

Matthew 6:9

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- [0 : 00] We shall turn out the gospel according to Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9. Matthew 6 and verse 9.
- This then is how you should pray. O Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.
- It will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors.
- They don't have temptation but deliver us from the evil one. Amen. You may recall that in Luke's account of the Lord's Prayer, there is a preface in which the disciples ask the Lord, Lord teach us to pray.
- They clearly felt a need for such teaching. They found prayer difficult and felt they were doing it in ways which were wrong or at least fell short of God's own standard.
- [1 : 24] And in his reply, Jesus does make plain that there are indeed wrong ways of praying.
- There is the hypocrite's way, for example, referred to in verse 5 of the same chapter. The prayer which is mainly for the purposes of ostentation.
- To be seen to be heard by others who will note how much and how long and how often and how well we pray.
- That's one problem. And then there is the heathen prayer. The prayer of many words, of bubbling, of rambling on, ruffling on.
- As the force of prayer lay in its quantity, the sheer volume and the sheer flow of words. And there is the Pharisee's prayer.
- [2 : 27] In which he says, Lord, I thank you that I am not like other human beings. I am different. I am better than all those others.
- The prayer of self-vindication. Of self-defense. The prayer of our old human pride. And so there is the hypocrite's prayer.
- There is the heathen prayer. There is the Pharisee's prayer. I wonder, is there the evangelical prayer?
- Because we are developing in some ways our own almost mythology of prayer. We have for example the well-known principle that more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.
- You all know these words. You love these words. But what are these words saying to us?
- [3 : 34] That prayer is some kind of independent force. There is some kind of prayer wave. Some great tidal wave of spiritual power.
- Whereas in fact, prayer itself achieves nothing. It's God who achieves. More things are wrought by God than this world dreams of.
- And all that prayer does is in its own weakness bring God into our situation. Prayer is impotence.

Screaming at omnipotence. And asking to come into our situation. Or we speak about our prayer life.

And any preacher can make any congregation and any Christian feel guilty by asking, How is your prayer life?

[4 : 51] But where do we find such a phrase in the Bible? Or indeed in the older Reformation and Puritan literature?

What do we mean by prayer life? For there is spiritual life we pray. But spiritual life, prayer life isn't itself an independent life.

By which one day, or for which one day God is going to judge us. And what store do we set?

On the regularity, and on the frequency with which we pray. Or indeed on the time at which we pray. So somehow the earlier it's done, the better it is.

In other words, we are in a curious kind of danger of a new legalism of prayer. Where somehow our standing, our merit, our deserving before God depends upon this thing that we call our own prayer life.

[6 : 10] The reformation theologians warned us. The reformation theologians warned us against making faith itself the ground on which we stood.

As if faith were our atonement, our faith were our merit. Today we're in danger of making that same mistake with our prayer.

Because our prayer life, our prayer life, our praying, my praying is indefensible before God. And I should never have peace with God.

If I think that my relation with Him depends upon the meritoriousness of the quality of our own praying.

So let's stand back for a moment from all these wrong ways of praying. And wrong attitudes to prayer.

[7 : 15] And look at what the Lord says to us here in this modern prayer. This is how you should pray. And notice that this prayer begins with recollection on invocation.

Our Father in heaven. The Lord says, you go into your room. You close the door.

No one knows you there. No one hears you. No one hears you.

And the one who is with you. It's your Father. Your Father in heaven. And He's real to you. And you're there to talk to Him.

Because you want to talk. And because you know that talking to Him makes a real difference. You're not talking to the air.

[8 : 46] You're not talking to your own prayer. Or trying to generate some force which is prayer. But you want to connect with God.

And you want God to act in and upon your own life. And so you start by reminding yourself in whose presence you are.

And who's with you. Our Father who is in heaven. There are two things there. There is the fact that you have a special relationship with God.

You have it. A special relationship with God. You have of course many relationships with God.

God is your creator who made you. God is your king who rules you. God is your shepherd who guides you.

