



**Matthew 6:9-10**

**9 “This, then, is how you should pray:**

**“ ‘Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,**

**10 your kingdom come,**

**your will be done,**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

During this month of November, we are dedicating our study to “The Lord’s Prayer”. Last week we talked about how to pray and how not to pray. We also learned how God wants us to approach prayer and that He wants us to learn to pray in private. That prayer is intimate by its very nature and it is by praying in private that we learn to carry that intimacy of our conversations with God into our public places.

I also gave you a little homework and a notebook to record your thoughts on The Lord’s Prayer. How is that working out for you? I do know how challenging that can be, but I hope you are finding it useful. Writing down your thoughts at the time they occur helps you to focus and define those thoughts. So, I pray that you will keep it up as we continue with this series.

Today, we are talking about verses 9 and 10 of “The Lord’s Prayer.” This passage of scripture tells us so much about who we are praying to and we need to pay attention to what Jesus is telling us. He begins with **“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven,’**

“Our Father” - Have you ever spent time pondering this opening to the Lord’s prayer? It seems so simple. “Our Father”. We know that Jesus always chose his words carefully and intentionally so we need to ask ourselves, why did he choose “Our Father?” He certainly had a close relationship to His heavenly father. Why didn’t He say “My Father” or “My God?” After all, we did talk about the intimacy of prayer last week. Wouldn’t “My Father” or “My God” be more appropriate?

We have to go to intent as far as what Jesus is trying to teach us. By using “Our Father,” Jesus is implying community and inclusiveness. He is teaching us that we are a part of something larger and that we should acknowledge our place within the greater community. Jesus is telling us that God is the father all of us, that we all stand in equality before the throne of God. We are His children and He is our father because He is the creator of each of us.

I grew up studying the Bible. There are so many passages in the Bible that give themselves to controversy. There are passages in the Bible that many preachers have a tendency to avoid, sometimes due to the graphic nature of the content but more often out of the fear that someone is going to be offended; that maybe what is being quoted is not “politically correct.” I want you to know that I am not one of those preachers and I promise you that I will probably offend, or at least make uncomfortable, each and every one of you at some point. I preach what God lays on my heart and I really don’t believe that needs to be sugar-coated. We all learn best when we are uncomfortable. because we are forcing ourselves to consider other opinions, challenge our own opinions and resolve to new conclusions and new revelations. It is also an uncomfortable truth that the older we get, the harder it is to step outside our box and examine new ideas.

In my studies of the Bible, I never considered the fact that the opening of “The Lord’s Prayer” could ever be controversial. But here we are and I am not going to dance away from it or ignore it. Several times in the last couple of years I have heard The Lord’s Prayer started with “Our Mother, which art in heaven.” I truly don’t think any anyone is trying to be decisive by doing this. I feel that it is an attempt to be inclusive. But I truly think it is unnecessary to do this. I have heard it done with other scripture as well.

**In this case, though, the Greek word used in Matthew 6:9 is “Páter” (father), not “mitéra” (mother). At the same time, Jesus spoke Aramaic, which was the common language of the people, not Greek. I do believe that the writers of the Gospels tried their very best to stay true to the actual words spoken by Christ and there is some indication that there were some Aramaic texts used as resources when the gospels were written down in Greek.**

**Having said all that, I believe that Jesus chose the word “father” for a reason, and I don’t think that reason was gender based. I believe that it was role based. Since the beginning of time, we, as humans, have assigned genders to certain roles. When we think of fathers, we think of the words: ‘provider’, ‘protector’, ‘authoritative’ and ‘head of the family’. When we think of mothers, we think of the words: ‘nurturer’, ‘caregiver’, ‘supportive’, ‘compassionate’; ‘the soul of the family.’ It is only over the last half-century that the lines have blurred when it comes to assigning gender to these roles. I’m not sure that the original assignation regarding gender to role was a sound one, but the changes have resulted in a great deal of confusion. So many roles that were once given over to a specific gender are no longer constrained to those genders and I believe that to be good thing for all of us. It is good that women can be doctors, lawyers and politicians. It is also a good thing that men can be nurses, secretaries and teachers.**

**So, when we talk about fathers and mothers, there are too many families where a woman or a man has had to take on both roles in a family for the family to survive. I applaud those who willingly embrace new, more complicated roles to insure the health, vitality and education of their families. I am just as grateful for**

those who have stepped into roles of step-father or step-mother as blended families become more main-stream in our culture. It is never easy to absorb the responsibilities of a new role.

I say all this because I truly don't think that Jesus is specifying a gender at the start of 'The Lord's Prayer' so much as He is focusing on the role of 'Father' in the family of God. God as our provider. God as our protector. God the one who is ultimately responsible for us because we are His children. And while God also has all the attributes of motherhood, those are not the attributes we are focused on in this passage.

When we say, "Our Father", it is with respect and humility because we understand that our creator is ultimately responsible for us and we understand who He is as we bring our petitions before Him.

"In Heaven" – Just where is heaven? What is heaven? We look to the sky as if that is where heaven is to be found. We want so much to be able to say that heaven is here, or heaven is there. I just don't think it is that simple. Heaven is the place that God resides, and it sits out beyond the confines of the universe as we know it. The universe is a creation. Just as the solar system is a creation. Just as the earth is a creation. Just as we are a creation. And the universe is bound by rules of time and matter, most of which we, as humans, have only begun to scratch the surface.

