

Study Notes - the Lord's Prayer

by Walter Beuttler

The Lord's Prayer is a model for true prayer that teaches us how to pray in a way that is pleasing to God and to help us understand the nature of true prayer.

Topics: "The Lord's Prayer", "Effective Prayer"

Description

Walter Beuttler delves into the essence of prayer as taught by Jesus, emphasizing the need for sincere and humble communication with God. He explores the different types of prayers highlighted in Luke 11:1 and Matthew 6:5-8, distinguishing between the hypocrite's prayer, the heathen's prayer, and the son's prayer. Beuttler provides insights into the characteristics and motivations behind each type of prayer, urging believers to approach God with genuine hearts and a focus on His kingdom and will. The sermon also delves into the Lord's Prayer, dissecting its elements and significance, guiding listeners on how to approach God with reverence, dependence, and trust in His provision and protection.

Transcript

1. What is evident from Luke 11:1?

(1) That there is a need for selecting a certain locality to pray, such as the seclusion of the solitary place (Mark 1:35)

(2) That one of the Lord's disciples (not necessarily one of the twelve) was impressed by his manner of praying, whether audible or silent

(3) That man is by nature in a state of ignorance concerning the nature of true prayer

(4) That men need a sense of need in this respect and pray, "Lord, teach us to pray"

2. What does Jesus do in Matt. 6:5-8? He differentiates between three kinds of prayer; namely:

(1) The hypocrite's prayer, v. 5

(2) The son's prayer, v. 6

(3) The heathen's prayer, vv. 7-8

3. Why does Jesus place the son's prayer between that of the hypocrite and the heathen, 6:5-8? To teach his disciples the right way to pray in contrast to the wrong way of the others

THREE KINDS OF PRAYER

A. THE HYPOCRITE'S PRAYER, 6:5

1. Whom, in particular, does the Lord have in mind by the "hypocrites" in 6:5? The Pharisees who were not seekers of God, but seekers of popularity who prostituted devotion into a means of self-aggrandizement by choosing places and times that would render the saying of their prayers conspicuous

2. Point out the characteristics of the hypocrite's prayer in 6:5:

(1) Wrong motivation. The hypocrite prays to men under the guise of praying to God. In actuality he does not pray; he only parades his pretended devotion in order to solicit men's favorable opinion and admiration

(2) False evaluation. The hypocrites, with their irreligious religion, were more interested in being seen by men than they were in being heard by God because they valued the praise of men much more than the praise of God

(3) Vain ostentation. The hypocrite's yearning for the gratification of his vainglorious desires made him select the public concourses and religious centers for prayer, not because "they loved to pray," but because "they loved to pray" THERE

(4) Worthless compensation. Inasmuch as the religious hypocrites were only interested in the praise of men, that is the only reward they get which is, when they do get it, at best only a temporary reward of doubtful merit

3. Comment on the hypocrite's prayer, 6:5:

(1) Standing to pray is one thing; standing to pray in order to be seen is quite another - and so is kneeling, if this be the purpose. One is as reprehensible as the other

(2) Long prayers (Matt. 23:14) do not necessarily evidence extraordinary devotion to God and piety of life, but may be a subtle method to insinuate oneself into the confidence of the unwary for personal gain

(3) Instead of secretly looking to God, the hypocrite secretly looks around to see what impression his religious pretence is making upon those whose good opinion he so eagerly covets

B. THE HEATHEN'S PRAYER, 6:7-8

1. Who is designated by the term "heathen," 6:7? The non Jews, i.e., "the Gentiles which know not God," I Thess. 4:5

2. Point out the characteristics of the heathen's prayer, 6:7-8:

(1) Wrong method. The heathen relies on the multiplication of words and mechanical recitation and reiteration of his requests as a meritorious means of being heard

(2) False assumption. Believing that the virtue of his prayers lies in the mere utterance of words, the heathen mistakenly takes for granted that he is being heard

(3) Vain repetition. The heathen seeks to render the empty verbosity of his prayers more effective by much repetition, thus reciting merely the same prayers over and over again without ever praying any of them

