THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT – MATTHEW 5-7

Blessed Are Those Who Pray Rightly

Matthew 6:5-15 | Faith Church of Linden

By Daniel Patz on October 25, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Blessed/happy are those who pray rightly.

Jesus began this sermon with the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit…" He does not use the word "blessed" in our passage, but this is what he is teaching us: blessed, flourishing, are those who pray rightly. This passage is for citizens of the Kingdom and they pray!

What is prayer? [D. L. Moody Story]

> *"Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."*
>
> *Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 98*

Put simply, prayer is asking our Father for things in Jesus' name with the Spirit's help. In chapter 7 Jesus will say, "Ask, and it will be given to you" (7:7). And in the model prayer before us, every petition is an asking.

Blessed are those who pray rightly (not beautifully or with great fancy or eloquence), because Jesus teaches us here how not to pray and then how to pray. And this isn't about a formula. It is a heart attitude of trusting obedience to our Father through Jesus Christ.

Remember where we are. Verse 1 warns us not to let our acts of devotion to God be hijacked into devotion to self, and then Jesus

illustrates it with giving, prayer, and fasting. But at prayer, he slows down. *Verses 7 through 9a introduce the prayer. Verses 9b through 13 give us the prayer with six petitions. Verses 14 and 15 are Jesus' own closing commentary, and we will look at those next week.*

I believe this prayer is the **central unit of the entire Sermon on the Mount**. Structurally it is right in the middle. The flourishing promised in the Beatitudes, our mission as salt and light, and a wholehearted righteousness that comes from God in Christ all rest on our relationship with our Father. And when you have a relationship with the Father you pray! Citizens of the kingdom come to know their Father, and they pray knowing that apart from him they can do nothing and be nothing.

Let me read our text – Matthew 6:5-15

> *5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 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.

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 6:5–15

1. HOW NOT TO PRAY (VV. 5–8)

Jesus begins with how not to pray. Notice the phrase he repeats. Verse 5: "you must not be like the hypocrites." Verse 8: "Do not be like them." Two groups, two wrong ways to pray.

Not Like the Hypocrites: Praying for the Praise of Man (vv. 5–6)

We saw this two weeks ago. "They love to stand and pray… that they may be seen by others." Their audience was people. We are not to view prayer as a way of getting praise from man. They got what they wanted, and that is all they got: "they have received their reward." And one of the ways you fight praying for the praise of man is praying to God privately.

Not Like the Gentiles: Praying to Manipulate God (vv. 7–8)

"Do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do [don't babble like the pagans], for they think that they will be heard for their many words."

The hypocrite's problem was his audience. The Gentile's problem was his god. The pagan nations prayed as though they needed to appease their gods, or manipulate them, or pull things out of them with the right incantation or formula. If you can appease the gods they will give you

a good harvest, or make you fertile, or bring favorable weather. Pile up the words, repeat them enough, say them loud enough, and maybe the god will hear.

Look at Jesus' words: "for they think." The problem is what they believe about God. They think the power is in the words. But prayer is not powerful. The God we pray to is.

Jesus is not condemning long or persistent prayer. He prayed all night (Luke 6:12), and in Gethsemane he prayed the same words three times (Matthew 26:44). Persistent prayer is passionate, repeated pursuit of a Father you trust. Pagan prayer is reliance on a formula rather than desperate dependence on God.

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal

There is no clearer picture of this than Mount Carmel, where we see the contrast between the prophets of Baal and the faithful prophet. Elijah.

The prophets of Baal call on him "from morning until noon, saying, 'O Baal, answer us!'" (18:26). They cry louder and cut themselves until the blood gushes out (18:28). And the text says:

> *But there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.*
>
> *1 Kings 18:29*

Then Elijah steps forward and prays a short, simple prayer to a God who is there and who hears:

> *"O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your*

> *word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."*
>
> *1 Kings 18:36–37*

The fire of the LORD fell (18:38). Elijah's power was not in his words but in his God. And notice what he prayed for: that God's name would be known and divided hearts turned back. That is exactly where Jesus begins. (see Elijah in James 5:13-18)

The Answer: "For Your Father Knows"

Notice the small word "for" in verse 8: "Do not be like them, <u>for</u> your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Jesus gives the reason. You do not need to inform him, persuade him, or wear him down. He already knows, and he already cares. The cure for both wrong ways of praying is the same: **knowing God as Father**.

2. HOW TO PRAY (VV. 9–13)

"Pray then like this." Notice the word "then." It ties this prayer to verse 8. Because your Father knows, pray like this. From Jesus let's see at least <u>three things</u> to know regarding praying rightly.

1) Know <u>Who</u> You Are Praying To: "Our Father in Heaven"

Not a distant deity to be appeased, but a Father. [see possibly verses from *Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise]* This takes us back to verses 5 and 6. Praying in secret protects us from seeking the praise of man and helps us seek, by faith, our Father's reward.

> *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

Hebrews 11:6

Our Father is not only a rewarding God. He is a caring God who doesn't need us to appease or manipulate him, for he knows what we need and he wants us to come to him. Jesus will say it again later in this chapter:

> *For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
>
> *Matthew 6:32–33*

Do you hear it? The Gentiles again, and the Father who knows again. And then: seek first his kingdom, the very order of this prayer. And he is "in heaven," not only near but majestic. We come with intimacy and reverence together.

2) Know Who You Are Praying <u>With</u>: "Our"

Jesus doesn't tell us to pray "my Father," but "<u>Our Father</u>." We do not pray alone. We pray together as a congregation. That's why we must not absolutize verses 5 and 6 and only pray in private. The early church "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). We should gather and pray as a church.

And when we pray in our own room, we still pray "our Father," remembering our brothers and sisters and our families. Notice the words: "give us," "forgive us," "lead us." We are not individualistic in our prayers.

Most importantly, we must not forget that it is our Lord Jesus who is instructing us. When he says "Our Father," we must include him. We

are children of God, and God is our Father, because of Jesus. The Son brings us to the Father, and we pray in Jesus' name. "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). The Father hears our prayers because Jesus is our go-between.

3) Know What He Wants You to Pray

Here Jesus says, "Pray then like this." In Luke 11 he says, "When you pray, say." I think we need to do both. Many people have experienced the Lord's Prayer in an empty way and have no taste for praying it together. That's not how I grew up. We never prayed the Lord's Prayer, and I think that was a mistake. It would be wise for us to pray it together from time to time, but not with empty phrases. When we don't know what to pray, we can take these words on our lips and ask God to help us mean them.

And "like this" means Jesus is teaching us priorities. Jesus prayed much more than these short petitions, but he prayed with them as his priority. If we ignore them, we are not honoring our Father.

There are six petitions; the last two belong together. Now look at the words again. The first three say "your": your name, your kingdom, your will – three overlapping petitions. The last three say "us": give us, forgive us, lead us. That change shows us the structure. Years ago I put it this way: the first three say to the Father, "I love you." The last three say, "I need you." Devotion, then dependence.

Pray with Devotion: Your Name, Your Kingdom, Your Will (vv. 9b–10)

"Hallowed be your name." May your name, who you have revealed yourself to be, be treated as holy. The hypocrites wanted a name for themselves. The disciple asks for the Father's glory, not his own. We

pray this seeking God's glory and asking our Father to give us this all-satisfying desire above all things. Father, be glorified in the world and in my life and make this my most consuming desire – teach me that I exist to glorify you and enjoy you forever!

"Your kingdom come." This is to seek first the kingdom: to pray for Jesus' saving reign to come and overcome his enemies by bringing repentance and faith, bringing his saving power where it is not. It is to pray that Christ will return and come with power to defeat His enemies and establish His glorious kingdom. I believe that it can mean that we pray for revival – pour out your Spirit! And we can personalize it: may your kingdom come in my heart and life, in my home, and in our church.

"Your will be done." This is to pray what Jesus prayed as he was about to go to the cross:

> *"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."*
>
> *Matthew 26:42*

Those are the same words as this petition. Jesus prayed it at the greatest cost, and he did the Father's will perfectly for us. Lord, make my heart to align with your heart. Help me to love my enemies and forgive and give to my neighbor – make your will my will. Take my prayers and give me faith to say – whatever you ordain is right and good!

"On earth as it is in heaven" is true of all three. His name is hallowed in heaven; may it be hallowed here. His kingdom rules in heaven; may it come here. His will is done in heaven; may it be done here.

