

Matthew 6:11 The Correct Understanding of Prayer Part 7

We are continuing in Matthew chapter 6 about prayer. Remembering that Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 is all one message or sermon by Jesus that we have entitled The Correct Understanding of the Things of God. Remembering that Jesus is speaking to religious Jews who are functioning religiously, but according to Jesus do not correctly understand spiritually the things of God. So in chapter 6 verses 1 through 18, we are in this section that is entitled The Correct Understanding of Doing Righteousness, that is, practicing one's religion as he is ministering to these religious Jews. In verses 2 to 4 the Lord ministered to them about their acts of mercy, whether it be giving, whether it be helping other people, any act of mercy. He says, "Do not do it like the hypocrites do because they want to be seen by people and receive the acknowledgment and honor of people." That is why they do it, to be seen by people, to be viewed by them. And He says, "They have their reward." People seeing them is their reward. They receive no reward from God.

But in verses 5 to 15, the section we have been in for a few weeks now, we are studying about prayer. Understanding doing your righteousness, that is, your prayer life and how you pray. And again, Jesus said, "Do not be like the hypocrites." They like to pray in public to be seen by people, and to impress people, to cause people to think of them as being ultra or super spiritual people. Do not be like that. That is not what prayer is for. They have their reward by getting the honor of man, but spiritually they have no reward. Because God is secret and Jesus said, "If you are going to pray to the Lord do it in secret." Do it in a private room. Not for people to see, but for you to converse with and communicate with God personally and privately.

And do not give vain repetitions - that is very important for our text for today. Do not present vain repetitions, that is, *empty words* that you just repeat over and over and over again. We are all used to that. We have all been exposed to that in church or a religious setting some time, where people get together and recite the Lord's prayer as a congregation every Sunday. Or find some prayer that you repeat over and over again to God. And the Lord says, "That is just empty repetitions." God is not impressed with that. And the important verse to realize - in verse eight of Matthew chapter 6 - is that God knows what we need of even before we ask. So He says, "Do not think that you are impressing God with your much speaking." Repeating a religious prayer over and over again does not impress or affect God or influence Him one way or another. It is empty. It is just religious practice. There is no relationship there because prayer, as we have studied, prayer is talking with the Lord. It is communicating to Him.

Our focus has been on verses 9 through 15 of Matthew chapter 6 where Jesus is teaching us The Concepts of Prayer. Now theologically this little section is known as The Lord's Prayer, which Biblically is not the Lord's prayer because the Lord is responding to the disciples saying, "Lord teach us to pray." So this is The Disciple's Prayer. He is giving it to them to pray. The real Lord's prayer is in John chapter 17 where the Lord interceded to the Father for all of us and all of God's people. That is The Lord's Prayer. That is His prayer to the Father. This is really The Disciple's Prayer and Jesus is teaching us in verses 9 through 15 The Concepts (or *principles*) of Prayer.

And the reason why I say it that way is because He is not teaching us a prayer to be recited - memorized, and recited, and repeated over and over again. He is not presenting that kind of prayer. And you say, "Well, how do you know that?" Well, in chapter 6 verse 7 it says we are not to give vain repetitions as prayers. He did not give us something to memorize and recite, that when we recite it some kind of blessing happens to us if we do it. That comes from the mystic religions. And there is a lot of mysticism in the church today where people are told to do things and say things a certain way in order to get blessed by God. That is superstition. That is mystical religions. That is witchcraft. That is magical arts. That is not spirituality and a relationship with Christ.

Not to speak in vain repetitions, and secondly, as we shared with you a couple of weeks ago, these concepts and principles were also taught by Jesus in Luke 11:1-4. He taught the same principles or concepts, but He taught them differently, worded differently, because He was teaching it to Gentiles; to the disciples in a Gentile setting to teach them to pray. So that tells us that Jesus was not going around teaching the same prayer to be repeated by religious people over and over again, as a religious habit. But rather, He was teaching them concepts and principles to go by so that when they pray, when we pray, we know the basic concepts of prayer.

In verse 9 through 15 as we have shared with you, these concepts of prayer are divided up into three categories. And those three categories - we are going to add to that now to share with you why we have done it that way. It is not because of some kind of ingenuity of man to break it up into three categories, but rather these three categories are established by the Greek grammar of the text.