(4) Worthless effort. The futility of the heathen's prayer arises from the fact of his ignorance concerning the nature of true prayer which is not a matter of words, but of meaning; not of form, but of heart; not of outward beauty, but of inward reality

3. Comment on the heathen's prayer, 6:7-8:

(1) Repetition in earnest supplication as Christ did in the garden (Matt. 26:44) is one thing; vain repetition as the heathen did is quite another

(2) Much speaking is not necessarily much praying, and long prayers do not necessarily yield large results

(3) There may be more prayer in a few words of earnest supplication than in hours of mere talk, more real prayer in total silence than in the loudest cries

C. THE SON'S PRAYER, 6:6, 8

1. What, concerning God, does Jesus reveal in the following phrases?

(1) "But thou," v. 6 - The Father's distinction. The heavenly Father differentiates between a true son and the religious hypocrite along with the unconverted heathen

(2) "When thou prayest," v. 6 - The Father's expectation. Jesus did not say "IF thou prayest," but "WHEN thou prayest." The heavenly Father expects that his children pray

(3) "Enter into thy closet," v. 6 - The Father's direction. The heavenly Father directs his children to seek a place of seclusion for their private prayers in contrast to the Pharisees who sought the public places

(4) "And when thou hast shut thy door," v. 6 - The Father's intimation. The heavenly Father intimates that real prayer involves wholehearted concentration and complete separation which leaves no opportunity for observation and no occasion for distraction

(5) "Pray to thy Father," v. 6 - The Father's exhortation. Since the end is not secured by the mere act of going into seclusion, the heavenly Father exhorts his sons to pray to him on the basis of their filial relationship to him by virtue of which they have corresponding privileges and the Father has corresponding obligations

(6) "Which is in secret," v. 6 - The Father's omnipresence. Though all others are excluded, the heavenly Father, who said, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (Jer. 23:24), is present with his praying child in the secret place wherever that may be and whatever that may be like

(7) "Which seeth in secret," v. 6 - The Father's observation. The heavenly Father, who said, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?" (Jer. 23:24), also sees his praying child in the secret place of prayer, a child who may pray in full confidence that those who are seen by God have no need of being seen by men

(8) "Shall reward thee openly," v. 6 - The Father's disposition. The heavenly Father does not respond to a son's legitimate need reluctantly or acquiesce to his request only grudgingly, but is kindly disposed for "He

that spared not his own Son, . . . how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Rom. 8:32

(9) "Be not ye therefore like unto them," v. 8 - The Father's admonition. Although the heavenly Father is the God of all flesh, he is the father only of those who believe. Therefore, since his children are not like the heathen in their relationship to God, they are not to be like them in their approach to God

(10) "For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him," v. 8 - The Father's assurance. Since the heavenly Father is fully aware of his children's needs before they even ask him, he is in no need of being informed ; and since he is a good Father, he does not need to be persuaded by a multitude of words

2. Comment on "pray to thy Father" in 6:6: This is not a mere matter of form, but a conscious reality of our sonship, an inner awareness given to us by the Spirit of adoption, Rom. 8:14-16

3. Comment on the omission of any reference to any kind of posture during prayer in 6:6:

(1) Although our posture in devotions is noticed by God (v. 5), no particular posture is prescribed as there is no virtue in any one AS SUCH. These may only be conformity

to a traditional pattern or a mere matter of mechanical formality

(2) Posture is related to the nature of our devotions at a particular time and is largely determined by a variety of factors, such as individual personality, emotional state, conception of God, and environmental circumstances, all of which tend to diversity rather than uniformity

(3) However, when posture is the natural expression of an individual and is not unnaturally imposed, it becomes an integral and effective component of devotions, whether it be worship as in Job 1:20 or supplication as in I Kings 18:42

4. Observe a diversity of postures under a diversity of circumstances from:

(1) I Chron. 23:30 - Standing in worship

(2) II Sam. 7:18-29 - Sitting in prayer

(3) II Chron. 6:13 - Kneeling in supplication

(4) II Sam. 12:16 - Prostration in distress

5. What is the open reward in 6:6? The manifest effect before men of our secret devotion before God; e.g., as in:

(1) Mark 1:35-39 - Ability to meet the needs of others through effective ministry

(2) John 6:15 - Ability to avoid the snare of public acclamation

(3) Matt. 14:23-33 - Ability to walk on water before men and enable others to do the same, such as the waters of distress, etc.