Imagine God is in an art gallery staring at piece of art. That piece of art represents the universe. God sees and interacts with that piece of art (our universe) from outside that piece of art. The place where He is observing from is

heaven. I do not believe that the words of man can come close to describing the nature and beauty of heaven. We try. We often use precious pieces of matter in the description; “Pearly Gates”, “Streets of gold”, “crowns and gems”. But those are all earthly terms trying to describe something that is beyond earthly.

It is the home of God. We need to realize that when we say, “Our Father, who art in Heaven,” we are acknowledging that our vision is limited to this universe, this piece of art, whereas God sees the world from a totally different perspective. He sees us from the perspective of creator. He is the artist, not part of the art. He is the creator, not part of the creation.

And the most wonderful part of that is that He has made a place for us to come join Him. He loves us so much that he invited us into His home for eternity. He not only invited us, He made a way for us. He built a bridge for us so that we could come into His presence.

“Hallowed be thy name” – God’s name is holy. In many cultures, the name of God was never meant to be spoken. To speak the name of God was to show disrespect to the creator of the universe.

When we speak God’s name, do we speak it with holiness? Do we acknowledge that it is consecrated? Do we truly understand what a privilege it is to stand in the presence of our creator, not just objects in His creation, but as His children? Are we truly grateful that He has elevated us above His creation; that He has chosen to have a relationship with us? That when we speak His name, we

**understand that He loved us so much that He sent His son to die for us so that we could experience that relationship?**

**Think hard about this familiar story of Moses in the third Chapter of Exodus:**

**1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.**

**2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.**

**3 So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”**

**4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”**

**And Moses said, “Here I am.”**

**5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”**

**6 Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.**

**Do we truly understand what it means to stand in the presence of our most precious Lord, to be able to speak His holy name, to stand on consecrated ground, to be in the presence of the creator of the universe – at His invitation?**

**“Hallowed be thy name!” Do we comprehend the divine nature of God not only allowing us to come into His presence but that He has invited us into that presence, not as strangers, but as His children? It is by the gift of salvation**

through His Son that allows us to stand on Holy Ground. If it were not so, we would be forced to step back and hide our eyes from His countenance.

**“Thy Kingdom Come” – What do you think about when you hear those words?**

**“Thy Kingdom Come”. What are the attributes of the Kingdom of heaven, the place that God calls “Home”? I know that you have heard these words from Revelation 21:**

**3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.**

**4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.**

**What a wonderful concept. A place where justice triumphs over injustice, peace over chaos, love over hate; where pain disappears into nothingness and there is no more crying. God’s kingdom brought to earth. Where the earth become a sacred place. Where the spirit of God is the rule and not the exception. Where unity and community enjoin all of us as children of our living God. There were many Jews in the time when Jesus was on earth that believed if a prayer did not**



mention the Kingdom of God, that it wasn't really a prayer. They may have been on to something.

**“your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”** - Let's face it. God gave us the ability to determine the nature of right and wrong. Apart from salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, it is probably His greatest gift to mankind. It is also His most confusing gift. There are so many of us that seem determined to hurt each other. Whether it is due to greed, power, revenge, prejudice, pride or spite, it still comes with the Free Will package. But then so does Thanksgiving, grace, forgiveness, acceptance, humility and goodwill. We each have the ability to apply the different attributes of the Free Will package to our lives and it is those choices that make us who we are and how we interact with each other.

The plea in this scripture is that we will choose attributes that best exemplify the life of Christ. Jesus lived so that we could see what life could be like if we chose wisely. He taught us through parables that our lives should be lived in the acceptance and lifting of others; that we should allow the love of Christ to first make a difference in our lives and my doing so, make a difference in the lives of the people that we touch. It is through His guidance and His spirit that allows us to wisely choose the best tool to bring light to the world, even when the world is confusing. and our basic nature pushes us in a different direction. Those choices can be tough. Turning the other cheek is tough. Forgiveness is tough. Goodwill and charity are tough. Love is tough. Jesus was a rebel and His teachings are often tough and hard to swallow. But that's how Jesus builds character in us. It

**is far more difficult to swim against the tide, but it will make you stronger and a better swimmer.**

**It is by letting the Holy Spirit guide, teach and make us, that we can bring God's Kingdom to earth. The world can and will be a better place for it.**

**So, who do we pray to? We pray to our heavenly father, master and creator of the universe who loves us more than creation itself. We pray to God whose name is hallowed and who, by the sacrifice of His Son, allows us to stand with Him on hallowed ground. We pray to our God whose Kingdom should bind to us in a world that is adverse to the nature of that Kingdom, where we have the Free Will to choose to make this world a better place. We pray to our God who loved us so very much that he sent His son to show us how to live, who became a sacrifice in the face of creation so that we could have, in spite of our nature, a relationship with the creator of the universe.**

**Next week, we will look at what Jesus showed us we need to pray for. I pray that you will continue with me on this journey where we study The Lord's Prayer. God bless you all.**

**AMEN**