[9 : 48] God is your judge who will one day call you to account. But here God is our Father.

The one who loves us. And the one who cares for us. And the one whose eye is always upon us. And the one who's healed is always open to us.

The one who longs to bless us. Because he loves us. And the moment he hears your voice.

Abba's ears prick up. And he knows at once whose voice it is. Like a mother with her child or her baby.

So there you are. This is who you are. You are talking to your father. You are his child. You are his daughter. You are his son.

[10 : 53] And you don't have to persuade him to be nice to you. Or to be good to you. Or to have good feelings for you. Or to love you. Remember in 1 John.

Where John speaks about having an advocate. Advocate. If we sin. We have an advocate. And it is an advocate. With the father.

Or indeed. Towards the father. He's talking to one who loves him. And who loves his people. And you're talking to your Abba.

To your father. Who simply loves. Doing good to you. And being good to you. So it's not some kind of emotional wrestling match.

Or some terrible struggle. To get back on good terms with God. Or to persuade some miserly deity.

[11 : 52] To give you sixpence. Or some kind of blessing. But you are there in the presence of your father. Who loves you. Your parent. Your mother.

Father. Who wants. Who loves. To do you good. That is so fundamental. So obvious. And yet. It so seldom has. An emotional impact.

It so seldom determines. How you feel. That God has good. And great. And generous feelings. Towards you. This is your father.

Your parent. Your Abba. That's where you are. I notice too. That it is our father. And that's peculiar.

It's peculiar. Because early on. In fact. It is a singular relationship. If you go back. For example.

[12 : 48] To verse 6. We'd find that. We could proceed it this way. Then thy father. Who. Seeds for seven secret.

Will reward thee. It is singular there. And I. Those two points are important. Because. God is both.

My father. And our father. It is individual. And specific. So that God. Knows. You. As your daughter.

As. As his daughter. And as his son. Knows you. You. Personally. Specifically. The Lord. Is my shepherd. The son of God.

Loved me. And for the moment. You see. It's as if. You are alone. With you. With your Abba. Just. Father.

[13 : 44] And I. All alone. Just the two of us. My father. Father. And. I am. His. Particular. Child. And at the moment.

You see. I have them all. To myself. And sometimes. That's what children want. Maybe. Large families. And sometimes.

They're desperate. For time. Alone. With their. With their parents. And we have that here. We are in this. Closed room. All by yourselves.

Along with my father. Just myself. And him. Utterly alone. I have him here. All to myself. He is my father.

And he loves me. As if I were the only responsibility he had. And as if I were the only one. Upon whom.

[14 : 40] He could lavish. All his love. And kindness. And. Confere indeed. Almost waste. All his resources. I have him here.

To myself. And yet. I'm also aware. As I talk to him. By myself. Just he and I alone. That I have siblings.

I have spiritual siblings. That. Even though I'm alone. I am part. Of a great. World. Wide. Family. Of a congregation.

A national church. An international church. A church. That spans. Time and eternity. So. I'm. Not only. There.

As. One term. God. Is. To me. Father. Personal. But I'm also. There. As. One. Who belongs. To. A whole community.

[15 : 37] And. I. Bring. Before. Abba. Not only. I. Me. And. Mine. But I. I. I. Bring. We.

And. Ours. And. Us. And. That's. Part of the glory. Of the Lord's prayer. Indeed. But. Having had. This great. Emphasis. Earlier on.

There. In verse 6. Upon the individual. I. And. And. Thou. Relationship. The prayer. You see. Is about. Our father. And. Give.

Us. Today. Our daily bread. Forgive. Us. Our debts. As we. Forgive. And. I'm alone. With God. And. Yet. I know. That I'm there.

As part. Of a great. Worldwide. Family. And. I bring. My siblings. And. Their needs. My brothers. And sisters. I bring. Them. With me.

[16 : 31] Into this. Conversation. I'm having. With my father. Just he. And. I. Alone. And. Then. It is. Our father.

In heaven. And. How tremendously. Important. That is. And again. How. How beautifully. Paradoxical. Because.