(4) Luke 6:12-16 - Ability to choose the cross as Jesus did when he chose Judas

(5) Matt. 26:47 - Ability to drink the cup of suffering offered by the wisdom of divine providence

6. Inasmuch as God knows what we need before we ask him, 6:8, why do we need to ask? Not because God needs to be informed but:

(1) To keep us in an awareness of our dependence upon God whom we would otherwise take for granted and even forget, "days without number," Jer. 2:32

(2) To enable God to demonstrate to us his goodness and faithfulness which would otherwise remain unrecognized

(3) To satisfy his heart by our thankful expression of praise for his bountiful and benevolent care, a praise which otherwise he would not receive

7. The following passages have a bearing on effective prayer. Point out the essential principles from:

(1) 6:14-15 - We cannot pray effectively to our heavenly Father with malice in our hearts toward his other children

(2) 6:16-18 - The necessity of avoiding external religiousness and of practicing internal religion

(3) 6:19-24 - Men are either mastered by God with their hearts in heaven, or mastered by things with their hearts on earth

(4) 6:24 - The utter impossibility of living for things and at the same time living for God

(5) 6:25-27 - The unreasonableness and consequent uselessness of worrying

(6) 6:28-32 - The reasonableness of confidence in the integrity of the heavenly Father

(7) 6:32a - The worldliness of worrying about the necessities of life

(8) 6:33 - Obtaining the necessities of life will be an easy matter when first things are put first

(9) 6:34 - The need of simplifying our lives by living for God a day at a time without adding to it the problems of tomorrow, many of which resolve themselves by the time tomorrow comes

8. Note Luther's translation for "all these things shall be added unto you" (v. 32): "So wird Euch das andere alles zufallen." ("Then everything else," i.e., the necessities of life, "will come your way without effort")

9. The effortless adding of the necessities of life is contingent upon what, 6:33?

(1) Upon giving priority to the interests of the kingdom of God over our personal interests

(2) Upon personal conformity to the standards of righteousness required by the laws of the kingdom of God

THE LORD'S PRAYER

A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1. Comment on the traditional title of "The Lord's Prayer": A more appropriate title would be "The Disciples' Prayer," as this is the prayer he taught THEM to pray; e.g.,

(1) "After this manner therefore pray YE," Matt. 6:9

(2) "When YE pray, say," Luke 11:2

(3) In Matt. 6:9-13 Jesus returns to the subject of verse 6 to teach them how to pray to THEIR Father

2. Comment on the so-called Lord's Prayer in 6:9-13 from:

(1) Luke 11:2 ("When ye pray, say") - Jesus sanctions the very form of this prayer to be employed, not for mere mechanical recitation, but as a medium of expression for what should be the true prayer of every child of God

(2) Matt. 6:9 ("After this manner therefore pray ye") - This model prayer is not intended to be simply one form superceding all other prayers, but a type and pattern embodying principles applicable to all prayers, for all true prayer is crystallized in this prayer

3. In 6:9 God is said to be in heaven; in 6:6 he is said to be in secret. Explain:

(1) Being in heaven reveals God in his transcendence, i.e., in surpassing the limits of human comprehension so far that Solomon exclaimed in undisguised wonder and deep humility, "behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," I Kings 8:27

(2) Being in secret reveals God in his immanence, i.e., in his presence in the world and nearness to every human being which prompted Paul to exhort men "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us, Acts 17:27

(3) Together these are intended to assure the petitioner that this heavenly Father-God is ever present in our immediate environment and can readily be approached in the most secret places because he is immanent as well as transcendent

4. Suggest the significance of the fact that all personal pronouns in this prayer are in the plural, none in the singular:

(1) There is absolutely no room in true prayer for selfishness by ignoring the needs of others and attending only to our own

(2) Our needs and problems are common to all men in one form or another

(3) The bond of love unites the family of God in mutual interest "that the members should have the same care one for another," I Cor. 12:25

B. SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES

1. The Lord's Prayer begins with what scene, 6:9? A domestic scene; namely, the Father, the family, and the home. Its keynote is the fatherhood of God. The place of his residence is heaven

2. Point out the essential elements of prayer contained in this domestic scene, 6:9, as seen in the following statements:

(1) "Our Father" - Recognition of the fatherhood of God. Having been made children by birth, John 1:12-13, and adoption, Eph. 1:5, Christ places our new relationship to

God at the very entrance of our approach to the heavenly Father

(2) "Our" - Appropriation of the fatherhood of God. We, "who sometimes were far off" and have been "made nigh by the blood of Christ," Eph. 2:13, now make use of our rightful claims as children and thereby give the Father opportunity to demonstrate his benevolent care

(3) "Hallowed be thy name" - Worshipful petition. After the initial approach to God, the actual prayer begins with worshipful petition for the sanctity of the name of God, suggesting that worship comes before petition and that prayer is rendered more effective in an atmosphere of praise. Therefore "with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. 4:6

3. Comment on the "name" of God, 6:9:

(1) The name of God is that description of him which embraces all that he really is, so that the name of God is the disclosure of his nature and the expression of what he is

(2) So many descriptive names of God are needed because of the manifold aspects of his nature and the limitations of human comprehension

(3) God looks with special favor upon those who know his name (Psa. 91:14) and assists them in the pursuit of this knowledge (Jer. 24:7)

4. Observe the two aspects of "Hallowed be thy name":

(1) Worship of the name of God. This gives God "the glory due unto his name," Psa. 29:2, not only for what he does, but also for what he is. Even when this appears to be the very negation of his promises, the trusting child will keep his confidence in the integrity of his Father-God and continue "giving thanks at the remembrance of his name," Psa. 97:12 (R.Y.)

(2) Praying for the sanctity of the name of God. This, however, does not mean that God's holiness is subject to addition or that his sanctity is capable of improvement, but that the name of God will be held sacred, esteemed among men. The familiarity of love must not neglect the reverence due unto his name, Psa. 111:9

5. To what scene does the Lord's Prayer proceed in 6:10? To a royal scene; namely, the kingdom, the king, and the subjects. Its keynote is prayer for the interests of the kingdom of God whose concern in this prayer is the sphere of his kingdom on earth

6. Point out the essential principles of prayer as seen in the following statements:

(1) "Thy kingdom come" - Promotion of the kingdom of God. This prayer passes from the revelation of God as Father to the revelation of God as Sovereign with a petition for the establishment of God's undisputed and absolute universal reign, a petition which takes priority over all merely personal interests in which our material needs usually, but unfortunately, predominate

(2) "THY WILL be done" - Recognition of the sovereignty of God. The burden of this prayer is that the disclosure of God through the revelation of his name might bring about a universal recognition of the sovereignty of God among men as a necessary requisite for the establishment of his kingdom in their hearts

(3) "Thy will BE DONE IN EARTH, as it is in heaven" - Submission to the sovereignty of God. True recognition of the sovereignty of God must inevitably involve submission of the human will to the rule of God and be demonstrated by actual obedience to the laws of his kingdom.

7. Explain Matt. 6:33a: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" refers to compliance with the laws of his kingdom in the sphere of our hearts, Luke 17:21. This kingdom within us is a kingdom based on principles which are expressed in laws. Some of these laws relate to matters which take precedence over secondary things, so that compliance with the priorities of the kingdom of God is a requisite for the abundant supply of our material needs; e.g.,

(1) Sowing precedes reaping, II Cor. 9:6

(2) Giving precedes receiving, Luke 6:38

8. Comment on 6:11-13 in the light of 6:10: Before we present our petitions for whatever purpose, we should make sure that they are in the interest of the kingdom of God in one way or another and in harmony with his will

C. SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES (CONT'D.)

1. To what scene does the Lord's Prayer proceed in 6:11-13a? To an earthly scene with its material needs, sinful states, and spiritual conflicts. Its keynote is prayer for personal interests, those of others as well as our own

2. Why does prayer for "our daily bread" precede prayer for forgiveness? To show that God as our Father will be faithful to his obligations notwithstanding some unsettled accounts

