**Sermon on the Mount 3**

Hello, everyone.

Here we are again. Online-only for a little while. I know this decision was not easy for many of us to hear. It is so devastating that we are entering the holidays without worshipping together in live, in-person services.

But I want to share again **why we’re doing this.** Our community is in crisis right now - hospitals are filling up fast, people are dying - and we, as representatives of Jesus (the light of the world, remember) need to **lead the way** in our compassion for our neighbors.

Which is why we are making **a short-term sacrifice** to minimize risk in spreading this disease. We are doing it out of self-giving love for our community.

Now, the good news is that it’s 2020, and we’ve got all kinds of **technology** which allows us to keep worshipping together at a distance. We learned a lot from our first time around with this in the spring. And this December we are leaning into that big time.

Our **Christmas series** is going to be totally unique. Really cool worship (we’ve made some of our own arrangements) and sermons unlike any we’ve ever done before (just wait till you see Tim’s!)

We’ve got our **Christmas boxes** full of cool stuff and we’ve got tons of **bonus content** online. Our Grace Kids team even developed easy-to-do **science experimen**ts which go along with each week’s topic!

Now, we know that watching a worship service at home alone is just not the same, so here’s what we’re doing.

First, we’re starting a new ritual. At the beginning of every service, we’re going to all **light a candle**. Wherever we are, we’ll light a candle which represents the presence of Jesus and connects us with everyone watching with us.

Second, we’re encouraging virtual and in-person “**watch parties**” for our services. Online, we’re introducing some new tools which will allow you to experience the service with a small group of others. It won’t just be a chat with hundreds of people. It’ll be *your* group.

We also know many of you have other individuals or families that you feel safe around - maybe they’re **your quarantine crew**. If that’s you, we’re going to make it really easy for you to host a watch party together with them.

Finally, on Christmas Eve, we’re going to be **gathering safely outside** at our three campuses to sing Christmas carols together. More info on that in the weeks to come.

You can get more info about all of this on our website, **gracechurch.us** or on your MyAccount dashboard there.

All that to say, no matter your situation, even though we are not worshipping in-person right now, **you are not going to go through December alone.**

One final thought. These Christmas boxes? They are the *perfect* way to **invite someone** to Grace who doesn’t have a church family. It’s literally never been easier to invite someone, since our whole experience is online.

So I’m encouraging you: Get another box and invite your “one” - the person or family God has put on your heart. This may very well be the way God wants to reach them and begin their journey of faith.

Now, let’s pray before we begin today’s message.

[PRAY]

SERIES RECAP

For the last few weeks, we’ve been exploring Jesus’ sermon on the mount, which includes some of the most provocative things he ever said.

“The poor are the ones who are blessed…” “You should be happy when you’re persecuted…” “Love your enemies…” “Pray for those who hate you…”

What he’s doing here, as we’ve seen, is completely **upending our assumptions** about how the world works. He’s calling us to live as he lived because it’s the only way to bring true healing to our world.

And in this time we’re living in - this time of pandemics and political divisions and anxiety and hatred - these are exactly the teachings we need to pay attention to.

Today we’re going to look at a part of the sermon on the mount where Jesus teaches his followers how to pray - what’s usually called **the Lord’s Prayer.**

You’ve definitely heard it: “our Father in heaven, hallowed by thy name…”

At first glance, this teaching may seem **kind of out of place** in a sermon about radical lifestyle transformation. But as we’re going to see, even in this simple prayer, Jesus is showing his followers a whole new way to live.

So let’s dive in and take a look.

HYPOCRICY

Go ahead and grab your Bible and turn to **Matthew 6**.

Before we look at the Lord’s Prayer itself (verse 9), we’ve got to pay attention to the world *of* the text. The *context* of this passage, which really starts in verse 1.

**Matthew 6:1-8**

*“Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

*“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

*“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!*

So, in this part of the sermon on the mount, Jesus is painting the picture of two different approaches to religion.

The first approach, as he describes it, is that of the “**hypocrites**.”

Now, the Greek word here, **ὑποκριτής -** *hypokritēs*, originally meant an actor - someone playing a role on the stage. But by the time of Jesus, the word meant anyone doing things that weren’t genuine - someone putting on a show.

It’s similar to **the way we use the word today**. But where we might say a hypocrite is someone who says one thing but does another.

