

MATTHEW 6.9-15

THIS IS HOW YOU SHOULD PRAY

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN . . .

Do not be like [babbling pagans], for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

MATTHEW 6.8

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!

MATTHEW 7.11

- ▶ Jesus has told his disciples how they should not pray—that prayer is relationship-based, involving the unseen realm, and has, at its heart, the certainty of faith and trust: “. . . pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

- ▶ In contrast to the hypocrites and pagans, Jesus wants his disciples to learn to pray in the way that will effect the experience of these kingdom of heaven dynamics: ⁽¹⁾ the extraordinary impact and implications of knowing God as their Father in heaven, ⁽²⁾ becoming deeply conscious of the spiritual realm and its greater reality, and ⁽³⁾ the certainty of faith and trust that sustains and gives vitality to this kingdom of heaven life. (*When these fail, one's prayer life fails.*)
- ▶ In this prayer, Jesus gives the best first that he and his Father can offer to humanity: the gift of transcendent love and security—the father-love of the sovereign, omnipotent God, the same love that the *Son-One-and-Only* has experienced for all eternity (cf. John 17.23). This went far beyond any concept of God as father that was understood by the Jews of Jesus' day.

- ▶ A greater consciousness of the physical realm is always detrimental: pride, insecurity, misplaced priorities, ignorance, bondage—these and more are the results of being “here and now” oriented and failing to understand the greater realities of the spiritual realm. The greatest and most valued relationship is unseen and Jesus wants us to be acutely conscious and engaged in that relationship. This is reflected in the prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Ephesians—

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- ▶ In presenting God as our Father in heaven, Jesus is also presenting us as His children—but not in the sense that the Jews saw themselves: e.g. children of Abraham, that is, descendants. To the Jews, it was important to be well learned in the Scriptures and the Law. Jesus is introducing the baffling, ridiculous, and elusive concept of child-like faith and implicit trust.

And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 18.3-4

Child-like faith in one's father is overtly confident, persistent, and absolutely certain. How often we lack this as “grown-up” Christians! Jesus is inviting us to fall deeply in love, be in awe, and have unshakable (even unrealistic) confidence in “our Father who is in heaven.” May we not settle for less.