

**Text: Matt.6:5-15 (Pew Bible, pg.960)**

**Title: "Prayer ... Approaching God"**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Our worship this morning will be built around prayer. If your schedule was like our schedule over the holidays, I found my normal devotional routine was interrupted by travel and other activities. I come to church today hungry for God. What better way to start our New Year than in an extended time of prayer.

Many of us made New Year's resolutions. In fact, we're far enough into 2011 that we may have already broken some those resolutions. For whatever reason, we can't seem to find the strength to carry through with those resolutions. Well, the difference between "resolutions" and "real solutions" to the challenges we all face is prayer.

**ILLUSTRATION** – If you think of it in terms of a water well with a pump connected to a pipe that runs deep into the ground then if the pump of life runs dry it's because the pipe of prayer isn't deep enough.

We find ourselves missing the mark time after time and the reason may just be that we have not fully come to grips with the awesome potential we have in prayer. I mean, do we really believe that all things are possible through prayer? The word "impossible" is scribbled across certain areas of our lives. Do we believe that all things are possible through prayer?

The early church believed that all things were possible through prayer. They prayed when they were under attack, they prayed when their preachers needed strength, they prayed when people were sick, they prayed for the lost to be saved, they prayed when they needed wisdom. They didn't know any better than just to take everything to God is prayer.

We're going to pray through what is commonly called The Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6. So let's open our Bibles to that passage. We'll begin in v.5 (Pew Bible, pg.960).

Before we read the Scripture I want us to sing it together.

## **CONGREGATIONAL SINGING – "LORD'S PRAYER" (Traditional version)**

Now with your Bibles open let's focus on this prayer that is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. It might also be called The Model Prayer. Some have even called it The Disciples' Prayer. Jesus is up on a mountainside. We're told in Matthew 5:1-2 that "His disciples came to him and he began to them." And what follows is called the Sermon on the Mount that begins with the Beatitudes. Then Jesus begins to lay out the lifestyle of the person who would follow Him as a disciple. After the Beatitudes Jesus sets forth the ways in which being a Christ-follower is different from the religion that most of them had come to know.

So we're not surprised when we come to Matthew 6:5 when Jesus includes teaching on prayer for His followers.

Before Jesus gets to the pattern for prayer, He teaches his disciples about preparing to pray.

## **PREPARING TO PRAY**

Prayer is for God. It is not for man. Our praying should not be done to attract attention to ourselves. It is for God and His glory alone.

**Matthew 6:5 (NIV) - “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.**

Prayer is to God. Prayer is a secret thing, a mysterious thing.

**Matthew 6:6 (NIV) - But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

Prayer is with God. We're not to pray as though God doesn't know what's going on.

**Matthew 6:7 (NIV) - And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.**

**Matthew 6:8 (NIV) - Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.**

So that we don't hurry into the presence of God unprepared, let's just quiet ourselves before the Lord. If you find yourself distracted, try this. Whatever distracting thought comes to your mind, give it to God. And if you find your mind wondering, ask the Holy Spirit to help you to pray.

## **SILENT PRAYER**

**Matthew 6:9a (NIV) - “This, then, is how you should pray...**

Don't you just love it when the Bible is that straight-forward and easy to understand?

Jesus is concerned about how we pray. We are not free to pray in any manner we want. There are a number of different words and phrases used in the Bible for prayer: prayer, to call upon the Lord, to ask, to seek, and many other words, but the bottom line is the same.

And we are not free to leave prayer out of our lives all together. The word “pray” is an imperative verb.

Now there's a pattern to Jesus' prayer that is a great pattern to follow in our daily prayer life. If you find yourself struggling to get started in prayer and to stay focused in prayer, use this prayer as an outline.

And the only appropriate way to start our praying is with praise. Prayer is about God, not about us.

## **PRAYER OF PRAISE**

**Matthew 6:9 (NIV) - “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

There’s a relationship involved here. We call upon a Father ... our Father. He is in heaven. He is seated upon the throne of the universe. He is sovereign over all matters of creation and eternity. And our desire is that His name would be “hallowed.” What does that mean? It means for His name (His person) to be revered. The word is akin to the word “holy.” It’s another way of saying, “God be praised for His holiness.”

PERSONAL PRAISE

CONGREGATIONAL SONG OF PRAISE (EARLY SERVICE)

CHORAL SONG OF PRAISE (LATE SERVICE)

## **PRAYER OF PURPOSE**

**Matthew 6:10 (NIV) - Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

The purpose in our praying should be first and foremost that the Kingdom of God would come in all of it’s glory and power. God’s kingdom is the realm in which God reigns supreme. When Christ came the Kingdom was inaugurated in the earth, but the Kingdom is not yet fully consummated. God is extending His reign every time someone is saved. God is extending His reign when His people live more perfectly conformed to His purposes.

The goal of prayer is not to get earth’s will done in heaven, but to get heaven’s will done on earth.

PERSONAL PRAYER

CONGREGATIONAL SONG (1)

Now obviously God is concerned about our needs. We’re told that back in v.8 when it says that God knows what we need before we ask Him, but still we are to ask Him.

## **PRAYER OF PROVISION**

**Matthew 6:11 (NIV) - Give us today our daily bread.**

Praying like this acknowledges that God is our source. We work hard to provide for our needs. But we do it all knowing that it is God who gives us the ability to make money and buy the things that we need.

Jesus teaches us to ask and trust God for the basics of life every day. What are you worried about? What do you need? Talk to God about it.

## PERSONAL PRAYER

Now you may have noticed that the Model Prayer is filled with plural references ... our, us. So there is a corporate component to our praying. We're praying in solidarity, each of us looking to the same Father. So I've asked \_\_\_\_\_/ Mary Lynn Stewart to come lead us corporately in a prayer for God's provision.

## CORPORATE PRAYER

### OFFERING (LATE SERVICE)

Now this prayer is about a relation we have with our Father. And if our relationship with Him is not right, our praying will not be right. And if our relationship with others is not right, our praying will not be right. So Jesus teaches us to pray for pardon and forgiveness.

## PRAYER OF PARDON

**Matthew 6:12 (NIV) – Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

We need God's forgiveness.

We need to forgive others and to be forgiven by others.

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

**Matthew 6:15 (NIV) - But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**

## PERSONAL PRAYER

Again, this is a corporate thing. Jesus says, "Forgive *us* our debts..." So corporate confession and repentance are necessary. I have asked Ray Raley/Mel Krewall to lead us.

## PRAYER OF CORPORATE CONFESSION

Life is a spiritual struggle against sin and Satan, and we are to pray about this as well.

## PRAYER OF PROTECTION

**Matthew 6:13a (NIV) - And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'**

We recognize our spiritual weakness and our need for God's strength in the midst of temptation. Now we are taught elsewhere that God doesn't sin, nor does He entice others to sin. Satan is the tempter. But God presides over the process of temptation. He uses it for His purposes in strengthening our faith. So we pray for God's divine protection in the process of testing and temptation.

We need God to protect us and rescue us from the devices of the Evil One.

#### PERSONAL PRAYER

We need God's protection over our families and over our church. Let's join together in praying for God's protection.

CORPORATE PRAYER OF PROTECTION – Led by Frank Nusbaum/Ron Waters.

Prayer starts with God and ends with God. So we come back to praise of the Father to whom we are praying.

#### PRAYER OF PRAISE

**Matthew 6:13b (NIV) - For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**