

TUESDAY 10 May 2022 "Our FATHER" (Matt. 6:5-9)

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

When you hear the word "PRAYER" what comes to your mind? Monks or Nuns living in isolation and spending long hours in meditation. The desperate call to God of people in a city when bombs and missiles are falling upon them. The heartbroken cries of a mother whose teenager is living in the horrible consequences of rebellious choices. The bedtime prayer of a little child.

It has always fascinated me that Jesus placed such a high priority on His time dedicated to prayer. While He often prayed as an important part of a miraculous experience like when he multiplied a little boys' lunch to feed 5000 people (Matt. 14:19); or as He raised Lazarus to life (John 11:41,42); it was the times Jesus spent alone in prolonged, sometimes all-night prayer with His Father, that most impacted His disciples. (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12) *In fact of all the things the disciples experienced with Jesus, did you know it is recorded that they only asked Jesus to teach them one of the amazing things He did?* Luke records it like this: **"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."** (Luke 11:1)

Yesterday I left you on a hillside with Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples, considering this "sermon on the mount" that Jesus gave one day to a huge crowd of people on that hillside near Capernaum. Already Jesus has touched on many topics, and in Matthew 6:5 Matthew records that Jesus taught the people about prayer. Jesus used some common experiences they had seen frequently to help Him make His important point about the personal, private, privilege of conversation with Almighty God, our heavenly Father, in prayer. Yesterday we considered what Jesus had said about heavenly rewards given to us by God in response to how we've lived our earthly lives. Today let's see how Jesus weaves that concept of rewards together with prayer.

Jesus said: **"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in heaven, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."** (Matt. 6:5,6) I have a question for all of us.. *if you were invited by the King or President or Prime Minister of a great nation or kingdom, to a private audience with him or her, how would you approach that remarkable opportunity?* How would you prepare yourself? What clothes would you wear? Would you take notes with you so you'd be sure to say the right things? What would be your expectations of that encounter? *And how do you compare that to the way you approach a conversation with Almighty, Holy God, the Creator of the universe and the Creator of you and me?* It's a sobering thought isn't it my friends?

What do you think of people who use public prayer as a platform to show off, or as a soap box to promote their agenda, or as a pulpit to preach while they pray, or as a courtroom to pronounce judgement on others in their prayers? We see and understand quite clearly what Jesus says about those people and their pompous public praying, don't we? But do you see Jesus' invitation to private prayer, humble praying? Now this should not be viewed as Jesus instructing us that the ONLY acceptable prayer is prayer prayed in isolated privacy, but rather *Jesus is drawing a stark contrast regarding the attitudes of the heart as we approach God in prayer.* In fact, Jesus went on to say: **"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them for your Father in heaven knows what you need even before you ask Him."** (Matt. 6:7,8)

Oh my, isn't that a glorious, magnificent promise of God's full awareness of our needs? Do you believe it my friends? Is this great truth reflected in how you pray, what you say to God in prayer? We could spend the day just talking about this remarkable truth... God's full awareness of all that is going on in our lives, before we ever speak a word to Him about it. So, here's an important question for all of us to consider: *'What difference should this fact, that God knows my needs, make in how I live my life every day, how I worship God, and how I pray?'* What do you think about that?

Matthew then records that Jesus gave His disciples a sample prayer, which we often call 'The Lord's Prayer'. He said, **"This then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.'** (Matt. 6:9) Perhaps you memorized it as a child as I did and in your mind it sounds like this: **"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.'** Am I right? So what are the main points Jesus is trying to teach His disciples, and you and me, in these two lines? Do you see again the **"Our Father"** statement of Jesus, which calls us to recognize the personal AND corporate relationship Almighty, Holy God wants with humanity? Personal, one at a time, every single human being... Peter, the disciple, was determined we would understand this when he wrote: **"...the Lord God is not willing that ANY should perish, but that everyone should come to repentance."** (2 Peter 3:9) And we understand that God showed this desperate desire of His by sending Jesus, God the Son, to die in our place so we could be rescued from our sin. That's John 3:16 isn't it my friends? You know that verse, right? *So HOW have you responded to God's outrageous love for humanity, including YOU and me, and God's beyond comprehension act of sending His Son Jesus to die in your place and mine?* Is Almighty God your heavenly Father? Are you sure? Have you thanked Him today for His outrageous love for you?

But you noticed I'm sure, my friends, Jesus didn't teach His disciples to pray **"My Father"** but rather **"Our Father"**, and yet over and over Jesus emphasizes the PERSONAL relationship He had with His Father and that we can EACH have the same personal relationship with God. So why would Jesus use the phrase **"Our Father"**? Because as each of us is adopted into God's Family, according to John 1:9, His family grows.

You realize we are a GLOBAL family, right? No one is ineligible to become part of God's family, because Jesus died equally for every person, every ethnicity, every economic status, every educational level, every language, and tribe. And we are a multi-generational family.

It's been 2000 years since Jesus died and rose again, so *in every generation millions of people have trusted Jesus' atonement sacrifice to pay their entry fee into the family of God.* In fact, in our day about 100,000 people join God's family daily around the world. Here's a link to a real-time composite report of how people are around the world are responding to the Gospel available on 100 different websites, most of them based outside North America: <https://witnessstoall.com/>

May I ask how often you thank God for the diversity and dynamic of the GLOBAL family of God?

And then in that first phrase Jesus emphasized the Holiness of God with His words **"Hallowed be Your name."** Hallowed is another word for Holy. God's names, all of them, are names which He either gave to Himself or people like you and me have given God in moments of powerful encounters with God. *Each and all of the names we have recorded for God in the Bible call us to recognize God's Holiness as central to His character and then other glorious attributes which set God apart from all living beings.* God is unparalleled, unequalled, and really incomprehensible in all His glory and majesty. That's why the name God pronounced to Moses on Mount Sinai when Moses asked His name was **"YHWH"**. Meaning **"I AM"**. I have found it helpful to think of this name of God as **"I AM"** more than you can comprehend, **"I AM"** more than you will ever need, more than you can imagine."

I think it's time we pause right here with Matthew, simply contemplating these words of Jesus. As Matthew looked out at Lake Galilee, and around the region his mind was filled with memories of the miracles of Jesus... *all of which reflected the power of God and beckon us to pray thanking God that He invites us to know Him and live in relationship with Him* as **"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name"**, and here's a song to help you contemplate and pray, my friends...

Today's Scripture is Matthew 6:5-9.