When Jesus says it he means someone who *does* one thing but it isn’t real. It doesn’t reflect what’s actually going on in their heart. It’s a show. They’re hypocrites.

And I love the picture he paints here. He’s being **ridiculous** to make a point. And I think this is one of those moments where his audience would have been laughing out loud.

Like verse 2. He describes someone giving money to a beggar on the street, maybe an orphan or widow. But instead of just giving them money, they have **a full-on parade** with trumpets and confetti and dancing bears.

You can hear the announcers: “Behold… a truly generous man.” “So humble, Bob, and I love his scarf!”

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus says, “they have received all the reward they will ever get.”

A bit later on, in verse 16, he paints a similar picture about “hypocrites” **fasting** - not eating food for a time out of devotion to God. But instead of just living their life they mess up their hair and walk around moaning, “oh, I’m so hungry… It’s because I’m fasting today… I’m just so devoted to God!”

Jesus’ point is clear. In all of these things - in our religion - what matters is not our outward acts of piety and doing all the right things for the world to see…

**True religion is a matter of the heart.**

What posture do we take in our relationship to God?

Are we hypocrites? Are we putting on a show? Or is our faith deep, and genuine, and true?

That is the context in which he’s talking about how to pray.

Verse 5. Don’t pray like it’s some kind of public spectacle. Or verse 7. Don’t babble on and on. Prayer is not about quantity. It’s about quality. The quality of the heart.

Put simply: **Don’t pray like a hypocrite. Don’t pray like an actor. Pray because it’s real.**

THE LORD’S PRAYER

So with all of that context in mind, let’s take a look at the Lord’s Prayer and see how it fits into this.

**Matthew 6:9-13**

*Pray like this:*

 *Our Father in heaven,*

 *may your name be kept holy.*

*May your Kingdom come soon.*

 *May your will be done on earth,*

 *as it is in heaven.*

*Give us today the food we need,*

*and forgive us our sins,*

 *as we have forgiven those who sin against us.*

*And don’t let us yield to temptation,*

 *but rescue us from the evil one.*

Now, this seems like a simple prayer, but there’s depth to it.

Interestingly, none of the specific lines of this prayer are original to Jesus. What he’s doing, is pulling together **common elements of Jewish prayers** **and traditions** into this small package which points directly to the *posture* we take in our faith.

And I’ll give away the ending right now: This is not the prayer of a hypocrite. Every line of this prayer flows out of **a posture of humble trust.**

For example, “Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.” This was a common Jewish prayer, but in this context, it’s a reminder first that we depend on God – our Father.

**Fathers** are the ones who - in the ancient world especially - represented protection and provision and teaching and wellbeing…

God the Father is the one who makes our life possible. He’s the provider. If anyone deserves a parade on the street, it’s him. Not me.

Jesus goes on. “May your name be kept holy.” Put another way: May your reputation, your identity be **uncorrupted by the things of this broken world.**

In other words, this is a prayer - at least in *our* hearts - that God would truly be the God beyond our understanding - the transcendent Creator - and not the God *we* create to keep him nice and tidy and contained.

**He’s our father (we depend on him), and he’s completely holy (he’s beyond us).**

It’s a prayer of humble trust because it reminds us of our place.

“May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

We talk a lot about the kingdom of God - the rule and reign of God in our world. This prayer is simply that this world would be run by God’s agenda, not ours.

And by extension, that our *lives* would be completely aligned with ***his* purposes**, not our own. “I’m going to work to make sure this world looks the way my king wants it to look.”

Do you see how this is a prayer about the posture we take? **It’s not about me. It’s about you, God.** What do *you* want? May *that* happen on earth.

Verse 11. “Give us today the food we need.” Literally, our “daily bread.”

Notice what it *doesn’t* say. “Give us **storehouses full of grain** so I never have to worry about food.” No. We’re asking for bread for today. Tomorrow, we ask the same thing. It’s a matter of trust.

And do you know what he’s referencing? Manna in the wilderness.

When the Israelites were escaping from Egypt through the desert in the book of Exodus, God sustained them by providing this odd bread-like stuff which showed up on the ground every morning.

If they took more than a day’s worth, it would rot. **They had to trust** that God would provide it the next day. It was *daily bread*.

Of course, in the Lord’s Prayer I think this is about **more than food.** We spend so much of our time worrying about money, or the future, or our health, or our family… It’s why our anxiety is through the roof!

