

Series: Pray20

Sermon 2: Praying to God our Father pt 2

Text: Matthew 6.5-13 – Give, Forgive, & Deliver.

Intro

Thank you MISSY & JULIE. Man these stories have been some of the most honest, encouraging stories that are really hitting me like invitations to come and pray. Like I want what they have. And listen, that's the idea behind this whole series. There is a movement of prayer God is stoking in our church. And you are invited into it.

Today we are continuing our series of sermons we are calling PRAY20. And the idea behind the series is really simple. It's a call to pray for 20 minutes every day. To take 20 minutes and get alone with God...to step into the presence of God who has promised he's with you...and talk with him. Listen to him.

Here's why: PRAYER is how we talk with God. It is the thing that is supposed to take KNOWLEDGE we get from his word...and turn it into life giving relationship. It's how we move from knowing about God to knowing God. And yet, The thing that seems to be most anemic in our spiritual lives is prayer. We treat prayer like its something to say at dinner and maybe also bedtime. A quick spiritual limerick to hopefully appease God that we remembered him and maybe he'll somehow bless that fried chicken smothered in cheese & bacon. *Like that's possible.* And what we've said is...that is just settling for SO MUCH LESS than what God offers us. If Prayer is the way God has made for us to actually know him. To draw close to him....**I don't want to settle for dinner and**

bedtime prayers because I don't want to settle for a dinner and bedtime God. Some of us go our whole lives functioning like prayer is that "break glass in case of emergency" box on the wall of the office. Listen, I don't want to settle for just a God of the emergencies so I want more than emergency prayer! This series is us saying we want ALL OF GOD that he will give us. We want to know GOD!

And I know. I KNOW every weekend somebody comes into mercy church hoping maybe God will help me out because I feel backed into a corner in my life right now. I feel out on a ledge right now. and nothing else is working. And what I want you to hear before we even begin walking through the passage of scripture is GOD LOVES YOU... AND GOD HAS SET UP TODAY FOR YOU! That's why we are named Mercy Church! We are a people who believe no person and no situation is too far gone for the power & love of God to come in and redeem by pouring his mercy out on it. We are a bunch of walking talking stories of redemption and that same hope is here for you today. Welcome Home brother or sister. There is no guilt, no shame here. Just the mercy of God. Welcome to the messed up but always hope-filled family of God. We are so glad you are here.

Today we are going to go further into a passage we began looking at at two weeks ago. Matthew 6.7-13. I'll read it and then we'll feast on it. I know that sounds weird, but that's what this passage is. A feast for our souls given to us by God. In it Jesus shows us how to draw close to him in prayer.

STAND THEM

[7] “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. [8] Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. [9] Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
[10] Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
[11] Give us this day our daily bread,
[12] and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
[13] And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

AMEN. – **you can be seated.**

This prayer calls the heart to two directions.

1. The first direction in verses 9&10 is for the heart to **look up**, so to speak, toward God the father. It’s to give honor and reverence to God. Hallowed be your name. It’s to put ourselves into a heart perspective that says...this is God’s world. It’s to say before I start running through my prayer shopping list I’ve got for this moment right here, let me slow my heart and mind and acknowledge who I’m talking to.
2. Second direction...that we look at today...is **looking out** into our world. And today is going to be about **how do we invite God into our world & how does he change**

¹ The broken images content is adapted from Paul Miller’s *A Praying Life* in Chapter 20 “A Father’s Love.”

our real, tangible lives. Jesus tells us to make 3 requests. God Give us, God forgive us, God Deliver us. Gonna look at each of those.

GOD AS FATHER

Now I told you this passage is a feast for the soul. But to fully receive all God has for us in those 3 requests, we need to build further on the work we began in this whole idea of God as our **heavenly father**. Because when Jesus teaches here THE WAY to pray...*I mean this is often called the prayer of prayers*...he says the frame of mind you have to put yourself into is that you are a child and the person you are talking to is a father.

So I want to open up that image a little bit and talk about it. Because it’s a really personal image. AND God knew that it would be personal to us. In fact his most common metaphor in the new testament to describe how we relate to him and even how we relate to one another...is the image of a family. Super personal. All of us have backgrounds with family. Some of us would call that background **baggage**. (LUGGAGE for some) All of us have a reaction when he says to pray “father” and JESUS knew that would be the case. And yet, In his infinite wisdom he made us finite and then gave us this idea as the chief one for us to understand our relationship to him through.