At one level. Of course. Abba. Is. In the room. With me. I've closed the door. And. We're in the room. Together. Indeed. He's in my very heart.

The life of God. Is in my soul. My body. Is his temple. And. He lives in me. And. He's so close. To me.

That. I don't need. Any lapel. Mike. To speak. To him. Or any megaphone. I don't need. To raise my voice. Because. He's away. So far in heaven.

[17 : 27] I. I don't even need. To whisper. In fact. At some levels. I don't even need. To say. Anything. I may. I may speak.

I may whisper. I may groan. I may think. My thoughts. Heavenward. Because. He is so close. And so intimate. And so near. To me.

And yet. He is heavenly. Not in the sense of distance. And remoteness. And inaccessibility.

But in the tremendous holiness. And the awesomeness. And majesty. And otherness. Of his character. In this room with me.

There is. An overwhelming. Absolute might. The God. Who is. A consuming fire. Who is too holy.

[18 : 24] To behold. Iniquity. And. I can't trifle with them. And I can't be flippant. And I can't be frivolous with them. I can't say.

Oh. It's only Abba. Abba. And I can't speak as a light to Abba. Because it's only Abba. After all. It's only Abba. Because it is.

Our heavenly Abba. In all the glories. Of his. Eternity. And his omniscience. And his omnipotence. And his omnipresence. And all the glory.

Of his moral purity. And all the potential. Of his divine anger. But above all here. In all the wonder.

Of his resources. And of his resourcefulness. Sometimes. The parent says to the child. We would love to give you that.

[19 : 23] But we can't afford it. We just don't have the resources. We don't have the money. We can't. I'm sorry. And.

I know that your pals have it. Your friends have it. But we don't have it. We can't. And you go to God. And you ask him for these tremendous things.

And for these impossible things. For these incalculable. These immeasurable benefits. And he's going to say to you. I'm sorry son. But I can't afford it. I don't have it.

You're asking too much. God may say sometimes. No. And say no. Very thoroughly. Because it's not good for us.

That God never lacks resource. Or resourcefulness. God is able. God has whatever it takes.

[20 : 21] And we are to know therefore. In this room with God by ourselves. That not only is God so willing to bless us. And so willing to give and to love.

But God is also able. His resources are infinite. And sometimes we limit our asking. To our own limited understanding.

Of what we deserve. Of what we need. Of what God might be willing to give. One great principle.

In the political process. Is that when you petition politicians. You never ask for the practicable. You never ask for the realistic. But you ask for the ideal.

And they throw it down. The realistic and the practicable. And when you go to God. Then you ask. Exceeding abundantly above. What we are able to ask.

[21 : 28] Or even to think. Because we are speaking. To our Abba in heaven. Well that is the first thing. We start here. In this prayer. With recollection.

And invocation. And how important that is. How important this morning. And really what is collective prayer. Which is how the fathers and the reformers.

Saw public worship. They called it common prayer. That is why we are here today. We are here for common prayer. And all common prayer starts.

With this tremendous realization. That we are with our father in heaven. And the whole feeling. The atmosphere. The dynamics.

The structure of this whole service. Are controlled by the fact. That we stand. In a very special way. In the presence of.

[22 : 24] Our. My. Father. Who is. In heaven. And the second great thing. About this prayer. Is the way it shows us.

What. Are the priorities. Of God's people. And of God's children. What God's children. Want. Above all else. Is. And it's a remarkable thing.

You see. The order of this prayer. There are six. Or perhaps seven. Petitions. And the first. Three. Petitions. Are.

All. About. What I'm going to. Guardedly call. God's needs. Of course. We come. With our own needs. We have all the problems.

At work. And problems. At home. We have friends. We have. Longings. Of one kind. Of another. So much. We want. And there's so much. We need. And so.

[23 : 22] There's a temptation. To rush in. Without. The moment. Of recollection. And the moment. The temptation. To press on.