Praying for “daily bread” is like praying, “**God, I trust you to see me through today.**” And when tomorrow rolls around? “God, I trust you to see me through today.” And the next day. “God, I trust you to see me through today.”

It’s a bold posture to take, especially when everything around us tells us to stock up and be on the safe side. Praying for daily bread is very hard in a self-sufficient culture.

It is so easy to be “**hypocrites**” about this in suburban America. We talk about God providing for us, but if we’re honest - in our hearts we know *we’re the ones* doing the providing.

But imagine if “daily bread” *was* our posture. Imagine **how generous we would be** *today* if we truly believed God was going to provide everything we needed tomorrow? How much do we really trust him?

Verse 12. “Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.”

Seems pretty harmless, until you realize what we’re really asking here.

“God, I want you to forgive my sins against you ***in* *the same way*** I forgive people who sin against me. Be gracious to me *in the same way* I’m gracious to those who hurt me. Love me *in the same way* I love my enemies.”

Uh oh. Suddenly I’m not so sure I really want that because I don’t do such a good job of those things!

This isn’t just a request for forgiveness. It’s a commitment to live and love the way Jesus did. This is a posture towards the world - towards our enemies - that is extraordinarily radical.

“God I’m going to show you with my life **the kind of forgiveness I’d like to receive**.” Woah. There’s no hypocrisy there.

Yet again: **a posture of humble trust**.

Finally, “don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.”

There’s a lot we could get into here, but I’ll just say this. The kind of temptation Jesus is talking about here is something everyone faces, including Jesus himself.

It’s **the temptation to turn away from God’s intentions for the world**. The temptation to make ourselves gods. To call the shots of our own life and pursue our own desires.

It’s the temptation to trust ourselves. To throw ourselves a parade.

It’s what the Evil One is always trying to get us to do. To turn inward. He doesn’t want us to all be murderers and rapists and warlords. **He just wants us to be selfish** and his job is done.

Because he knows that if we all just make our own desires - our own advancement, our own wealth, our own success - if he can make that the *chief aim* of our life, then **this world is never going to change**.

If he can make the self-giving love of Jesus sound ridiculous to us, then his job is done, the world stays broken, and **God’s kingdom stays in heaven.**

“Don’t let us yield to temptation.” Don’t let us turn inward.

This whole prayer, as short and simple as it is, is a call to radical living. It fits perfectly in the sermon on the mount.

**The Lord’s Prayer invites us to take** **a posture of humble trust.**

This is not the prayer of a hypocrite - of someone just pretending. This is a prayer of someone **who trusts that what Jesus says is true** and commits to live their life like him.

Humble trust.

GUIDED MEDITATION

So with all of that said, here’s what I’d like to do. I think the most perfect application for the Lord’s prayer is to actually *pray it*. Wherever you are right now, I want to give you some space to **talk directly to God**.

We’ll pray the Lord’s Prayer line by line, and I’ll give you just a few prompts to guide you in your own prayer. Let this be an opportunity to examine your own posture towards God. Is it one of humble trust?

Remember, you don’t have to have fancy words to talk to God. You don’t have to babble on, as Jesus says. **Just share what’s on your heart**.

And if you’re alone, feel free to pray out loud - it really helps me.

We’ll start with this: What do you want your relationship with God to look like? As you consider that, take some time to pray this:

**Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.**

[…]

Talk to God about what it would look like if your whole life was lived for his purposes.

**May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.**

[…]

Talk to God about this: Do you trust him?

**Give us today the food we need.**

[…]

Talk to God about how you’re doing loving your enemies these days.

**Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.**

[…]

Finally, talk to God about areas in your life where you’re tempted to be selfish.

**Don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.**

[…]

Amen.

CONCLUSION

Friends, as we live through this very complicated time, it can be hard to know what to think, what to feel, how to live…

But the Lord’s prayer is a reminder that following Jesus isn’t about saying all the right things or going through the right religious rituals. **It’s about living with a posture - a posture of humble trust.**

It’s not always easy. There are plenty of temptations trying to draw us away.

But the invitation from Jesus is always open. It’s when we give our lives to him that we experience **true and genuine healing.** For ourselves, yes. But also, for our world.

Take that posture of humble trust, friends, and then buckle up. You might just start to see God’s kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven.