

SI: This morning we’re finishing our study of the Lord’s Prayer.

When we say the Lord’s Prayer, we end it with these words:

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.”

You may have noticed as we’ve read Matthew 6 over the past few weeks, that those words are not in the text of the New International Version.

The Lord’s Prayer ends with: “Deliver us from the evil one.” A footnote says:

“Some late manuscripts (add), “For yours is the kingdom, power, glory . . .”

If you have any modern translation of the Bible, this line of the Lord’s Prayer is either left out, put in footnotes or in brackets.

What that tells us is that some point, in the copying of Matthew over the centuries, this line was added, and that addition was picked up in some later manuscripts.

How did it get in there? How did a phrase Jesus probably didn’t say get into some copies of Matthew 6? The answer is pretty well established.

When the early church would meet for worship, they would say the Lord’s Prayer.

And they began the custom of responding to the Lord’s Prayer with a doxology—a word of praise—probably from 1 Chronicles 29.

“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Over time, that became a very common worship practice.

Some scribe, copying Matthew by hand many centuries ago, was copying

Matthew 6 and at the end of the Lord’s Prayer, he’s thinking about how

he says it in church, so he wrote it in. Not to add to Scripture or change Scripture.

He probably wrote it in as a note, sort of like you have Bibles with study notes.

But over time, somebody else copying his old, faded copy, didn’t understand that this was a worship note, thought it was the text itself.

And in that way, this line made its way into some of the later manuscripts.

The Catholic church uses the older, more accurate version of the Lord’s Prayer.

They end it with, “Deliver us from evil.”

If you are ever in a Catholic service, don’t say: “For thine is the kingdom.”

Because everybody will know there is a Protestant in the house!

But even though this conclusion of the Lord’s prayer is probably not the words

of Christ, it is biblically sound. It’s a quote or paraphrase of words of David.

It for some closing reflections on the Lord’s Prayer.

One more time, let’s read the whole passage.

INTRO: I know you remember how the passengers of Flight 93 died heroically,

fighting the hijackers who had taken control of the cockpit.
You probably also remember the passenger Todd Beamer.

Todd tried to call his wife on a sky phone but was unable to reach her.
So he spent those minutes talking to the operator.

He told her what was happening, told her about plans passengers were making to try to take back the plane. And asked her to tell his wife he loved her.

Todd was a Christian and the operator, Lisa Jefferson, was also a believer.

Just before Todd joined the other passengers to rush the cockpit, he asked her to pray with him. They recited the 23rd Psalm together and then the Lord's Prayer.

In your mind's eye, you picture these two people who didn't know each other, bound together for those terrible moments.

And then in that fear and confusion, the words of Jesus Christ:

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven . . .”

All Scripture is inspired by God, and yet there are those passages in Scripture that are more near and dear to the hearts of Christians.

John 3:16, Parable of Prodigal Son, the Luke 2 Christmas story.

And near the top of the list the 23rd Psalm and the Lord's Prayer.

One reason is that Christians of almost every church tradition grow up saying it in worship. When you have a regular liturgical element in worship, especially something you have recited since childhood, it not only becomes imprinted on your memory, it becomes a part of your spiritual sub-conscious. So in times of deep distress, it comes to the surface.

This was even true of Christ.

When he cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

those were not his own words. He was quoting Psalm 22, a Psalm he had often read and sung in the synagogue as a boy.

So there is that liturgical, worship element of the Lord's Prayer that makes it precious to Christians. For 2,000 years Christians around the world, babes in Christ and fathers in the faith have prayed this prayer.

It's been prayed in great cathedrals in the great cities, and in little thatched roof chapels on the mission fields.

But there is another reason the Lord's Prayer is precious—and that's because it's true. And because in these remarkably few and simple words, that even a little child can memorize,

you have the whole theology of the Christian faith.
All the great things we need to know about God, the world, and ourselves.
Everything we need to know for life and godliness.

So to wrap up this series and put a period on our study I want us to look at two themes that set Christian prayer apart from all other prayer.
The themes are sovereignty and sonship.

God's sovereignty and our sonship.
The Lord's Prayer teaches us the absolute necessity of acknowledging,
and submitting to, and resting in, and rejoicing in the sovereignty of our God
whenever we pray.

And, at the same time, the Lord's Prayer teaches to pray confidently,
and persistently, and specifically because of our sonship—
because we are the adopted sons and daughters of our Father in heaven.

How do you pray when you're on an airplane with terrorists in the cockpit?
How do you pray when you are facing the lesser problems of life?
You pray to a sovereign God, who is also your Father.
You pray believing he is in total control, and that you are his beloved son.

MP#1 God's sovereignty

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray
and he taught them to start with God.

That's not where people naturally start to pray.

When people spontaneously pray, they start with themselves.

God, help me. Get me out of this situation!

But we've seen in our study of the Lord's Prayer that in the very order of the petitions, Jesus is teaching us something. He's teaching us to start with God. The first three petitions are prayers about the glory and greatness of God.

Hallowed be your name. Praise God, seek his glory.

Acknowledge him as worthy of all praise and adoration.

Your kingdom come. Pray for the growth and advance and fulfillment of God's plan of salvation and the redemptive work of Christ.

Your will be done. Pray that you will be able to do diligently all that God commands, and submit patiently to all that he inflicts.

The Lord Jesus Christ is pressing home the absolutely necessity of acknowledging and submitting to and rejoicing in the sovereignty of God.

When we pray we should always be reminded that God is the Creator.

His will is the cause of all things and that everything belongs to him.

When we pray we should always be reminded that God is clothed with absolute authority over the hosts of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth.

That he upholds all things with His mighty power
and determines the purposes which all things are destined to serve.

That he rules as King in the most absolute sense of the word,
and all things are dependent on him and subservient to him.

Nothing happens apart from God's plan and his purposes cannot be thwarted.

Every sparrow that falls, every kingdom that crumbles is his doing.

That's our God, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ teaches us to always pray bowing before him and rejoicing in his sovereign will.

That's how David prayed in 1 Chronicles 29.

Before he asked God to bless his plans for the Temple,
and to bless the succession of his son Solomon he prayed—

Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

When the first Christians in the little church in Jerusalem were persecuted, Acts tells us they raised their voices together in prayer to God and said:

“Sovereign Lord, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.”

And then they prayed, God we know that all of this evil and persecution and even the crucifixion of your son by wicked men was part of your eternal plan, look on us and deliver us.

Now, what does this look like today?

I want to read you something that I've read to you before.

About 20 years ago Dr. James Montgomery Boice died of liver cancer.

He was the pastor of 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia .

After his diagnosis, the disease spread so quickly that he only made it to church one Sunday and this is what he told his congregation.

May 7, 2000. I want to bring the call to worship this morning. But before I do that, I thought you might be interested—and it might be helpful to all of us—if I took a moment to fill you in on some of these medical problems. I had been feeling quite good until recently. But about the time of the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, I was not feeling well. And when I came back from Chicago, I went to the doctor and had a number of tests. And the bottom line of that is that they diagnosed liver cancer. Then it takes a little while to figure out exactly what kind of treatment you need. I have consulted a number of eminent physicians—C. Everett Koop, of course, who has been a family friend for at least 30 years, another man at Mayo Clinic, who providentially had come through here to meet me just a few weeks before. He's the man that screens everything out there and gets patients into the hands of the specialists. So I feel that I have very good guidance, and the bottom line of the treatment is that I'm at Fox Chase Cancer Center. I'm in the care of a man named Dr. Paul Engstrom. And what I am receiving at the moment, beginning last Thursday, is standard chemotherapy for cancer. It's hard to tell where that comes out. Liver cancer is a very serious thing. They do get response from treatment in a percentage of cases, but it's relatively small. And as far as I can tell, we're doing the best thing we can.

