

2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters
Sermon Series - Focus on Righteousness
Sermon Title - Prayer Under the Microscope (part 3)
Sermon Text - Matthew 6:9-13
Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry

Introduction:

“In Christ alone my hope is found; He is my light, my strength, my song;”

If I've learned one thing in my life, it is that I do not find my hope in the things of this world! It's not if this world will let you down, but when this world will let you down! Because it will! And notice, I said “If I've learned one thing in my life...” I've actually learned a second thing in my life...In Christ alone my hope is found, because no matter what the world throws my way He never lets me down! As the old hymn says, “He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own, and the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.” When we talk with Jesus and when He speaks to our hearts, that's called prayer. Let's pray right now and ask Jesus to teach us more about prayer! Pray.

"Lord, as we finish our study of the model prayer, please teach us and help us understand the depths of its meaning. We thank You that we can pray to You our awesome and Holy Father! We do ask for Your kingdom rule and authority to be over our daily lives and we willingly submit to Your will, direction, plans and guidance for our lives. What a privilege that we can ask You, The Creator of the universe, to take time out of Your schedule to stop and hear our cries, our concerns, our needs, our petitions. We love You and praise You for being such a loving and attentive God! And it's in Jesus name I pray. Amen!

Focusing on righteousness requires that we focus on prayer! Jesus spoke on prayer in His famous sermon on the mount when He said...

Matthew 6:9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

Matthew 6:10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

Now some of you might be wondering what happened to the last part...

Matthew 6:13...For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

That part is not found in many of the translations because it is not found in the oldest manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel. And these words are not found in Luke's Gospel where we also find The Lord's Prayer. So where did they come from? Good question and no one knows

for sure, but many theologians and historians think it was added later by a scribe who was copying Scripture. Here's what I think happened. A scribe was copying the Sermon on the Mount and was really caught up in the message. By the time he finished with The Lord's Prayer, I think he was just having a moment! A God inspired, awesome moment, and he just blurted out with his writing instrument..."For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever, Amen!" So, while I agree with the translator's who are trying to be true to the oldest and best manuscripts we have, I don't have a problem at all with the words and the sentiment of one very excited and inspired scribe!! While it may not have been in the original prayer that Jesus taught, it certainly is a true statement and does not contradict any other Scripture so it's not a bad thing if you want to end the model prayer, the Lord's prayer, or any other prayer for that matter, with the words...

"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

We've spent the last two weeks on verses 9 & 10 and today I need to finish the last three verses. So buckle your seatbelts, here we go...

Prayer under the microscope reveals the Ingredients of The Bread of Life

Matthew 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Boy am I excited to share this message with you today. I woke up one night thinking about the bread of life. What is it? What are the ingredients for the bread of life? Let's get out our microscope and look under the surface! Is "give us today our daily bread" just asking God to provide physical sustenance for our physical survival? As we turn the little dial and focus in closer we just might see other things Jesus said and taught concerning the bread of life. Do you remember the words Jesus spoke when He was being tempted by Satan in the wilderness at the very beginning of His ministry? His words lead us to one of the most important ingredients to the bread of life.

The Written Word

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 4:2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Matthew 4:3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Of course we need physical bread and sustenance. We'll talk more about that in a minute, but those who only focus on physical nourishment and ignore the spiritual, do so to their peril. God has graciously given us His written word to show us how to live lives with meaning and purpose. You can have all the physical sustenance and health in the world, but you can live a wasted life!

The Psalmist found this to be absolutely true. Psalm 119 is my favorite Psalm. It has 176 verses. We're only going to read 10 of them. Listen...

Psalm 119:9 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.

Psalm 119:10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:12 Praise be to you, LORD; teach me your decrees.

Psalm 119:13 With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

Psalm 119:14 I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

Psalm 119:15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

Psalm 119:16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

Psalm 119:17 Be good to your servant while I live, that I may obey your word.

Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

We keep our way of life pure when we live according to His Word. Seeking Him with all our heart keeps us from straying from His commands. The Psalmist said he had hidden the word in his heart so he might not sin against God. He wanted to be taught, and he would use his lips to repeat God's Word so he wouldn't forget it. He found the Word of God to be as exciting as great riches. He meditated on the word and considered God's ways! He found great joy in what he learned and made a conscious decision to not neglect God's Word. He asked God to bless him and promised to obey God's instructions. He asked God to open his eyes so that he could see the wonderful things in God's ways. I guess you could say the Psalmist had a really good spiritual appetite. Remember that Jesus had said earlier in His Sermon...

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Now here's an amazing truth. God had given His people the written word in the law, the prophets and the poets of the Old Testament. However, it was not enough. The people still didn't fully understand. They couldn't fully see. They couldn't fully comprehend the deep, yet simple truths God wanted them to consume. So what did God do? He provided another ingredient for the bread of life...

The Living Word

Jesus was the embodiment of the entire word and law of God in the flesh. In fact Jesus had already made this statement in His sermon...

Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Here's the deal...no one was able to fully live up to the righteous demands of the law. Many try, but we are weakened by our sinful nature and so the law accentuates and highlights our inability

to be all God wants us to be. God, in His mercy, decided to do something about this. He made a way for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness to be filled. Jesus explained...

John 6:47 Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life.

John 6:48 I am the bread of life.

John 6:49 Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died.

John 6:50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die.

John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

John 6:52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

John 6:53 Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

They didn't understand. Jesus was not talking about literally eating His flesh and drinking His blood. He was talking about the spiritual ramifications of Him being the Messiah and the Lamb of God who would offer His body and blood as a sacrifice for the sins of the world and that whoever would believe and receive would be eating the true bread of life.

How do I know this is what He was talking about? Listen to what Jesus said a few verses later...

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.

And remember what Jesus said a short time before the crucifixion.

Luke 22:19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,

Luke 22:19 "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

Luke 22:20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Let me explain something to you. When He said this is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you, the Jewish people had a unique perspective to understand. They knew that when a person lost their blood they lost their life, so for them life was in the blood. When Jesus said His blood was poured out for them they understood He was talking about His life! So Jesus lived a perfect life and then poured it out as a sacrifice for our imperfect lives and in so doing He became the Bread of Life for you and me. Now I know someone might be thinking. Wow! This is really deep and spiritual and kind of interesting, but I always thought "Give us today our daily bread" was talking about things we need to live! You would be right, it is certainly that as well because God does give us...

Physical Provisions

Personally, I think sometimes we try too hard to separate our spiritual life from the rest of our life. I believe God wants us to understand that our spiritual well being affects every other aspect of our lives! Being spiritually well nourished gives us strength to face the difficult circumstances we all will face at some point in our lives. When we face those tough times it's certainly not wrong to ask God for very practical things, like basic necessities, including groceries! So it's okay to ask God for basic necessities! But we must be careful in this area. One of my favorite professors at Mississippi College, Dr. William Stevens, said this...

"There seems to be an endless chain of 'things' for which to beseech God, thus making 'Give me' the recurrent theme"

Even the writer of Proverbs knew this temptation so he prayed a prayer that very few people are willing to pray, especially the prosperity preachers...

Proverbs 30:8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.

Proverbs 30:9 Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?'

Proverbs 30:9 Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

Jesus also gave some guidelines for the asking aspect of prayer a little later in His sermon and Dr. Nave is going to talk next week about keeping our greatest treasures in heaven and then on the last Sunday of this month we're going to talk about trusting God with our needs and learning how not to worry about things! So asking for our daily bread certainly includes physical provisions, but I believe it also includes...

Spiritual Provisions

Peter said this...

2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

2 Peter 1:4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

2 Peter 1:5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;

2 Peter 1:6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;

2 Peter 1:7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

So in your daily prayer for daily bread remember, God's going to give you the ingredients for the physical bread of life. Thank Him for that, but don't worry about those things. The things we need to be concerned about are the things that God wants to give us but we are hesitant to ask for because they involve us being willing to submit our will to His will.

Our prayer for daily bread should certainly include...

Faith, Goodness, Knowledge, Self-control, Perseverance, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, Love

Peter says...

2 Peter 1:8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And Jesus, right after telling us to pray for God to give us this daily bread, tells us why we will need it...

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Wow, what a tall order! But not to worry, because...

Prayer under the microscope reveals the The Ingredients of Forgiveness!