1) First of all, in the first part of verse 9 is first category. Know or have a realization of who you are talking to. That is concept number one, principle number one. Know or realize who it is you are talking to. And the beginning of verse nine 9 says, **Our Father, the one who is in heaven.** Notice *Our*, first person plural, *Our Father*. That is a pronoun distinction separating this from all the other concepts in prayer.

2) The second category is the latter part of verse 9 through verse 10. Three things about our request to God about the things of God. You have noticed that, in prayer now, nothing about us yet; this is all about God. Realizing, recognizing, and knowing who we are talking to, and then three things - in this category it is divided off into three things. Asyndeton is a grammatical phrase that has to do with a type of style of writing. These three requests are separated from each other, there are no conjunctions (like the word *and*) connecting them together. They are three requests, all three of them stand by themselves, and it is called asyndeton: without conjunctions or connecting members to it.

1. Let Your name be sanctified.

2. Let Your kingdom come.

3. And thirdly, Let Your will be done (or Let Your will happen) as it is in heaven so upon the earth.

3) The third category - again marked out by the grammar, the grammar changes in the Greek text - our request to God concerning our needs and our necessities. Now we get to us. And again, it is separated into three requests in verses 11 through 13.

There is a shift in grammar. Here the requests are set apart by the change in pronouns, by using *our*, *we*, and *us*. And all of these requests, these three requests are connected with conjunctions, which means they are separate, but they are all together connected together in their request form. And so today we are going to begin with verse 11 and that first request.

But in the review let me go back to verse 9. Know and have a realization of who you are talking to. **Our Father who is in heaven.** We saw an example of this in Acts 4:23-31. You remember the disciples were threatened about preaching in the name of Christ; so they went back and found their brethren who were meeting in a home for prayer. And they told them, "We have been threatened not to preach anymore in the name of Christ." So they said, "Well, let's pray about it." They spent a majority of their prayer by starting out and expressing to God their realization and their knowledge of who they are talking to. They said, "Lord God who created the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. And both You and prophecy, You prophesied ahead of time, God, that You not only knew about, but You designed that when Your Messiah came that they would come against Him and even crucify Him. So we are praying to the Creator. We are praying to the One who not only knows when persecution comes against us, but You actually allow it to happen and plan it. You actually deliver us and carry us through. This is the God who we are praying to. The One who knows all things. The One who is in charge and the One who has designed all things." So then in chapter 4 verse 29 they finally get to their prayer request, and they say, "Behold their threatenings." That is it.

Once you have a proper perspective of who you are talking to, that this is God, this is the Lord, He is the creator. He is the One who, as we saw in chapter 6 verse 7, He knows everything that we need before we even ask. Before we were even born God knew everything that was going to happen in our lives every day of our lives. He designed it to happen, and He also provided for its answer before we even born. This is Who we are talking to. He is not surprised. He is not shocked when we come before Him with prayer. He already knows about it.

Our Father who is in heaven. He is the one sitting on the throne in heaven. He is not God here on the earth. He is in heaven over the entire universe including the earth. This is the God that we are talking to.

And those three things of our request to God about God in verses 9 and 10:

1. **Let Your name be sanctified** (or *set apart*). Let it be honored.

Stop and think about this. If you prayed this way every morning, "Today Lord, let Your name be glorified and honored in my life. The way I live, the way I talk, the way I treat people, the decisions that I make, may it all be an honor to You." Realizing, as we talked about when Jesus said that we are to pray, we are to pray in His name. That if we pray in His name He will do it, whatever it is we ask. He said it four times in John 14, 15 and 16; four times. "Pray in My name and I will do it."

But as we studied that a few weeks ago, we saw that to pray in His name is not a magical formula. Again, that is mystical religion. That is superstition. That is magical arts. That is not what Jesus meant by that. To go in someone's name, to pray in someone's name, means to represent that person, his authority, and his purpose. So Jesus says, "Pray in My name and I will do it." If you pray in the authority of Christ that everything be done for the glory of His name and His purposes He will always answer that prayer. So you and I, if we are known as Christians, we carry the name of Christ, and we represent the name of Christ, all day every day. Let Your name be set apart, and hallowed, and sanctified in my life today.

2. Secondly, **Let your kingdom come.** This is a good one for election time as Christians get caught up in the political activities of the world. Realize that this is not our home. This is not God's kingdom. We are praying, "Lord, let Your kingdom come." As soon as Christ comes and sets up His kingdom on earth, then everything is going to get straightened out. So we pray, "Lord Jesus come quickly." But Paul said in Philippians 3:20 that believers were to conduct themselves as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, not of the earth. We look forward to His kingdom. We are citizens of heaven. We are looking for Him to come.