A number of you have asked what you can do, and it strikes me that what you can do, you are doing. This is a good congregation, and you do the right things. You are praying certainly, and I've been assured of that by many people. A relevant question, I guess, when you pray is pray for what? Should you pray for a miracle? Well, you're free to do that, of course. My general impression is that the God who is able to do miracles—and He certainly can—is also able to keep you from getting the problem in the first place. So although miracles do happen, they're rare by definition. A miracle has to be an unusual thing.

I think it's far more profitable to pray for wisdom for the doctors. Doctors have a great deal of experience, of course, in their expertise, but they're not omniscient—they do make mistakes—and then also for the effectiveness of the treatment. Sometimes it does very well and sometimes not so well, and that's certainly a legitimate thing to pray for. Above all, I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying Himself in history and you say, where in all of history has God most glorified Himself? He did it at the cross of

Jesus Christ, and it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though He could have. Jesus said, "Don't you think I could call down from my Father ten legions of angels for my defense?" But He didn't do that. And yet that's where God is most glorified.

If I were to reflect on what goes on theologically here, there are two things I would stress. One is the sovereignty of God. That's not novel. We have talked about the sovereignty of God here forever. God is in charge. When things like this come into our lives, they are not accidental. It's not as if God somehow forgot what was going on, and something bad slipped by. God does everything according to His will. We've always said that.

But what I've been impressed with mostly is something in addition to that. It's possible, isn't it, to conceive of God as sovereign and yet indifferent? God's in charge, but He doesn't care. But it's not that. God is not only the one who is in charge; God is also good. Everything He does is good. And what Romans 12: 1 and 2 says is that we have the opportunity by the renewal of our minds—that is, how we think about these things—actually to prove what God's will is. And then it says, "His good, pleasing, and perfect will." Is that good, pleasing, and perfect to God? Yes, of course, but the point of it is that it's good, pleasing, and perfect to us. If God does something in your life, would you change it? If you'd change it, you'd make it worse. It wouldn't be as good. So that's the way we want to accept it and move forward, and who knows what God will do?

Some Christians say prayer is telling God exactly what you want.

And if you even consider that God might tell you no because he has some greater purpose in mind, that's a lack of faith.

But I don't think that's faith in God. I think that's faith in your wisdom.

It's saying, God, I've got it figured out.

But Jesus says: Pray that God's name hallowed, his kingdom comes, his will done.

As Dr. Boice said: Pray for wisdom for the doctors, effectiveness of treatment—but above all, pray for the glory of God.

Let me ask you a question: In your prayers do you start with God?

In your desperate prayers and in your ordinary daily prayers, have you rested in the sovereignty and goodness of God and prayed that he will be glorified in your life, and in every circumstance?

That's how the Lord Jesus wants you to pray. But there's another part to this.

Brings us to second point . . .

MP#2 Our sonship

I've been struck in by how sonship, adoption, and the Fatherhood of God permeates everything Jesus teaches us about prayer.

Before Jesus even gets to the Lord's Prayer, when he is giving the warnings—
don't pray like hypocrites and don't pray like pagans—

The reason he gives is because you have a Father in heaven.

He is always present. He invites you to talk to him.

He knows what you need. He wants you to ask.

And then there is the address to God Jesus teaches us: Our Father in heaven.

And Christ's intent is that we take that and apply it to every petition.

Father, hallowed be your name. Don't you want your earthly father to be honored?

Father, your kingdom come. If it's his kingdom, you his son, your kingdom too.

Father, your will be done. He's your Father, and father knows best.

Father, give us our daily bread. Of course he will.

Father, forgive us our debts. Of course he will.

Father, deliver us from evil. Of course he will.

And that changes everything.

You are praying to the sovereign God of the universe.

And he's also your Father.

