

"FATHER..."
LUKE 11:1-2

Some questions as we begin this morning:

- ✓ How many times did you pray last week — prayers at meals, at your children's bedsides, with a co-worker, while you were driving, on your knees in the morning, with your disciple/friend...?
- ✓ How many times do you suppose you prayed last year? In your life time?
- ✓ How many times have you read books about prayer? Heard sermons about prayer?
- ✓ How many times have you been convicted/felt guilt for lack of prayer?

This morning we come to one of the most well-known passages of Scripture: **the Lord's Prayer**. These words have been sung to multiple tunes, been recited in church many times, and even used at secular events as a source of comfort and encouragement.

These words remain the simplest, clearest, and most profound instruction from our Savior on prayer. I have preached multiple times on this prayer, including a series from Matthew's account that I began in January, 1996 (when Tanner was almost two years old). Many of us have read or spoken these words dozens or even hundreds of times. Yet for all their familiarity, they still instruct us how to pray and still encourage us to pray. Over the next several weeks, we will look at this prayer phrase by phrase, and see the richness of how our Savior teaches us to pray.

These words are not a formula to pray, but a pattern to pray. It's a model for what God-honoring prayer looks like. And it doesn't begin with confession, or our needs, or thanksgiving, or even praise. It begins with a recognition of and a commitment to our relationship with God. The opening verses remind us —

PRAYER BEGINS WITH AN EXPRESSION OF OUR DEPENDENT, LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

One of the emphases of Luke's gospel is prayer. More than any other gospel writer, Luke shows us Christ repeatedly in prayer, and instructing on prayer. As we begin our meditation on this familiar prayer, let's begin with **two encouragements in approaching prayer...**

1. The Pattern of All Prayer (vv. 1-2a)

- ✓ The Example of Christ
- ✓ The Desire for Fellowship
- ✓ The Necessity of Words

2. Where All Prayer Begins (v. 2b)

- ✓ A Radical Way to Address God
- ✓ An Exclusive Relationship with God
- ✓ A Tender Fellowship with God
- ✓ A Secure Access to God

1. The Pattern of All Prayer (vv. 1-2a)

• The Example of Christ

- ✓ While Jesus and the Twelve are on the road to Jerusalem (9:51), as is often the case in this section, Luke is vague about the time and place. He simply says it is at **a certain place**. The place and time are immaterial — what He says about prayer is *essential*.
 - You will undoubtedly notice that this is similar to, but different than, Matthew 6:9-15.
 - Matthew's account was in the Sermon on the Mount; Luke omits the teaching in that sermon and includes a more concise teaching from a different time (Jesus frequently taught the same truths in different ways to different crowds at different times; that's what happens here).
- ✓ Once again Luke tells us that **Jesus was praying**. We don't know the occasion for the prayer or the content of the prayer. We only know that Jesus was praying. Again (e.g., 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29).
- ✓ And we will hear this instruction on prayer and hear Him praying again in future chapters. He would have us to know the primacy of prayer; the examples of His praying instruct us that "if the Son of Man needed to pray and desired to pray, then shouldn't I also desire prayer?"
- ✓ Of the importance of prayer, MacArthur simply says, "Prayer is more than merely an occasional duty; it is a way of life." [MacArthur, 2.]
- ✓ There was evidently something particularly compelling about this prayer (or perhaps the accumulation of all the prayers the Twelve heard Him pray) — **after He had finished, one of His disciples said...** We don't know who, but we know that he spoke for all — "Teach us..."
- ✓ The request reminds us that while we are not God incarnate, like Christ, He did live His life here as an example of how to live — "Follow Me...Be my disciple...live your life the way I live and compel..."

• The Desire for Fellowship

- ✓ The request of the Twelve is quite simple — **Teach us to pray...**
 - They did not ask for motive to pray or wisdom to pray or time to pray or a place or plan to pray. They asked for instruction about how to pray — what are the components of prayer?
 - And there was a sense of urgency to the request — we might translate it something like, "teach us *now* to pray." Even more significantly, this is the only place in the gospels where such a direct request for instruction occurs. They *really* wanted to know. Do we have that longing?
 - All their lives they had heard prayers in Sabbath worship and heard the prayers of rabbis. But when Jesus prayed it was different, and they *had to know how to pray like Him*.
 - Notice also that the request begins by addressing Jesus as **Lord** — they are appealing to Him as the Master and they are expressing their submission to Him. He alone can teach them.
- ✓ This disciple also adds a further reason for the request — **as John also taught his disciples**.