3. And thirdly, **Lord, let Your will happen.** Let Your will take place. Let Your will be done. This is the crux of all of prayer. This expresses the meaning and purpose of prayer that we started in I John 5:14-15 where John says, **We can have confidence that God hears our prayer if we asked all prayers to be according to His will.** "Whatever it is," He says, "I guarantee you, you have your request if you pray for His will to be done." You might not agree that it is God's will, but you have to trust that it is God's will.

And so last week, we took a little detour, but it is based on praying for God's will to be done. There are two words that I want to impress upon you from that message last week and remind you of it. We talked about three things: the sinner, the salvation, and the struggle.

A sinner is someone who goes their own way, who is their own God, who is in control of their own life. That is you and me. It does not mean a person is necessarily bad or corrupt. They can become very religious and see themselves as not as corrupt and as bad as other people. But if we go our own way and we are in control of our own life, that is who a sinner is.

Now salvation comes. When salvation comes we are born of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of Christ comes into our spirit and the reason why it happens this way - why salvation is not a religious belief in your head, but a literal spiritual experience. It is an experience that happens. When the Spirit of Christ comes into your spirit, you are born of the Spirit of God. That is what saves you. That is salvation. Not one's religious beliefs but a spiritual experience where one is born of the Spirit of God. The reason why it happens that way is because when the Spirit of Christ comes into a person's life He takes over.

Control. You see, the sinner relinquishes control. And our second word, the first word is *control*, the second word from last week is *surrender*. That is what we are doing. By receiving Christ we are surrendering the control of our lives.

And then the struggle. After being saved my flesh (my human nature that still has the sin nature in it) still wants to be in control, it still wants to do things its way; but now I have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in me and the Spirit of Christ says, "No, I am in control. We are going by the way of God." But my human says, "No, I still want to be in control." So there is a struggle going on as Paul said in Galatians chapter 5, that the flesh fights against the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God stands against the flesh. There is a constant battle for control. One thing that our pride will not let us do is surrender.

So please know this, and I told you last week, there are two kinds of Christianity in the church. There is a religious Christianity that teaches people that Christ comes into your life for you to take Him along with you to help life work out for you the way you want it to. That is mystical religion. That is superstition. That is magical arts. Some even call it *witchcraft*. Using the Spirit of God to make life turn out the way I want it to. No, that is control. You are controlling God. You are being God under His name. That is not Biblical Christianity.

Biblical Christianity is when the Spirit of God comes into your life and takes over. We are to deny ourselves. We are to tell our human nature, and the desires of the flesh, we reject those desires in order to submit to, because we have already surrendered to the Spirit of God. But the struggle rages on.

So it adds emphasis to the meaning of this prayer, "Lord, let Your will be done." Do you realize what that means when you pray for the Lord's will to be done? It is an expression of submission and surrender to whatever God wants to do about it. We are leaving it in His hands. We are letting go of the control of the situation and letting Him work it out according to His will. That is why the struggle rages on. There is a religious Christianity that teaches out of the Bible how for you to be in control of your own life. That is the opposite of spiritual Christianity, of a relationship with Jesus Christ. A relationship with Jesus Christ is surrender, where His Spirit is in control.

Then for today in verse 11, we have three requests. Beginning at verse 11, again a shift in grammar that has to do with our needs and our necessities, all here in verses 11 to 13. We will take one of them today.

Verse 11 says, first of all, **Give to us today our necessary food**. Seems simple enough. But would not you know it, it is complicated. There are two words we want to focus on this morning to help us understand. The first request for ourselves is, **Give to us today**, there is our first word; **our necessary**, there is our second word, **food**.

The word *today*, highlighted in the Greek text to show a limited period of time. Our requests for our needs and necessities are for today, not for tomorrow, not for next week; but our provision of food for today. The Lord wants us to trust Him for our daily needs. Not our daily wants but our daily needs. The provision for today. So the focus is just for today.