To talk. About ourselves. And our needs. But. No. Says the Lord. After this manner. Pray. And those.

First. First. Three petitions. Look. At things. That are important. To God. And therefore. Important. To us. God's name.

And God's kingdom. And God's will. And it's not. Really. Because. God. Wants.

Us. To put. His. Interests. Above ours. It's because. Really. His.

[24 : 17] Interests. Are. Our. Interests. There is no. Tension. There is no. Discordance. Between. God's.

Needs. And I use the word again. Advisingly. God's needs. And our needs. We are on our knees. And we pray.

About the things. That matter. And the things. That matter. To a Christian. Are the name. Of God. And the kingdom. Of God.

And the will. Of God. And we want. God. To deal with these. First and foremost. And in many ways. It is one of the most. Searchy.

And illuminating. Marks. Of. Of. Our being Christians. That. These. Are our. Primary. Heartbeats.

[25 : 14] The things. That murder. Most. In the whole. World. You remember. Solomon. When he prayed. To God.

At the time. Of his. Accession. To the throne. Moon. And he asked. God. For wisdom. And. God. Commended him.

Because. He hadn't. Gone into us. God. For wealth. Or for a long life. Or for the lives. Of his enemies. But instead.

He had asked. For wisdom. We don't. Rush. Into God. And ask. For. For. Threshold. On earth. For health.

For power. For influence. Anything. For ourselves. Primarily. But. On the threshold. We pause. We remember.

[26 : 10] We before. Our Abba. In heaven. And first. And foremost. It's Abba's needs. God's. All needs.

God's name. God's kingdom. God's will. These. Are the things. That matter. Above all. And then.

Move on. To the third phase. Here. The things. The specific. Things. A Christian. Asks. For. When we play.

What. Do we actually. Ask. God. To do. What. Do we ask. God. For. Although. This is a model. Prayer.

It is not. An exhaustive model. For example. There is in this. Prayer. No element. Of thanksgiving. And there's no element.

[27 : 10] Of confession. Of sin. It's a model. Of petition. A petition. A. That shows us.

What we ought. To ask. God. For. And the order. In which. We ought. To ask. God. For. Take that.

First. Set. Of three. Petitions. That. In some ways. Quite amazing. First of all. Hallowed. Be thy name. You can put it.

In a more. Active sense. And say this. It is. Saying to God. Abba. Glorify. Your name. And I spoke of the way.

That. We pray first. For God's needs. I do. You see this remarkable. Picture here. Because. You've gone into God's presence.

[28 : 09] Poor soul. That you are. Very poor soul. And all the needs. That you've got. And you're saying to God. Abba. I'm concerned.

About your name. Can we talk. About your name. Abba. You must do something. About your name.

About. Glorifying your name. And I'm not sure. But. It must bring a smile. To God's face.

As if. God. Weren't concerned. For his name. But weren't. Able to handle. The problem. By himself. But I'm sure. He loves.

To hear this concern. Registered. Abba. We're worried. About your name. And. We want you. To do something. About your name.

[29 : 05] Abba. And we're not talking. First of all. About. My health. Or my job. Or my family. We're talking about. God.

And his name. And say. Abba. Abba. You really. Must do something. About your name. You must. Glorify. Your name. That's.

That's where it starts. And then. The second petition. That we have here. We want. God's kingdom. To come. That's the second.

Most important thing. To us. God's kingdom. Which has. Already. In some sense. Come. Because Christ. Himself. Has come.

But Abba. We wanted. To come. More. And we wanted. To keep. On coming. And we wanted. To keep. On growing. God's kingdom.

[29 : 59] Kingdom. Is not a territory. A land mass. Or a geographical area. But God's kingdom. Is God. Reigning.

In the hearts. Of men. And women. If God. Is your king. Then God. Lives. And reigns. In your heart. In your heart.

In your heart. We want. That reign. To be extended. Every day. And every moment. So that. More.

And more. Human beings. Are rescued. From the dominion. Of darkness. And transported. Into the kingdom.