And one more passage I haven't mentioned is Luke 11, the other place Jesus gives the Lord's prayer.

Afterwards, when talking about answers to prayer he says:

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

And in those amazing words Jesus explains that we are to filter all answers to prayer through the grid of our sonship. That every answer to prayer—yes, no, or wait, is really a yes. It's our heavenly Father giving us what we need. It's a yes to the perfect prayers of the Holy Spirit on our behalf.

Jesus makes it very clear, you are to pray as a child speaking to his Father.

What does that look like? It's confident. Children come to parents boldly.

They presume on their parents. They don't understand grownups, but they know they are their to meet their needs.

You are to come to your Father confidently.

One thing I miss about regular church life right now is the time after worship

and after Sunday school when everybody is standing around, talking.
Grownups love to stand around and talk after church,
and children need things, they want things, they want attention.
And even at the risk of being reprimanded, and being told not to interrupt
when mom or dad is talking, they will do so anyway.

Little children are relentless. But at the same time they are utterly trusting.
They don't understand why grownups do what they do.
They just know that they are to express their needs and somehow
mom and dad will take care of it.

One time I was talking to a man after church, and he pointed down and said:
Look what's on my leg.

I looked down and saw a Christ Covenant toddler who had come up and wrapped
his arms around this man's leg.
He held on for a few minutes, watching all the older kids shouting and playing, and
then he let go and waddled into the middle of them.

We knew what had happened. This child thought it was daddy's leg.
And the fact that it wasn't his dad's leg just emphasized all the more
the forwardness and confidence of a child with his father.
He didn't say: Excuse me, I need to hold your leg for a minute to get a little
dose of courage for all this confusion.
He just grabbed dad's leg. Because that's what dads are for.

If prayer was only a matter of addressing God as sovereign king,
all we would ever say is, Your will be done, Majesty.
But who is the only person in all the realm who can wake the king up at midnight
and ask him for a glass of water? Not his generals and advisors.
Even his queen asks her ladies in waiting so the king can get his sleep.
But the little prince cries out—Daddy, I'm thirsty—because that's what children do.

And how do parents respond to the persistent, bold requests of their children?
Most of the time they answer them and provide what is requested.
Your heavenly Father does that. Every single day he gives you what you need.
Most of the time you don't even ask him and he gives anyway.
He gives you daily bread every morning, even if you forget to pray.
And he has given you all the blessings of Christ in the heavenly places.
Parents respond by giving what is best.
And that's why some prayers require persistence.

God wants to see if you are really sincere about it and he's also teaching you dependence on him.

As your Father, he also delights in hearing from you.

Those of you with children who are grown up and gone, don't you hate it when they call? Doesn't it bug you when they call to tell you their problems and needs?

Of course not. You love hearing from them.

And sometimes your advice is for them to work it out themselves—
but you still want to hear from them and you tell them that.

I know these are old lessons, but we need to be reminded of them.

God wants us to come to him and say:

I know this is a little thing God, but it's so important to me. Please listen.

And he will.

I know this is a big thing, Father. I know I don't deserve it. But please, listen.

And he will.

And sometimes you even say: Father, I don't know what to pray for.

I'm so confused. I don't know what's best.

I don't even know what I want. Listen to me. And he will.

CONC: The old hymn says:

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,

That calls me from a world of care.

And bids me, at my Father's throne,

make all my wants and wishes known.

There it is. Just three words. The heart of Christian prayer.

My Father's throne.

It's a throne. It's actually the throne. Control center of the universe.

The Throne covered in the cloud of glory, surrounded by the four living creatures and the 24 elders, and the myriads of angels singing holy, holy, holy, to the one who sits on the throne, whose appearance is like lightning and who rules with absolute authority over all things.

And it's your Father's throne. And he says to you through Christ his Son, come to me, and make all your wants and wishes known.

I'll listen with a Father's ear, and I'll give you what is best.