



## **WHEN YOU WORSHIP, PT2**

Here are some prayers I found – courtesy of an internet mum – that her children have prayed, over the years:

“How are You doing, God? Are You having a good day?”

“Please help us have fun at Disneyland.”

“Please make it so that we will be nice ... and won't tie up our family in the living room.”

“Please make it so that we'll close our eyes during the prayer ... Hailey.”

“Please help us be safe. And funny.”

“Please give me power to save people – coz I'm a spy.”

Now in amongst the humour there's some truth here, particularly to that last one. Because as Christians, we are all a part of Jesus' mission.

Which brings us to the most famous prayer of all.

The prayer Jesus taught us.

### **Matthew 6:9-15**

Last week we looked at how worship lies at the centre of Jesus' sermon, because it's supposed to lie at the centre of His community. Today, we're going to look at the very centre of that centre – the thing Jesus' sermon is really all about:

The prayer or *ha-Tefillah* that Jesus taught us to pray.

Now some people will pray this prayer parrot fashion, as if just saying it absolves you of sin (until your next confession). It's important to understand: that is not what Jesus is doing here. Jesus is offering us a template to pray *from* – as individuals, and community. And you can divide it into 2 sections – the first section focusing on the God we worship, the second on the things we need.

And each contains 3, pretty important, points:

**1) There's love.** "Our Father, who is in the heavens ..."

Who is this prayer about? Yep, it's the king of the universe – God Himself. But from the start we're told something very important about this king. Now in the OT, God is referred to as the *ava*, the 'father' of Israel. But in the gospels Jesus encourages us to see God as dad on a more personal level. God is not some impersonal force, or a being so beyond us He's indifferent to us. We are His sons and daughters, meaning He cares for us.

**2) There's holiness.** "Holy is Your name ..."

In both the Greek and Aramaic forms of this prayer, the word 'holy' means more than just 'righteous' (though that is a part of it). It literally means 'set apart', i.e. there's nothing as great or powerful or loving or kind or merciful or gracious or wise or intelligent as God. Which is why, in Isaiah 6, all that the seraphim can cry is, '*Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh!*' or "Holy, holy, holy!" Jesus is saying, "Remember that. In how you talk *to* God. And about Him ..."

**3) There's sovereignty.** "May Your kingdom come, Your will be done ..."

We know that one day Jesus will come in glory and establish His kingdom, and this is certainly a prayer that this will happen, soon. But it's also a prayer that we will see it now, in our midst, and live like the king is already here – because He is, in us. If I'm honest, when I pray, what I'm often saying is: "Lord, let my will be done." Jesus is saying, "Let the Father's will be done – in your life, in your brothers' and sisters' lives, in your world."

**4) There's generosity.** "Give us today our daily bread ..."

Jesus here is taking us back to Israel's time in the wilderness, and the daily provision of manna. And both that and this are a reminder that God provides for our needs, not our greeds (and it's down to God to decide which is which). You'll also notice there are 3 words missing from this prayer: I, me, my. Jesus calls us to be family, and so we pray for the needs of *others*, not just *ourselves*. And perhaps become the answer to that prayer.

**5) There's forgiveness.** "And forgive us our sins, as we forgive ..."

In the Bible, sin and debt are linked – the Aramaic for 'sin', *khoba*, literally means 'debt' – the idea being: when we sin, we owe God an apology; when He forgives us, He tears up the I.O.U. But Jesus includes a reminder to forgive one another, too (a sign that we've grasped how forgiven *we* are, according to Jesus in vs14-15). And, of course, He showed us how to do it – by praying for those who were crucifying Him: "Father, forgive them ..."

**6) There's strength.** "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us ..."

We all have our weaknesses, and we all have an enemy who wants to use them against us. Even so, temptation in itself isn't necessarily a negative – it can drive us to God and confirm our love for Him. So perhaps the lesson here is: "Keep us from being tempted to a point that takes us from You" – which can ring hollow if you don't really mean it. So, pray that you'll mean it! And remember, God will always, always, *always*, provide a way out.

### **It's All Yours**

Now that's how the prayer ends – at least in the oldest manuscripts – and it may well be that Jesus finished it there. However, in the majority Byzantine text and the *Didakhe* (a late 1<sup>st</sup> century worship manual) you'll find words to this effect, tagged onto the end (and given its age, it may be that this was prayed by Jesus' earliest followers):

*For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.*

I.e. God is the only one sitting on the throne of the universe, the only one strong enough to change the course of history, and the only one deserving of our praise and adoration – so *pray*.

Now words and structure matter. But Jesus' prayer is more about heart-attitude than anything else. A heart-attitude that says, "Dad, I trust and respect You enough to believe that *You* know what's best for my life, not me."

And this is an important point.

At a time of declaring and decreeing and 'speaking things into reality', we need to remember who's the daddy, here. God is the one who spoke this universe into being, He's the one who holds it all together, and He's the one who will one day heal this broken world and raise it and us to glory.

So, how's your prayer-life looking? Is it a case of:

- The anxious arrow approach?
- The shopping list approach?
- The lost-for-words approach?

We can probably all relate to at least one – which is why this template matters. So perhaps do the Jewish thing of seeing prayer as a conversation, talk to God 3 times a day, and make *this* the prayer you pray –

Whichever way you pray it.