

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 6 (PART 2)

LAST WEEK WE SPOKE ABOUT DOING WHAT WE DO FOR GOD AND NOT FOR PEOPLE. JESUS ENCOURAGES A "SECRECY" TO OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH DEFLECTS ATTENTION AWAY FROM US AND PUTS IT ON GOD AND OTHERS. IF YOU GIVE, PRAY, FAST OR SOME OTHER ACT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WITH A MOTIVATION TO BE NOTICED, PRAISED, THANKED, OR HONORED, JESUS TEACHES THAT THAT IS THE REWARD YOU RECEIVE. IF YOU DO THINGS FOR GOD AND OTHERS, EVEN WHEN YOU RECEIVE NO RECOGNITION, OUR REWARD COMES FROM GOD.

MATTHEW 6:7-8 - HOW TO PRAY & HOW NOT TO PRAY

1 - DON'T USE MEANINGLESS REPETITION (V. 7)

2 - DON'T THINK THAT YOU WILL BE HEARD BECAUSE YOU USE A LOT OF WORDS (V. 7)

EXAMPLES OF GENTILE PRAYERS: 1 KINGS 18:24-29 (NLT) - THEN CALL ON THE NAME OF YOUR GOD, AND I WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD. THE GOD WHO ANSWERS BY SETTING FIRE TO THE WOOD IS THE TRUE GOD!" AND ALL THE PEOPLE AGREED. 25 THEN ELIJAH SAID TO THE PROPHETS OF BAAL, "YOU GO FIRST, FOR THERE ARE MANY OF YOU. CHOOSE ONE OF THE BULLS, AND PREPARE IT AND CALL ON THE NAME OF YOUR GOD. BUT DO NOT SET FIRE TO THE WOOD."

26 SO THEY PREPARED ONE OF THE BULLS AND PLACED IT ON THE ALTAR. THEN THEY CALLED ON THE NAME OF BAAL FROM MORNING UNTIL NOONTIME, SHOUTING, "O BAAL, ANSWER US!" BUT THERE WAS NO REPLY OF ANY KIND. THEN THEY DANCED, HOBBLING AROUND THE ALTAR THEY HAD MADE. 27 ABOUT NOONTIME ELIJAH BEGAN MOCKING THEM. "YOU'LL HAVE TO SHOUT LOUDER," HE SCOFFED, "FOR SURELY HE IS A GOD! PERHAPS HE IS DAYDREAMING, OR IS RELIEVING HIMSELF. OR MAYBE HE IS AWAY ON A TRIP, OR IS ASLEEP AND NEEDS TO BE WAKENED!" 28 SO THEY SHOUTED LOUDER, AND FOLLOWING THEIR NORMAL CUSTOM, THEY CUT THEMSELVES WITH KNIVES AND SWORDS UNTIL THE BLOOD GUSHED OUT. 29 THEY RAVED ALL AFTERNOON UNTIL THE TIME OF THE EVENING SACRIFICE, BUT STILL THERE WAS NO SOUND, NO REPLY, NO RESPONSE.

ACTS 19:34 (NLT) - BUT WHEN THE CROWD REALIZED HE WAS A JEW, THEY STARTED SHOUTING AGAIN AND KEPT IT UP FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS: "GREAT IS ARTEMIS OF THE EPHESIANS! GREAT IS ARTEMIS OF THE EPHESIANS!"

3 - REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE PRAYING TO AND WHAT HE IS LIKE

UNLIKE THE PAGAN GODS (WHICH ARE NOT ACTUALLY REAL), THE GOD WE PRAY TO IS OUR FATHER, AND AS SUCH "KNOWS WHAT WE NEED EVEN BEFORE WE ASK!" THIS IS A FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH OF JESUS' INSTRUCTION ON PRAYER. WHO WE ARE PRAYING TO AND WHAT HE IS LIKE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER WHEN WE PRAY.