- The interaction between Jesus and John and their disciples was minimal (7:18ff; Jn. 1:35)
- But they had heard of John's teaching on prayer — and typical of teachers of the day.
- The commentator Joachim Jeremias tells us that in that day teachers (Pharisees and Essenes) would teach their disciples prayer principles as an expression of community and fellowship — this request “shows that Jesus' disciples recognized themselves as a community and that they requested of Jesus a prayer which would bind them together and identify them...”
- So the request is driven as well by a desire for belonging, fellowship, and intimacy.
- ✓ This is exactly what prayer does — it binds our hearts to the Lord; it gives us communion and fellowship with Him. And it binds together the hearts of those who pray together. We often lament that we are alone and lonely, when the fellowship that we desire is as close as prayer.

• The Necessity of Words

- ✓ In Matthew's account, Jesus explicitly addresses those who pray publicly “to be seen by men” (and apart from heart desire, Mt. 6:5), and with repetitious and ritualistic words (Mt. 6:7) as if the form of what they were saying was the key to success. Jesus teaches a different way (Mt. 6:8).
- ✓ **When you pray** emphasizes that all prayer at all times and all places should follow this form.
- ✓ And in addition to being addressed to God in private (not for show, Mt. 6:6), prayer should be spoken — **say**. That seems self-evident because prayer is talking. But Jesus is emphasizing that He does not address the time of day for their prayers, their physical posture in their prayers, the length of their prayers, or the location of their prayers.
- ✓ He teaches them what to say — *the content* of their prayers. It's not enough to think about another or about praying; prayer only happens when words are uttered (though sometimes the words are, “I don't know what to say — would you help me in my weakness and lack of understanding?” Rom. 8:26).
- ✓ This instruction from Christ is an exhortation to the Twelve to pray — constantly and regularly (using particular words) — because prayer demonstrates our reliance on God and expresses our yearning for fellowship with Him (and our recognition that only He will satisfy).

2. Where All Prayer Begins (v. 2b)

- All prayer begins with an address of God — how will we approach Him? What do our first words reveal about what we think of Him and what we understand of our relationship with Him? And Jesus shocks...

• A Radical Way to Address God — *Father*

- ✓ There are stunning and shocking sentences and words that change your life — when I asked Raye Jeanne to marry me, she said something like, “REALLY!? You're asking? Yes!” It changed our lives.
- ✓ Many of those kinds of sentences exist in the Bible (like, “It is finished...”).
- ✓ The first word of this prayer is one of those radical and transformative words.

- ✓ When Jesus said to address God as **Father** it was a new way to approach God.
- ✓ Prayer exists in the OT (Psalms is a song/prayer book); but God was virtually never called Father in prayer (only two times; Is. 63:16; 64:8). And God was only referred to as Father 14x in the OT —
 - Several references are to God and David — “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men...” (2 Sam. 7:14).
 - The most well-known reference is “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6).
 - Again, only 14x is God called Father in the OT. It’s a little-known concept.
- ✓ That changes dramatically in the Gospels and NT —
 - God is called Father 5x in Mark, 20x in Luke, 43x in Matthew, 116x in John, and 77x in rest of NT.
 - Jesus regularly spoke of God as His Father and the hearers understand the meaning (Jn. 10:29-31).
 - Every time Jesus prayed, He addressed God as Father. Every time. Except one (Mt. 27:46).
 - And from His relationship with the Father, He invites His followers to also call Him Father (Jn. 20:17). And here He invites them to call Him Father in prayer. For the Jews who were fearful to even pronounce the name of God, YHWH, for fear of profaning Him, this was stunning access.
 - We come to the One who is sovereign Creator and eternally righteous and holy (Is. 6) w. boldness (though not flippancy; Heb. 4:16) — believing that because of sonship, He will accept us.
 - We come trusting that He will care for us as a loving Father (Mt. 7:7-11).
- ✓ We easily address God as Father without thinking of it; the followers of Christ were stunned by the access and privilege that was being granted to them.
- ✓ “There is more sweetness in this word *Father*, than if we had ten thousand worlds! David thought it a great matter to be son-in-law to a king. ‘What is my father's family, that I should be son-in-law to the king?’ 1 Sam 18:18. But what is it to be born of God, and have him for our Father! [Watson]

• An Exclusive Relationship with God

- ✓ In going through Luke, I have worked hard to tell the story of Jesus just as Luke has, even when there are parallel passages that have other details. In these messages, I will often go to Matthew’s account of the Lord’s prayer because it is so well-known and we want to understand the differences.
- ✓ Matthew has the same address with the addition of one word — **Our Father...**
- ✓ The addition of the pronoun **our** emphasizes that there is community (there are many children!).
 - There is a sense in which God is the Father of all mankind (Acts 17:29).
 - But He is not the Father of all men relationally (Jn. 8:42, 44).
 - Only those who have faith in Christ as their redeemer from sin have God as their Father (Jn. 1:12; Gal. 3:26-27; 4:4-6). Only when Christ is your Savior will God be your Abba (Father).