Matthew 6:12 Forgive us our debts...

The first ingredient may seem like an obvious one, a no-brainer, but I must tell you it's one of the hardest ingredients to come by!

Admission

Forgive us our debts! Before a person is able to sincerely pray those words, they have to admit they are in debt. The debt Jesus is talking about here is our sin debt: the fact that we have all messed up in some way and fallen short of God's original plans for our lives. The writer of the book of Romans put it this way in Romans 3:10 and 3:23...

Romans 3:10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;
Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

You might be tempted to say, "But I'm just as good as the next person, in fact, maybe even better because I've not done any of the big sins, you know the big ones, I mean I've never murdered anyone! I'm sorry to break this to you, but the most common word used for sin in the New Testament is the word harmatia, which means to miss the target, to miss the mark! So it's not just about the big sins you do, but it's also about what you didn't do that you should have or could have done. I don't believe there's anyone in this room who would claim they've always been and done their very best in their relationship with God or their spouse, or their children, or their parents, or their co-workers, or those they don't get along with.

So we must all admit and confess that we have missed the mark of God's plans and designs for our lives. Even if you are really good in comparison with others, if you compare yourself with Jesus your imperfections will become obvious. Don't fret, I'm gonna give you some good news in just a minute. Hold on! Now I also know there are some here that might say, "Pastor Larry, I'm in big trouble, I've broken some of the big ones! I know I'm not good and there's probably not any hope for me even if I admit and come clean with what I've done." Actually, if that's your thinking, you're on the right track. You've already found the next ingredient in forgiveness...

Acknowledgement

We have to admit we're sinners and then acknowledge that our sin debt is bad, it must be paid, and that we don't have the ability or the means to pay the debt! Why is this so important? John wrote these words in 1 John 1:8-10...

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

And what happens if His Word has no place in our lives? Spiritually bankruptcy! Spiritual bankruptcy is worse than any financial bankruptcy could ever be. In fact, Paul described it in Romans 1:21-25...

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

Romans 1:23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

Romans 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

Romans 1:25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

We need to pray for our nation because we are seeing some very clear signs of spiritual bankruptcy. It could become illegal for me to preach this book in the not so distant future! To preach its truths could be seen as hate speech. But let me tell you, there's nothing hateful about warning the wicked of the consequences of sin. In fact it is one of the most loving things a person could do, especially if done in the Spirit of Christ! When God warned people of sin, it was because of His love for them.

Listen to these words of the Prophet Ezekiel..

Ezekiel 18:30 “Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.

Ezekiel 18:31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel?

Ezekiel 18:32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!

And this leads to yet another ingredient in forgiveness...

Asking

This is an Old Testament and a New Testament concept! It is vital for both societies and individuals! Listen to the call of God to the Israelites...

2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Asking for forgiveness must include the action of repentance. If we humble ourselves by admitting and acknowledging our sin and then pray and ask for forgiveness, we must then seek His face and turn from our wicked ways. In other words, we must no longer look to sin and the pleasures of this world for our purpose or our pleasure. We must allow God to give us a new purpose and new pleasures.

In fact, Jesus said basically the same thing when He first started His ministry...

Mark 1:14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

And Paul, in the book of Romans, the same book in which he described spiritual bankruptcy, described what could be done to avoid it. In this passage Paul is speaking to the individual need to ask for forgiveness. Romans 10:9-13...

Romans 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Romans 10:11 As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

Romans 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

Romans 10:13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

And why is it possible for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord to be saved? John gives us a beautiful answer to this question in 1 John 4:9-11...

1 John 4:9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1 John 4:11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

How powerful, how beautiful, how amazing, how inspiring is that? Jesus told us to ask to be forgiven of our debt because He knew He was going to pay our debt in full!! Every spiritual penny of our debt. And God didn't do that for us because we were so good and so deserving: In fact we weren't even loving God, but He loved us first and most and best, and did something about it! He simply asks for us to admit our sin debt, acknowledge we can't pay it, and ask Him to help us! Asking Him to forgive us involves our willingness to repent and turn away from sin and to God! And when we do, we find freedom from the penalty of sin and God begins giving us freedom from the power of sin. We begin living a new life and others will begin to experience the change in us. How? Well, this takes us back to our Lord's Model prayer and one of the most important ingredients for forgiveness!