Of the son. Of God's love. Abba. We're concerned. For your kingdom. The terrible thing. Today. You see. In Scotland.

[30 : 53] All these statistics. Of church decline. As if you are measuring. The sales. In retail stores. At Christmas time.

The figures. Are down. This year. The figures. Of church. Attendance. Are down. This year. They have fallen. So much. In the last decade. In the last. Quarter century.

The figures. Are down. In some ways. That is so. Absolutely. Scary. That we're seeing it. Simply. As some kind of.

Sociological exercise. Abba. We want to talk about. Your kingdom. kingdom. Because. Not so many. Subjects.

Were born. Into it. The last few days. We've lost. Some subjects. Some have gone home. To glory. Some have apostatized.

- [31 : 47] And fallen. By the way. So Abba. We want to talk about. Your name. We want to talk about. Your kingdom. We want. Your reign.
- Extended. We want. More hearts. And souls. And minds. And spirits. Conquered. And come. Under. The dominion. Of your love.
- We want you. To reign. In more. And more. Hearts. We want. More. And more. Knees. To bow. And confess. That you are. Lord. We want.
- The world. To sing. The glory. Of God. Abba. Your kingdom. Your name. Your kingdom. We're concerned. About your name.
- And we're concerned. About your kingdom. And we're concerned. About your will. We want. Your will. To be done.
- [32 : 41] Abba. We know. It's done. In heaven. It's perfectly. Obeyed. And perfectly. Complied. With. But we want. It. Obeyed. On earth.
- In the same way. And that is a huge constant. Of course. What God's will is. But let me narrow it down. For you. To the confines. Of this sermon.
- On the mount itself. In chapter 7. Jesus refers to. Doing the will. Of his father. Who is in heaven. And that will.
- And that will. Is defined. For our present purposes. By the sermon. On the mount itself. And when I pray.
- That God's will be done. I am praying. That the sermon. On the mount. And its great principles. Be complied with.
- [33 : 39] And find expression. In this world. On earth. Thy will be done. Your will be done. On earth. Abba.
- We are concerned. About your will. And about that great sermon. You preached. On the mount. And we are concerned.
- That it is not being complied with. In the public life. Of our land. In the professions. In the commerce.
- In the industry. Of our culture. We are concerned. Abba. That even in the church itself.
- This will. Is not being complied with. And become to you Abba. With this great longing. That the principle.
- [34 : 34] Do to others. As you would have others do to you. Be complied with. By every teacher. Every social worker.
- Every policeman. Every politician. Every single member. Every single member. Of our human society. But above all Abba.
- We want your will done. And that great sermon. Lived. In the life. Of your church. Abba. Abba. Abba.
- Would you please. Take measures. To ensure. That in your church. At least. Your will is done. And that you. People. Who profess your name.
- Are poor in spirit. And mourn over their sins. And are meek. And are merciful. And hunger. And thirst.
- [35 : 32] After righteousness. And turn the other cheek. And go the extra mile. Abba. Will you look to it. Because people are saying.
- That your gospel. Has no more transforming power. Than any other religion. Abba. Will you please. Look to it. And show that your gospel. Is the power of God.
- Unto salvation. And will you see to it. That your will. As expressed. In that great sermon. Is complied with. And then the second set.

I just had to rush. Over the very very quickly. Give us today. Our daily bread. There's a remarkable point. In that language.

And it is this. That it means literally. I'm fairly certain. Give us today. Our bread for tomorrow. And this.

[36 : 32] Teases so well. To our own. Fears. About the future. And our. Our. Consuming. Passion. In this.

Present economic. Climate. For. Financial. Security. And we want. Bread. You see. For when we're 65. Or when we're 80.

Or when we're beyond. That. Abba. Give us today. Our bread. For when we retire. And I'm not saying it.

As someone who doesn't have. These same concerns. I'm simply saying. Look. Jesus. Doesn't really. Function. With that kind of calendar.

With that sort of. Chronology. The furthest. Ahead. That he looks. Is tomorrow. Give us today. Our bread.