This is based on Exodus 16:4 where God provided manna for the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness. And He says to Moses to tell the people, **I am the one causing**

bread to rain down from the heavens for you. And the people will have gone out and will have gathered the matter of the day in its day. That is way the literal Hebrew reads: *the matter (or things) for the day in its day*. And He says, **So I will put them to the test whether they will walk in My laws or not.** So He says, "I am going to provide manna," this little bread that came down from heaven was on the ground every day. And God said, "On a daily basis, for that day go out and take your daily provision for you. Do not take any more or any less, just your portion for the day." Now, you know what they did. Some of them went out and just decided, "Hey, we can get two days worth, and we will not have to go out tomorrow and get it." But God made it so that anything more than a day's portion, it spoiled. It did not do them any good. He is teaching them to trust Him. Take your daily portion today and tomorrow I will give you more. That is a little too insecure for people, to trust the Lord on a daily basis so we have to have more.

Well that brings in Proverbs 30:8-9, one of my favorite texts that God continues to remind me of. Where the writer, Agur, he writes and says, **Lord, remove vanity.** That is not our word *hevel* from Ecclesiastes, it is the word for *worthless*. **Remove worthless things and the word of a lie from me.** Do not let me get caught up in stuff that is just absolutely worthless and a lie, I do not have time for that. **Remove poverty and riches.** Do not give me poverty, and do not give me wealth. **Feed me my food of my portion.** Whatever I need, that is all I am asking for. He saw that too much, more than what he needed or less than what he needed, he said, "We have problems." And here is what he listed in Proverbs 30:9. **Otherwise, if You do not just give me my portion - if you give me too much or not enough - here is what is going to happen. If you give me too much I will be satisfied and I will have denied. And I will have said, "Who is Yahweh?"**

Stop and think about that. And I know that you are just like me, so I can say this about you though you do not want to admit it. That when you are satisfied, and full, and you have enough, and you are not in need, you do not even think about the Lord. Do not need Him. Everything is going fine. Got whatever I need. And then if there is something I need or if my food runs out, then I start calling out to God. So he says, "Do not give me wealth where I get so satisfied that I forget all about the Lord and I say, 'Who is God?' Yeah, He has blessed me."

Remember the first hour in Ecclesiastes this morning? How that Asaph in Psalm 73 looked at the prosperity of the ungodly people as they gained wealth, and they gained material things for themselves, and he said, "Boy, I am really losing out by trusting God, because I do not get to do that. I do not get to have that." He said, "Then I realized their end. They are the ones who are going to be lost, but I am the one that is going to go to glory." But he saw them as humanly, physically, materialistically prospering, and he got jealous. He got envious. He said, "I was envious of them." Well, see that is what happens. When things are going so well for a human being, they forget and do not even think about God. So God always tries to keep us in a position of meeting our needs for the day, but not too much, because then we will forget about Him.

And then he says, **And I will have become dispossessed (lose all my possessions), and then I should steal, and I will have taken the name of my God in vain.** If I do not have enough, if I get dispossessed of all of my possessions, and I start stealing in order to get my food

and make my living, which is the opposite of having too much. And then I associate with God's name, then I have ruined His glory and my relationship with Him is ruined there too. Just like we talked about before, **Let your name be sanctified, let your name be honored.** Agur here in Proverbs chapter 30 says, "Do not put me in a position where I am tempted to steal in order to make my living and get my necessities. Just give me the provision for me for today so that I keep my focus right, my perspective right, and I do not lose my relationship with the Lord, and I do not dishonor Him with anything that I should do."

Give to us today, not tomorrow. It is not like, "Lord, I will not have time to pray this prayer tomorrow, so I am just going to include two days okay?" No, it is today. The provision for today.

Secondly, **Give to us today our necessary food.** Now the word *necessary* obviously means *whatever is needed for today*. And it is very obvious what it means but the Greek word - very interesting. If you do a lot of research - and some of these words, you come up with a lot of words that are pregnant with meaning even though it is very difficult to research. It is because this word, **ἐπιούσιος** (epiousios) in Greek, outside of this, before Matthew 6:11 the word is not even used. It is used for the first time here as an adjective, in all of literature. And it is used after this. But it is interesting, so therefore scholars have a difficult time figuring out what in the world this word means. So they come up with different definitions like *needful*, or *each day*, or *daily*. Give to us our *daily* food. Give to us our *necessary* food. Give to us our *needful* food. They are trying to find a way to use this word.