Matthew 6:12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Absolution

Absolution is releasing from guilt, obligation, or punishment those who have wronged you!

There is amazing freedom in finding forgiveness for your sins, but there is an equally amazing freedom to be found in giving forgiveness! Some of the most difficult times in my life have been when I struggled to let something go that someone else had done to me. It's not easy to forgive someone who has hurt you, but Jesus makes it clear that those who are recipients of a great and undeserved grace and love of God must in turn be willing to give the same grace and love of God to others. In fact, Jesus says something very difficult at the end of the model prayer...

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Matthew 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Now why would Jesus say this? The first thing you need to understand is the literal reading of Jesus' words when He said, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Are you ready for this?

Matthew 6:12 (Barclay) Forgive us our sins, in proportion as we forgive those who have sinned against us.

So if you pray that part of the prayer literally, and you aren't willing to forgive someone else, then you are literally asking God not to forgive you. Here's the deal, forgiving someone is never about saying it's okay what they did, or that it didn't really matter, or that it didn't really hurt you! If someone hurt you, abused you, lied about you, stole from you, or in any way sinned against you, it was wrong! Forgiving them doesn't make what they did right or excuse them from their behavior. Forgiveness in the Greek means "letting go" or giving a "pardon." To forgive is to no longer personally require payment of a sin debt. Don't waste your life collecting debts! If laws were broken it may mean that we allow society to hold them accountable, or place it in God's hands. We don't have the power to forget, but God can give us the power to forego the demand for retribution. Some people think if they just let something go, especially a grievous offense, then the other person wins and has the power. The truth is the opposite. When you let a past offense go, it no longer controls you! It no longer hijacks your thoughts, your time, your energy!

It doesn't mean the pain of the offense automatically goes away, but you can begin the healing process! It allows you to move forward with your life rather than living in the past. And remember, I'm not telling you to remain in a situation where an unrepentant person is still abusing or hurting you. That's not forgiveness. God will give you wisdom to know if that's the case and He will guide you in what to do. But remember, the prayer should always be that the other person repents and finds Jesus. Don't seek their demise, seek their salvation! Here's another reason Jesus said what He said about our forgiveness being tied with our willingness to forgive: A person who is seeking revenge or is unwilling to forgive others will not humble themselves to seek God's forgiveness! And unless we admit we're also sinners, and acknowledge our inability to pay our debt and ask for forgiveness then we will remain unforgiven. Freedom is found in being forgiven, but also is found in giving forgiveness! And last, but not least...

Prayer under the microscope reveals the truth about temptation!

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. '

God Will Not Tempt You!

When Jesus said we were to pray for God to not lead us into temptation, He was not insinuating God would otherwise tempt us to do evil. In fact let me share with you a passage that points this out...

James 1:13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

James 1:14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

God would never tempt you to sin, because He knows what sin will do to you, so He won't do that! He does allow us to be tested, and sometimes in that test, we will be tempted by the

enemy, but God is not tempting us. Jesus said we need to pray "Lead me not into temptation!" It's not that God is planning on tempting us, it's that we need to give God permission to lead our lives, our agenda's, our priorities, our goals, our motives, our attitudes, and our actions! When God is not leading you or directing your path, your own evil desires will drag you to dark places of temptation where bad decisions lead to sin and sin kills! It will kill your joy, your God-given purpose, your relationships, your witness, your character, and left un-treated by the forgiveness of God, sin will destroy your soul! God is a gracious and forgiving God, and will forgive the penalty of sin, but never forget some consequences cannot be undone in this life.

God Will Deliver You From The Evil One!

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

So we know God will not tempt us to do evil and when we pray for God to not lead us into temptation we are giving Him permission to lead our path. If He leads us to a place of testing, and we are tempted by the enemy, we know God will provide a way out and the strength to stand up under the pressure! Prayer under the microscope reveals the ingredients of The Bread of Life, and the ingredients of forgiveness! It also reveals that God promises to never tempt you, but to deliver you when you are tempted! The question is, will you pray...

Matthew 6:9 ... 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

Matthew 6:10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Let's pray!