[37 : 26] Bread. For tomorrow. And I cannot. Get. This kind of security. I want. That I know. That. Should I. Live to a hundred. I am still.

Secure. Because. All I have. Is bread. For tomorrow. And the bread. Is not simply. In the sense of. Physical sustenance. But. All our temporal needs.

Which. Are so important. To God. That he puts them. At the top. Of this. Second collection. Of items. That we talk to him about. Because.

We cannot. Serve his kingdom. We cannot. Glorify his name. Serve his kingdom. Do his will. Unless. We have. Some. Supply.

Of our temporal needs. They do matter. To God. God. And. He is not saying. You see. You mean. I have no guarantees. Then. You mean.

[38 : 24] That you cannot. Promise me bread. For the day. After tomorrow. And he says. No. But I can promise you. Myself. That's the bread.

I will never leave you. Nor forsake you. And I can say. To God. That's all. Very well. But. I need the bread. Too. Well. I need to know.

That. That. That. That. That. That. That. That. That. I want. Today. Remember. These people. In Exodus. When they. Collected. The manna. They wanted to store it up. To a month's supply.

Of manna. God said. You can't. You can only have a day's supply. Of manna. That's all you can have. And God promises. This temporal supply.

On that limited basis. Forgive us our debts. We are a debt ridden society. And debts matter.

[39 : 19] And God says that debts matter. And so there's this plea. Lord forgive us our debts. But see. It is spiritual debt.

What I owe to God and haven't paid. To love him with my whole heart. What I owe to my neighbor. Oh no. Human being anything.

But to love one another. Those are the great terrible debts. The debts of love. The God whom we all love.

The neighbor whom we all love. Abba. I haven't paid. And. Perhaps I can't Abba. Forgive. That debt.

That's the debt. That matters. And this terrible addition. To that. Where the Lord says. As we forgive our debtors. Remember the unmerciful servant.

[40 : 18] Who had a debt. Of millions of pounds. Cancelled. And then threw into prison. A man who owed him. A few pounds. Seven or eight or nine pounds. The most terrible thing.

A Christian can say. And I weigh this very carefully. The most terrible thing. A forgiven sinner can say. The most terrible thing is.

I could never forgive that man. That's the most awful thing. To be ourselves so hugely.

And so totally forgiven. So that to us. There is no condemnation. And ourselves. To harbor grudges. Grievances.

And unforgiveness. And to say. We standing. On the ground. Of divine forgiveness. And saying. I could never forgive that man. Forgive our debts.

[41 : 19] As we forgive our debtors. And. Don't lead us into temptation. Or into testing. It's complicated. But there are things.

That we shrink from. There are things. That we fear. And things. Bring us out in a cold sweat. Because we think. I could never handle that.

And although. I have no right. To dictate to God. And say. Abba. That must never happen. I have every right.

To pray to God. As Jesus did. In the garden of Gethsemane. Abba. Let that cup pass me by. Don't let that.

Into my life. Those things. That we shrink from. And all the sensitivity. Of our human nature. And all the frailty. Of our finitude.

[42 : 20] We have a right. To say to God. Abba. Don't take me. Down that road. I'm not saying.

That Abba. Always thinks. That's the best thing. But we have every right. To ask. And Abba listens. And only. If there are. Over 12. Overwhelming reasons. Will God.

Lead us into areas. Where we are. Stretched to the limits. Of our own capacity. And our resources. Abba. We shrink.

From flood. Fire. And pestilence. We shrink. From sudden death. We shrink. From persecution. We shrink. From the loss.

Of friends. And loved ones. And those. With whose. Lives. Arise. And intertwined. We shrink. Abba. From that. Abba. Taunt.

[43 : 15] Lead us. Down those roads. Keep us. From those. Crashings. And those. Tribulations. The humanity. Of the incarnate. Christ. Shrunk.

From the cup. McF sticker. So. Par hats. God. Iran. Iran. Iran. Iran. Though.

Iran. Iran.