In these petitions we pray that God would make us completely devoted to him, saying, “I love you,” or “I long to love you.” We have seen this single-minded purity of heart all through the sermon: “Blessed are the pure in heart” (5:8); “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (6:21). Here we make it our chief desire. His glory, not ours. His kingdom, not ours. His will, not ours.

Pray with Dependence: Bread, Forgiveness, Protection (vv. 11–13)

In verse 11 we move to earthly requests about living in this world. All of prayer depends on God, but these petitions express our dependence.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” He knows what we need before we ask, and yet he wants us to ask. This could be translated “our bread for tomorrow, please.” It reminds us of the manna in the wilderness, when God gave his people “a day’s portion every day” (Exodus 16:4). Give me what I need today and tomorrow, just enough to trust you day by day. He tells disciples not to be anxious about tomorrow (6:34), but to pray for bread. We can bring every daily need: emotional, spiritual, relational, physical, and financial.

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” We depend on him for our right standing with God, so we do not cower because of our sins. He has paid our debt and we confess our sins daily. Daily we need his covering, and we receive it because Jesus died on the cross for our sins at the provision of our Father. And we pray with hearts that grasp this forgiving love, so we ask him for forgiving hearts toward those who sin against us. He has forgiven us an unrepayable debt – how can we turn to others and act with such ingratitude to our God who calls us to love and give mercy. That is

what Jesus has been teaching: “Blessed are the merciful” (5:7). Do not retaliate (5:39). “Love your enemies” (5:44). We will see more of this next week in verses 14 and 15.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Why would God ever lead us into temptation? He does not lead us to sin. But he does guide our paths in a world of evil, and this prayer asks him to sustain and protect us in the trials, testings, and temptations of the world. Our flesh, the world, and the Devil are continual enemies seeking to devour us – and we take prayer on our lips and look to our Father as our Refuge! He gives us His Son who is our Shepherd who leads us in the valley with his rod and staff. Look back at chapter 4: “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (4:1). Jesus knew that battle. The last phrase can be translated “deliver us from the evil one.” In this one prayer we go from heaven to hell, from our Father to the devil, the evil one.

> “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:15-16)

This prayer teaches us to pray with our hearts and our hands, keeping God first and remembering that we need him for everything. It keeps heaven and earth in mind.

The Father Who Answers

In chapter 7 Jesus will tell us to ask, seek, and knock, and he promises:

> *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*
>
> *Matthew 7:11*

Our Father is far better than the best of fathers on earth. So we pray with faith.

CONCLUSION

So take your needs and desires to God: your inner trials and discouragements, your temptations and besetting sins, the difficult people in your life, your job, parents you wish understood you, children you long to see follow Christ, or the exhausting season of raising little ones.

Let us not pray for others to hear, but to Our Father who is so good. Let us not think that some formula, even this prayer, will win his favor, as though we need to coerce him. He knows all our needs, and he is shaping us to be completely devoted to him and completely dependent on him.

Let us pray this model prayer, and let it draw our minds and hearts to our great Father and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus will say some hard words next week. It can sound as though we will not be forgiven if we don’t forgive. Does he mean that we must earn forgiveness by forgiving those who sin against us? When we read the whole Bible, we know that is not the case. He is calling our hearts to truly remember that we have been forgiven all. And if we remember that, how can we not live out toward others what he is and does for us?

If you are a child of God and your prayers have been mostly a list, or mostly words, come back to the order Jesus gives: his name, kingdom, and will, then your needs.

If you are weary or discouraged by unanswered prayer, you do not need to wear him down. He is not Baal. He is your Father, and he knows.

If you do not know God as your Father, you cannot pray “Our Father” by technique or by many words. You come through the Son. “To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). That is the door, and it is open today.

Blessed are those who pray rightly. Flourishing are the people who hunger and thirst for righteousness by crying out to God for it. This beautiful prayer, central in location to the entire Sermon on the Mount, should bring us to the Father together, yes, together, as we cry out for God to help us to love him and depend on him rightly.

God intends to work his righteousness in us. He intends us to shine his light in the world. He intends us to be wholehearted Christians who really believe he is real and show that he is real to a dark world. We will never do it without him, and without this gift of prayer: real conversation and earnest submission and love to a Father who loves us with a love that far exceeds our imagination.