"WHAT COMES INTO OUR MINDS WHEN WE THINK ABOUT GOD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT US" A.W. TOZER

GENTILES/PAGANS ARE PRAYING TO GODS THAT DON'T EXIST AND IF THEY DID EXIST, DO NOT LOVE OR CARE FOR THE PEOPLE THAT ARE EVEN PRAYING TO THEM. BEING MINDFUL THAT WE ARE PRAYING TO *SOMEONE* IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER. REPETITION IS NOT A BAD THING, BUT MINDLESS REPETITION IS. ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE SAYING WHEN YOU'RE PRAYING LIKE YOU WOULD IF YOU WERE SPEAKING TO A FRIEND?

MATTHEW 6:9-13 - THE LORD'S PRAYER

THIS IS A MODEL PRAYER WITH VARIOUS ELEMENTS WHICH JESUS IS TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES TO INCORPORATE IN THEIR PRAYERS. IT WAS NOT MEANT TO BE MINDLESSLY REPEATED BECAUSE JESUS' JUST ADDRESSED THAT - BUT IT IS SOMETHING SIMPLE AND HELPFUL TO MEMORIZE AND BOTH PRAY VERBATIM AS WELL AS AN OUTLINE/GUIDE FOR PRAYER.

V. 9 - "PRAY, THEN, IN THIS WAY: 'OUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.

PRAYING TO THE FATHER, WHO IS IN HEAVEN.

CALLING GOD (YAHWEH) "~~FATHER~~" AND SPECIFICALLY "OUR FATHER"

THE TERM FATHER (GREEK *PATER*) IS PROBABLY THE ARAMAIC EQUIVALENT "ABBA" WHICH IS A PERSONAL AND RELATIONAL WORD OF A CHILD TO THEIR FATHER. WHILE CERTAINLY THERE REMAINS A REVERENCE BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILD (AFTER ALL, HE'S OUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN), A SPECIAL AND LOVING RELATIONSHIP IS BEING COMMUNICATED HERE BY JESUS.

"HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME": THE TERM "NAME" IN THE BIBLE IS USED AS A REPRESENTATION OF THE ENTIRE PERSON OR AUTHORITY. GOD'S "NAME" IN THIS CASE IS THE IDEA OF ALL THAT GOD IS.

THIS PHRASE IS ACTUALLY A PETITION. THE GREEK WORD "HALLOWED" IS A VERB FORM WHICH CAN BE TRANSLATED "LET YOUR NAME BE HALLOWED". CERTAINLY IT IS AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT GOD IS HOLY (HALLOWED/SET APART) BUT IS A PRAYER THAT IS REQUESTING THAT GOD'S NAME, WHICH IS HOLY, WOULD BE SET APART AS HOLY TO ME. JESUS IS TEACHING THAT WHEN WE PRAY, WE SHOULD ACKNOWLEDGE GOD AS OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN AND ASK THAT WE WOULD KNOW AND HONOR HIM AS HOLY AND SET APART. IT'S NOT STATING THAT GOD'S NAME IS HOLY (PRAISE), IT'S A REQUEST THAT GOD'S NAME WOULD BE HOLY TO THE ONES PRAYING (PETITION).

V. 10 - 'YOUR KINGDOM COME. YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

ASKING FOR GOD'S WILL TO BE DONE MEANS WE WANT WHAT GOD DESIRES TO HAPPEN (AS OPPOSED TO OUR OWN). GOD'S KINGDOM COMING IS THE TIME WHEN GOD'S WILL/DESIRE WILL FULLY BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. AND WE ALSO WANT TO PRAY FOR THAT TO BE THE CASE IN OUR OWN LIVES AS WE WAIT FOR THE FULL CONSUMMATION OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

V.11 - 'GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.

THIS DAY/DAILY. WE LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME.

"BREAD" IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BASIC SUSTENANCE NEEDED FOR LIFE. THIS CERTAINLY CAN BE PRAYED WITH BOTH A PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL MEANING.

IT'S HARD NOT TO THINK ABOUT THE MANNA GOD PROVIDED FOR ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS. MANNA PERFECTLY SUSTAINED GOD'S PEOPLE AND ENOUGH WAS PROVIDED EACH DAY. WHEN WE ASK GOD TO BE OUR PROVIDED TODAY, WE CAN THANK HIM FOR WHAT HE PROVIDED YESTERDAY AND TRUST THAT HE KNOWS WHAT WE NEED.