Because we live in a fallen world, God uses broken images of himself, such as fathers.¹ All of the images God gives us of himself in Scripture...sin distorts them in our experiences.

Think about the name “Lord” for a second. That was the name used for Caesar. Who murdered Christians. The early church did not have a pleasant experience with this earthly lord. And yet, the Christians applied the title to Jesus calling him “Lord” Jesus. Because he was the embodiment of what “Lord” **should** be. You following?

The fact that we know our father is flawed means we know what a good father should do. That’s in the fiber of your being. **You are created in the image of God so you have an instinctive knowledge of how a father should love.** If you didn’t, you wouldn’t be hurt by where yours fell short. So if you have a broken dad story, or no dad story, that doesn’t make you unable or too hurt to lean in here. There is an incredible invitation for you in calling God your father. I mean in the first 9 verses of this chapter on how we are to pray... Jesus has called God “The Father” 6 times. It’s an incredible invitation. But its not one we naturally embrace.

See the Christian message that we call the gospel, the good news...says this: Once we were not children of God. It’s not like you’ve always been a child of God and the hard reality is some of you are not currently children of God. God made us all. Yes. BUT when we sin we declare our independence from God and say you are not my dad. We are on our own. Spiritual orphans. I want you to listen to the apostle Paul’s words in a passage that has rocked my world recently...

[23] Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. [24] So then, the law was our guardian...Gal 3.23-24

Pastor Howard Brown up at Christ Central showed me this in a whole new light a couple of weeks ago that just lit my heart on fire. According to Paul the law was our guardian. That means you and I, without Christ, are spiritual orphans. Living as wards of the law. We are awaiting adoption as sons and daughters. That is what sin does. It gives us the law which offers us some guidance right? It manages our broken condition saying do these good things, don’t do those bad things. but it does not heal us from our brokenness. That’s because the law is a guardian, not a parent. And our brokenness actually gets magnified under the law because what we want deep down...is to be wanted. We want permanent unbreakable forever love. And a guardian cannot guarantee that kind of relationship.

And listen some of you though you profess to be a follower of Christ you’ve been functioning as a spiritual orphan; a ward of the law. Your spiritual vitality is managed according to your good deeds outnumbering your bad deeds. That’s why you have spiritual roller coaster weeks. Because you are acting like an orphan trying to earn the approval of a set of laws that can’t give you what you seek. The law can give you protection, direction...but not intimacy, not relationship. And you were created for intimacy with God. To be his son or daughter.

And Paul says that’s how we all were...STUCK...And we couldn’t get out. Paul then says..

[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those

who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. [6] And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" [7] So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. Galatians 4:4–7

The only way out of our spiritual orphanage under the law was for God to come and get us. You have to understand the insanely powerful idea of adoption if you are going to go to God in prayer as your father. It feeds how you pray the Lord's prayer because you start to realize who you are sitting down with. Here's what it means for you to be ADOPTED by God in Christ

- **Adopted: God BOUGHT your freedom from the law** – The wage of your sin...the law says the payment for your sin is death. And when Jesus went up on the cross it was in your place! YOU ARE NOW FREE! NO MORE GUILT! NO MORE SHAME! God says you don't find God...he came to find you! Orphans don't have the resources or ability in their orphanage to go secure parents for themselves. Adoptive parents come and get them. Jesus was born under the law. He came into your mess. And said I WANT THIS ONE! What's the price? In the garden of gethsemane he had the chance to back out of paying for your sin. And he said no, not my will but yours be done. He took the cross SO THAT WE COULD BE SET FREE from the law. Your ticket has been punched, your price paid.
- **Adopted: God BROUGHT you into his family** – God didn't just emancipate you from the law. He didn't just

set you free, he **brought you home**. He gave you a room, put a spot at the family table for you and said from now on you will go by the title of SON....from now on you ARE my daughter. Pastor Rashard says it this way: Some of us don't struggle with the idea of God forgiving us, some of us struggle with the idea of God actively loving us. When I say "God loves you." That is anything but a platitude. That is the TRUE PARENT...the one whose love you were created to have your heart filled by...saying I SAW YOU, I PAID FOR YOUR FREEDOM, AND NOW YOU ARE MY CHILD. Welcome home. Sit down and feast with me here.

And you know why we don't enjoy prayer? Why we don't sit down with God at the dinner table and talk? It's because even though we've been adopted...we still function like orphans. Who think they need to perform to be approved of. We still want to earn a love already fully given. Pastors are the worst at this. We know the system. Oh friends how much I am learning in my 25th year of following Christ that I still try and earn his love instead of rest in it.

