask for the courage to do it.

May Your will be done. Today, and each day, I want to commit to knowing Your Word, and Your ways, so that Your will can be done in me and through me.

I am thankful for Your daily presence and provision in my life. Forgive me of my sins, and help me live each day entirely dependent on You. I love you.

Amen.

Church family, keep on praying in the Spirit, at all times and with all kinds of prayers, as it says in Ephesians 6:18. Remember, Jesus taught us to fix our perspective on our Father in Heaven first, and then these three priorities so that ...

God's name is glorified.
God's kingdom is expanded.
God's will is done.

Pray the Lord's Prayer with that kind of intention.
Pray that with your family. Pray that before you eat.
Pray that when you wake up or go to bed at night.
And as you're praying and petitioning the Lord, use
the same perspective and then the priorities.

Pray to your Father in Heaven that the situation
would glorify His name, expand His kingdom, and
that His will would be done.

Thank you for allowing me to share God's Word today. And let's put this into practice, the Lord's
Prayer.