3. Comment on the meaning of "bread" in 6:11: This word does not refer to literal bread, merely, but to all the necessities of life as evident from v. 25 and Isa. 55:2

4. "Give us this day," 6:11, implies what? That the Lord's Prayer is meant to be a "daily" prayer for "this day" whether it is prayed in its given form as a medium of expression, or whether it is prayed by employing its basic principles in any other mode of prayer

5. Point out the essential elements of prayer in this earthly scene from the following statements:

(1) "Give us," v. 11 - Acknowledgment of our dependence upon God. This is the prayer of the needy child. Without any trace of independent self-sufficiency and self-assertive pride, the needy child is content to rely on the Father's care with humble childlike simplicity

(2) "This day," v. 11 - Acknowledgment of our confidence in God. This is the prayer of the trusting child. With unquestioning confidence in the continued faithfulness of the Father's care, the petitioner is entirely content with sufficiency for the needs of the present without any anxiety about the needs of the future

Said the sparrow to the robin,

"I would really like to know

Why these anxious human beings

Rush about and worry so."

Said the robin to the sparrow,
"Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father
Such as cares for you and me."

(Author not known)

(3) "Our daily bread," v. 11 - Contentment with the necessities of life. This is the prayer of the modest child. There is no request for luxuries here. While we as children have a legitimate right to receive support, the Father is under no obligation to provide mere luxuries, although he might bestow even these, but out of kind generosity, not out of obligation, Psa. 68:19

(4) "Forgive us," v. 12 - Acknowledgment of our sinfulness. This is the prayer of the sinful child. All sins are "debts" because of our unfulfilled obligations both to God and man, whether by omission or commission. As we have no assets to pay what we owe, forgiveness is the only means to liquidate this indebtedness when there is no unforgiving spirit on our part to form an obstacle to our being forgiven

(5) "Lead us not into temptation," v. 13a - Acknowledgment of our moral weakness. This is the prayer of the weak child. Because of our inherent propensity to evil, (Matt. 26:41), and consequent susceptibility to sin, this is a petition for protection against exposure to Satan's temptation beyond our ability to endure

(6) "But deliver us from evil," v. 13a - Acknowledgment of our impotence. This is the prayer of the helpless child. Inasmuch as God solicits no man to sinful compliance, (Jas. 1:13), this is an entreaty to God for deliverance "from evil," i.e., "the evil one," (R.V.), from the overwhelming power and wiles of the devil," Eph. 6:11

6. To what does this prayer proceed in 6:13b? To a triumphant scene in the form of a doxology. Its keynote is the affirmation of the ultimate triumph of God over evil

7. Comment on this doxology: Although the authenticity of this doxology is a matter of serious doubt, to say the least, it certainly is a most appropriate and scriptural conclusion to the Lord's Prayer

8. Point out the essential principles in this doxology as contained in the following segments:

(1) "For thine is the kingdom" - Affirmation of God's right to the kingdom. Although Satan, by his rebellion against God, has usurped the rulership of the affairs of men and has become "the god of this world," II Cor. 4:4, God has nevertheless retained title to the kingdom and his exclusive right to the throne

(2) "And the power" - Affirmation of God's sovereign power. Even though Satan is "the prince of the power of the air," Eph. 2:2, "the rulers of the darkness of this world," Eph. 6:12, God has both the authority and the capability to enforce his right to the kingdom and he will, in due time, terminate Satan's rule so that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ," Rev. 11:15

(3) "And the glory" - Affirmation of the glory of God. The glory of God is the object of all true prayer for whatever immediate purpose it might be offered. Therefore, we pray for health, not because we want to live longer, but because we want to serve longer. We pray for money, not because we want to spend more, but because we want to give more. We pray for food, not because we enjoy the pleasure of eating,

but because we want to be able to carry out his will. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," I Cor. 10:31

(4) "For ever" - Affirmation of the ultimate triumph of God. God's kingdom has come; Satan's kingdom has been destroyed. His will is done; no other will opposes him. He has forgiven our sins; the accuser of the brethren has been silenced. He has brought temptation to an end; no seducing power remains. He has delivered us from the evil one; neither sin nor Satan can trouble us. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen"

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