See in a second I'm going to show you those three things Jesus tells us to ask God for. But what he wants you to see is in prayer you are sitting down to the table with your heavenly father. Who says hey son, hey daughter, I love you. You are mine. And all I have is yours.

Do you know God like that? Man I want to invite many of you who have never heard this... to receive salvation from your sin and adoption into God's family today. And I want to invite

many more of you to REMEMBER your adoption and just REST and EMBRACE God's love. Stop tryin to earn what you've already been given.

ANNIE. My wife loves the musical Annie. Our kids love it. Cause it really is a hard knock life. Anyways. There is this one song "I think I'm gonna like it here." And its when Orphan Annie comes into Super Rich Daddy Warbucks' house. There is this group of butlers and maids and one walks up to her and Annie, what would you like to do first? And Annie looks around and says..."The windows." "Then I'll do the floors, in case I drip." The head maid says no Annie...you don't understand...you don't have to do any cleaning here with us. And annie says I won't? Then how am I gonna earn my keep? She can't fathom being allowed to even stay here without proving her worth. And I think that is so many of us with God. We've been welcomed in...and instead of receiving from the father we are still trying to earn our keep with the father. We don't believe we deserve to be loved. And God says I LOVE YOU ANYWAY! You need to become dependent like a son or daughter again. We need to REST in the security, the soul satisfying love of God our father.

HEY by the way: this is WHY we love adoptive and foster care families. Because you are doing holy, gospel exalting work. Praise God Praise GOD for you. And a lot more of you need to join them. In a series where you are learning to relate to your heavenly father you may realize your next step of faith is starting the adoption or foster care process. There are currently 600 kids in Mecklenburg County in the foster care

system and only 42 families who have an active license to foster. That's a crisis worth you praying about.

Ok I want to transition us now to that second direction this prayer calls us to look. Out to the world around us. Jesus tells us to pray God Give us, God forgive us, God deliver us.

[11] Give us this day our daily bread,

This first request...is probably the one in the entire Lord's prayer that feels least urgent to many of us. Not to all of us but to many. Because you hear it and you think...yeah I'm not rich or anything but I have bread in my home. And so it feels a little silly to ask God for something you think you don't *need* from *him*. You feel you are able to do that. So you'll say this part of the prayer because Jesus says to but you don't really mean it. Maybe you'll be thankful to God for it at the table, but you don't ask him for it.

Couple of things. First – Some of my greatest Provision moments have been when I asked him for something I needed and had NO WAY of supplying through my own ability. God grew my faith more in those moments than ever. We had to raise a lot of money to start Mercy. Not only for the start-up costs but my family's daily bread was tied up in that. Over the next few months I threw myself to the Lord in this prayer each day because I just didn't know how it would happen. And God did provide!

LISTEN – By placing myself in a position where the Lord HAD to provide...where a lot was at stake if he didn't...and then the provision came...man the Lord multiplied my faith! I GOT MORE THAN PHYSICAL BREAD....I GOT THE JOY OF TRUSTING MY HEAVENLY FATHER WILL PROVIDE!

Some of you need to ask yourself: When is the last time you put yourself in a position to depend on God for something you needed and couldn't get? Hey let me ask it about your money since that was my example: Are you trusting the Lord with how you leverage your money? **God calls us to give generously to his work and I wonder if you are giving generously instead to yourself because you don't trust God will take care of you if you put yourself in a position where you are depending on him.** That's not guilt. God doesn't need your money. He wants your heart. Your father knows what is best for you is to depend on him.

He's calling his disciples to push against, in this prayer, their false sense of self-reliance. This is a prayer of DEPENDENCE. He's saying we are children who need to go to the father for daily provision. And the father loves to give it.

This is why this is a *daily* prayer. Life is far more fragile than we want to admit isn't it? Coronavirus is teaching us that. Any attempt at controlling your future is an illusion. Emergencies just reveal that truth. So Jesus says like a child...we must **go to our father** for what we need. Everything we need. But here's the thing...we don't have to be shy about that. Not at all. Do children worry they are asking too much from their parents? NO!