V. 12A - 'AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS.

DEBTS - SOMETHING THAT IS OWED, THAT WHICH IS DUE. THE BIBLE WILL OFTEN USE THIS LANGUAGE TO TALK ABOUT SIN.

OUR PRAYERS SHOULD INCLUDE AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT WE NEED GOD'S FORGIVENESS AS WELL AS AN AWARENESS THAT WE NEED TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE SINNED AGAINST US.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS ARE INTERTWINED. COMING TO GOD FOR FORGIVENESS WHILE WE HOLD ON TO A HEART OF BITTERNESS AND RESENTMENT TOWARDS OTHERS IS WRONG. JESUS ADDRESSED THIS IN **MATTHEW 5:23-24**:

"THEREFORE IF YOU ARE PRESENTING YOUR OFFERING AT THE ALTAR, AND THERE REMEMBER THAT YOUR BROTHER HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU, 24 LEAVE YOUR OFFERING THERE BEFORE THE ALTAR AND GO: FIRST BE RECONCILED TO YOUR BROTHER, AND THEN COME AND PRESENT YOUR OFFERING.

HE WILL END HIS TEACHING ON PRAYER WITH THIS ADMONITION:

MATTHEW 6:14-15 - "FOR IF YOU FORGIVE OTHERS FOR THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER WILL ALSO FORGIVE YOU. 15 "BUT IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE OTHERS, THEN YOUR FATHER WILL NOT FORGIVE YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS.

THE PHARISEES WOULD OFTEN LOOK DOWN ON OTHERS AND THINK THEY WERE RIGHT WITH GOD. JESUS IS FLIPPING THAT UPSIDE DOWN. CERTAINLY WE CAN'T ALWAYS BE AT PEACE WITH EVERYONE, BUT WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS AFFECTED BY OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS - AND THE FACT THAT WE HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD *SHOULD* AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS.

V. 13A 'AND DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

WE'RE PRAYING THAT GOD WOULD LEAD US AWAY FROM THE THINGS THAT WILL TEMPT US AND DELIVER/RESCUE US FROM THE EVIL THAT IS OUT TO GET US. WE DON'T ALWAYS KNOW WHAT WILL CAUSE US TROUBLE - GOD DOES. THE WORD FOR "EVIL" IN THIS PRAYER CAN BE TRANSLATED "EVIL" OR "EVIL ONE".

V. 13B - FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN .'

THIS SECTION OF THE PRAYER IS NOT FOUND IN THE MOST ANCIENT AND RELIABLE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. HOWEVER, BECAUSE THIS PHRASE DOES APPEAR IN LATER MANUSCRIPTS AND SPECIFICALLY THE ONES USED TO TRANSLATE THE WIDELY READ KING JAMES BIBLE, MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS WILL OFTEN INCLUDE THIS SECTION IN BRACKETS, ITALICS OR AS A FOOTNOTE. HERE IS THE ESV STUDY BIBLE'S NOTE:

"FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY, FOREVER. AMEN" (ESV FOOTNOTE) IS EVIDENTLY A LATER SCRIBAL ADDITION, SINCE THE MOST RELIABLE AND OLDEST GREEK MANUSCRIPTS ALL LACK THESE WORDS, WHICH IS THE REASON WHY THESE WORDS ARE OMITTED FROM MOST MODERN TRANSLATIONS. HOWEVER, THERE IS NOTHING THEOLOGICALLY INCORRECT ABOUT THE WORDING (CF. 1 CHRON. 29:11-13), NOR IS IT INAPPROPRIATE TO INCLUDE THESE WORDS IN PUBLIC PRAYERS."

THOUGH NOT ORIGINAL TO THE TEXT, ENDING OUR PRAYER WITH PRAISE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GOD IS GOOD. WE LIFT OUR PRAYERS TO OUR FATHER WHO LOVES US AND ENTRUST OUR LIVES AND FUTURES TO THE ONE WHO HAS THE POWER AND DESERVES THE GLORY FOREVER.