- If you do not believe in Christ as your Savior, you must believe. If God is not your Father, He will be your judge. Turn away from your sin and believe that only Christ can liberate you from the penalty and power of sin in your life. And then God will be your everlasting Father.
- ✓ God is the Father and we can approach Him as Father, but only when we believe in His Son.

• A Tender Fellowship with God

- ✓ The word that most Israelites would have used for their fathers was not the Gk. *pater*, but the Aramaic (commonly spoken), *Abba* (cf. Mk. 14:36).
- ✓ It's a word of affection and intimacy. Some of you have pet names as parents or grandparents. When I was in college, my father became "Pops." It's a badge of honor to him and a word of affection from us. When Christ invites us to call God in Heaven *Abba*, it's an invitation to affection and fellowship.
- ✓ It's a word that recognizes love, affection and care (Mt. 7:7). Everything God the Father gives us comes from His loving care of us; we may not understand His gifts, but they are fatherly (Js. 1:17).
- ✓ Even more, we have fellowship and are secure in our relationship with God as our Father because God loves and is always well-pleased with His Son (3:22). When we are in Christ, the Father can no more be displeased with us than He can be displeased with His Son.
- ✓ When we belong to God as His adopted children, we will always be His children.
 - Many of you say to your children, "I will always love you..." And you will.
 - But it is infinitely and eternally true of God's love for His children. He is wholly unwavering in His commitment to care for His children. And as **Father**, He invites us into fellowship with Him.

• A Secure Access to God

- ✓ We are secure and safe with God not merely because we are His children and because He is benevolent towards us; we are safe because of His position as God — **who is in Heaven** (Mt. 6:9).
- ✓ That's not a reference to His physical address; it's a reference to His transcendence (He is above all). He is the God of all authority and power. The sovereign and unduplicated Master.
- ✓ This opening phrase, **Father (who is in Heaven)** combines two realities of security — His love and His sovereignty: He is loving to do what is compassionate for you and He is sovereign and control of all things to be able to do what is compassionate toward you. You are safe.
- ✓ Do you ever have thoughts like, "What will I do?" Or, "what will happen if..." *You are safe*. "When in your weakness and your utter humiliation you drop on your knees before God, in your anguish of mind and heart, remember that He knows all about you." [MLJ] And He cares lovingly.
- ✓ I often say, "we live in a broken world..." And we do. And when we experience that brokenness, we can also be sure that when Christ is our Savior, we are safe, because we have a Father in Heaven.
- ✓ "God is not merely the transcendent lord of the heavens, but is near as a father to his children." [Fitzmyer]

CONCLUSION: “Do you know that the essence of true prayer is found in the two words...‘Our Father’? I suggest that if you can say from your heart, whatever your condition, ‘My Father, in a sense your prayer is already answered.” [MLJ]

You know what that is like don’t you? You run to the Father for help and He comforts you and provides for you. You may not know what to pray, but you know the One to whom you pray — the Father — and you know you are safe and that He will provide and care for you.

I mentioned earlier that I first preached this part of the Lord’s Prayer in January, 1996. It was January 14, 1996, to be exact. I don’t remember much about that sermon, but I do remember that week very well. Our daughter Emily was three weeks old that week, and we took her to the hospital for a routine test that they were unable to perform on her when she was born. And it was at that appointment that we definitively learned that she was hearing impaired. We didn’t know many details as we left the hospital — we didn’t know that in two months she would begin wearing hearing aids, or that in eight years she would have a cochlear implant, or that there would be countless numbers of hospital and rehab trips and speech therapies for her, or that the Lord would use her weakness to make us financially dependent on God.

We didn’t know any of that. But we did know that our beloved daughter had a life-altering problem. And we knew that we were sad. And we knew that God was good and that He would provide. Earlier that week, I had begun studying the Lord’s Prayer, focusing on the two opening words of the prayer from Matthew’s account, “Our Father...” And all the way home, whenever there was silence in the conversation with Raye Jeanne, I was meditating on those two words — “our Father,” I repeatedly reminded myself. We had a problem that was beyond our ability. And we had access to our Father, who was greater than our problem.

Oh friends, pray. And when you pray, begin with and be comforted by the fellowship you have with the One who is your eternal Father.

BENEDICTION: Jude 24-25