And listen, depending on God for our physical needs opens up our hearts to depend on him for deeper things too. The day after Jesus feeds 5000, the crowd gathers in the morning on the beach at Capernaum asking for more food. He says John

6.33 – The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

He calls them to receive bread for their souls. The provider of food for the body is the provider of food for the soul. So when you pray, don't just ask for material provision...Come to him and ask for his spirit to give you JOY today. Come to him and ask for WISDOM.

[12] and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Now look how tightly right here Jesus connects our relationship with God to our relationship with others. This prayer is an aspiration more than a limitation. We can't be required to perfectly forgive in order to receive forgiveness from God. None of us would be forgiven! But here Jesus has baked into our prayer a heart check on whether or not we really understand the gospel and are walking in the mercy of God today. So let me ask you some questions you need to be able to say yes to to pray this.

- **Do you believe you have sinned?** – easy starter. Most of us believe yes. But only abstractly. So be honest sinner. Where have you sinned today? Yesterday?
- **Do you believe your sin creates a debt to God you cannot pay?** – This is big. When we sin we create a debt to great for us to pay. It's a sin against an infinite and holy God. So only God can pay that. Only when you come to the realization you need God...can Christianity be of any help to you.
- **Do you believe God offers you forgiveness for your sin in Christ?** – This is the Gospel. God made a way home.

He paid your debt. That's what Christ's death was. DEBT RELIEF. You are all paid up. But you gotta receive that yourself. He died for YOU and only YOU can receive YOUR salvation. But to do so means he's LORD now.

- Do you believe others have sinned against you? – just thought I'd give you an easy one.
- How difficult is it for you to forgive someone and let it go? – I'm not talking about traumatic hurt here that needs therapy to help you get to that place. I'm saying the way you forgive others is a DIRECT window into your understanding of forgiveness. Seriously. Because if you are unable to forgive others it means you have not seen your sin rightly nor have you sought real forgiveness from God. The forgiven people of God...forgive and even find joy in giving and receiving forgiveness. Is that you?

[13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Let's be clear God isn't planning on leading us into temptation. God's not like "hey look at this website" and then you pray "God don't take me there" and God says "oh ok." No, this is a doubling down phrasing for emphasis. God keep us FAR from temptation. DELIVER us from evil.

And temptation comes at us from two directions doesn't it? From one direction - There are the temptations of prosperity. Of power, wealth, and pleasure. Things that will tempt us to forget God. tempt us to think we don't need him.

But them from the other direction come the temptations of adversity – Poverty, disgrace, afflictions, pain. These tempt us to think God has forgotten us. We get angry or we despair.

BOTH of these lead us away from trusting God as a loving father who graciously gives his children what they need. So we pray lead us AWAY from temptation. Keep our hearts satisfied in you.

Some of you are in a cycle of sin you just can't get out of. You've tried everything in your own strength. This prayer says...I have no strength. I need God to pick me up and DELIVER ME to safety. So I want you to go ahead today and say "I'm not strong enough, not smart enough, I'm tired from fighting this sin for so long...God DELIVER ME!" And I believe he will. Because I believe he hears and answers prayer. And your temptation to give up on God...is the temptation to run away. But your father in heaven is saying today...just let me deliver you.

Don't run away and try to get by on your own strength. I LOVE YOU. I CAN deliver you. I pray this for our church. God protect us from evil. From the evil one. Who is prowling around looking for someone to devour. Church we have a real and active enemy who wants to destroy your life. That's just REAL. And God has said the means of deliverance from this enemy is prayer.

John piper, an older pastor in minnesota, said we gotta think of prayer not as a domestic intercom, but as a wartime walkie talkie. GOD WE ARE AT WAR. DELIVER US! DELIVER OUR FRIENDS! DELIVER OUR FAMILIES!

Close – Doxology – Not in the earlier manuscripts but makes such good sense. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever AMEN.

We are going to close our sermon by praying through these three prayers. God give us, God, forgive us, God deliver us. BUT FIRST, we go to him again as father.

PRAYER INSTRUCTIONS

Prayer Points

1. **Thank God for adopting you through Christ.** Time to talk to God as a son or daughter again. And if you never have, receive his offer of adoption today.
2. **Give us – Ask God for what you need.** Ask him to lead you to trust him. To depend on him. To show you places where you are depending on yourself instead of him.
3. **Forgive us – Confess your sins to God and receive his promised forgiveness again.** Ask God for strength to forgive those who you need to forgive. Ask him to free you from bitterness.
4. **Deliver us – Ask God to deliver you from any temptations you are facing.** Ask God to protect you and to protect our church from the attack of the evil one.