The word itself means *to draw near* or *to approach*. That is its basic meaning. Now how do you fit *necessary* or *daily* into *approach* or *drawing near*? Well, it is interesting that in the book of Acts, its participial form, that is an *-ing* word: the *coming* or *approaching*. It is used four times to describe the coming day or the next day. And so the word *coming*, the one that is on its way day, four times it used of Paul and his travels. And Paul, he was onboard ship, going to the different ports in the coming day or the next day. In Acts 21:18 it is translated *and the day following* for this word **ἐπιούσιος** (epiousios) in its participial form.

So in all of its usages, beginning with Matthew 6:11 through all history up to our day today, this word has been applied, both used of time and measure. *Time* means *the coming of something*: the coming day, the coming provision. And of *measure*, meaning *necessary* or the *necessity*.

So I share all of this with you to share with you this one word actually means *the coming necessary food*. The food that is already on its way. The provision of God for the necessities of today. That is all encompassed in that one little word, used of both time and measure. And you say, "Well, okay, so how does this work out? How does this fit into our prayer request?"

Give to us today our coming necessary food. The necessary food that is already being sent by God. So what we are praying here, it is not really a request for God to provide our food for us, this is a confession acknowledging two things.

That the Father, first of all, provides our food. We are coming to God and saying, "God give to us today food." We are acknowledging that God provides that food. And in case you think that is sort of obvious and why even think about it, it is because in the Old Testament God had to remind the Jews that their provision of food - though they worked for it, labored for it, got paid to purchase food - their food was from God.

In Deuteronomy chapter 8 - now, I do not know about you, but we have a habit if you want to call it that, at least I do, I pray before I eat. I do not care if I am in public. I do not do it for public to see, but I pray in public. We pray around the dinner table. Not out of religious habit, but because what I am doing is I am acknowledging that God has given us the food. I am saying, "Thank you." When your server comes into a restaurant and serves you your food, what do you say? "Thank you." When people do things for you and give you things, even if you pay for it, you tell them thank you. But for some strange reason when we sit down to eat food we do not even stop to think about thanking the Lord for the food. Why? Because we bought it and put it there.

So in Deuteronomy 8:10, the Jews were called upon not just to pray before, but you know what? To pray after the meal a prayer of thanks to God. And He says the reason He is having them do that, Deuteronomy 8:13-17, is so that they would not think that they provided for their own food. It is to remind them, before and after the meal, that God provided that food for them. He says, "Now, I am telling you to pray," because in Deuteronomy 8:13 it starts out by saying, "in case your herds should multiply, and your food should multiply, you will forget all about Me." That is the principle we just talked about in Proverbs 30. "I have all these cattle. I can slaughter cattle all day long. I can have food for the next year. I do not have to look to God provide it. I have my own. Thanks, Lord, for the bountiful herd." But then we just go right through our food for the year and just forget all about that God provided it. And God says, when you become wealthy and you are able to buy food just at the drop of a hat, and it is not a problem for you, you will have a tendency to forget God. You will have a tendency to think that you provided your own food. And even though you labored for it, it was God that provided the labor, it is God the provided the money, it is God the provided for the food. We are just thanking the One that gives it. Why do we not thank Him for our food? It is because we do not acknowledge that He has given it to us.

So, first of all, we pray this way, because the Father is the one who provides our food for us. So we ask Him for it, **Give to us today**. And why even pray the prayer if I have 20 bucks in my pocket and I can stop off at McDonald's? I do not have to ask God to give it.

And secondly, that His provision is on its way while I am praying. The coming necessary food. The provision that is already on its way.

In chapter 6 verse 8 of Matthew, **He already knows what we need before we ask**. "Lord, I am hungry," He knows that. "I need food," He already knows that. And the provision for that, it is already on its way. Give to us today the necessary food that is already on its way. It is already coming. See that is what prayer is all about. God is already answering even before we even pray. It is already happening. It is already on its way.

So, this prayer is our acknowledgment that He is our provider and that His provision for food is already on its way for today. You get the sense that we think we have life bad and difficult. We have life so good, and it is measured by the fact that we do not even think about the Lord during the day. We just take everything for granted. We have enough money, got enough food, got enough provisions. I do not even have to think about Him. And that makes for a very difficult spiritual relationship. We have it too good. He is our provider, it is already on its way, so why pray? Because it is our confession and our acknowledgment. It is part of our relationship with Him to acknowledge Him as our provider, to thank Him for being our provider, and to look to His provision for my necessities. And that provision for my necessities is already coming. It is already on its way.

Let's close with prayer.