

Godly Praying (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] We're in the Sermon on the Mount section where Jesus warns his hearers against being like the Pharisees who hypocritically practice their religion for show.

! Matthew 6-1 served as the section introduction. In Matthew 6-1, Jesus said, Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Verses 2-4 of chapter 6 warned us against hypocritical giving. And then verses 5-8 started Jesus' warning against hypocritical praying.

Verses 5-6 contrasted hypocritical Jewish praying against properly motivated prayer. And verses 7-8 contrasted improper Gentile prayer against properly motivated prayer.

Let's go ahead and read verses 5-8 to remind ourselves of the context. Jesus said there, We talked about how the difference between hypocrisy and holiness is our motivation.

[1 : 51] God honors prayer done with the proper motivation. We have to avoid taking these phrases out of context and thinking that Jesus is condemning public prayer.

What Jesus is condemning is public prayer done for the wrong reason. The problem with the hypocrites was that when they prayed, they prayed to be seen by others.

John Stott wrote, He went on to say, The fundamental difference between various kinds of prayer is in the fundamentally different images of God which lie behind them.

The tragic mistake of Pharisees and pagans, of hypocrites and heathen, is to be found in their false image of God. Indeed, neither is really thinking of God at all.

The hypocrite only thinks of himself, while the heathen thinks of other things. What sort of God is it who might be interested in such selfish and mindless prayers? Is God a commodity that we can use him to boost our own status?

[3 : 13] Or a computer that we can feed words into him mechanically? We talked about how our Heavenly Father wants to hear us. He wants to commune with us more than we ever could want to commune with him.

And that's because his love for us is so much greater than our love for him. Prayer is our giving God the opportunity to manifest his power, majesty, love, and providence.

In the next seven verses of the Sermon on the Mount that we'll look at tonight, Jesus continues his discussion about prayer by focusing exclusively on how we should pray.

So let's read Matthew chapter 6, verses 9 through 15. Jesus said, These verses record Matthew's version of what commonly is known as the Lord's Prayer.

A better name for it is the Model Prayer or even the Disciples' Prayer. Jesus' Model Prayer has six requests and then a promise. The first three requests are focused on God and his glory, and they come in verses 9 and 10.

[4 : 58] The second three requests are focused on us and our needs. Those come in verses 11 through 13. And then the promise comes in verses 14 and 15.

With that structure in mind, here's the main idea. Properly motivated prayer exalts God and trusts Him to provide what is best for us.

Several excellent studies on the Model Prayer go into great detail on these verses. Some tackle only one verse per study. Some tackle just one phrase per study.

We're going to approach it a little differently by taking the entire prayer in just one lesson. That will help us see something amazing and something that might otherwise be unexpected.

And it's easier to see if we take them all in one lesson instead of splitting them up. We'll see an interesting connection between the first three requests and the last three requests.

[6 : 00] You know that because of the Thanksgiving holiday, our Wednesday night Bible study won't meet next week. We'll meet again two weeks from now. And during that time away, consider taking some time to reflect on this overview of the Model Prayer.

That will give you even more reason to be thankful to God during this holiday and during every day. We're going to divide tonight's passage into three sections, starting with just the first half of verse 9. And there we see paternity. So the paternity is the first thing that we see. Jesus said there, pray then like this, our Father in heaven.

We learn some things in verses 5 through 8 about how we should pray, that Jesus focused mainly on what we should avoid doing. He starts verse 9 very simply.

He said, pray then like this. Some people and even some entire denominations can get caught up in the idea that they should pray the Model Prayer exactly as it is written.

[7 : 10] Nothing is wrong with that if we do it with the proper motivation. However, everything is wrong with it if we recite the prayer by rote with improper motivation.

If we mindlessly recite the prayer, we do the same thing for which Jesus criticized the pagans in verse 7. A better way to approach the prayer is as a guide for how we should pray rather than as a mandate for what we should say.

If Jesus had wanted us to pray exactly what he said, he would have said, pray this. What he said was, pray like this. One word makes a big difference there.

We see paternity in the Model Prayer when we look at its first clause. Jesus said that we should pray to our Father in heaven. In those few words, Jesus summarizes both God's approachability and his authority.

Said another way, he summarizes his paternity and his power. No Old Testament Jew ever addressed God directly as my Father. The invocation of the Lord's Prayer would have been something new and startlingly original to Christ's original audience.

[8 : 24] According to biblical scholars, three things are indisputable. The title of Father was new with Jesus. Jesus used this form of address in praying, and Jesus authorized his disciples to use the same word.

We need to remember, though, that God is Father of only those who come to his family through his Son, Jesus Christ. Some parts of Scripture, including Malachi 2.10 and Acts 17.28, refer to God as being Father of everyone.

But Father in those contexts clearly refers to God's fatherhood as it pertains to being their creator. For proof of that, listen to Malachi 2.10.

Malachi 2.10 says, Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

So you can see there that father pertains to God as the creator, not God as the Savior. Unbelievers have another spiritual father.

[9 : 34] John 8.44 makes that clear. In John 8.44, Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders who had rejected the Messiah. Jesus said there, You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.

The flip side comes in John 1.12. Speaking of Jesus, John wrote, But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Because believers belong to the Son, they can come to God as his beloved children. And that's why we can say, Our Father who is in heaven.

Before you pray again, take time to reflect on the privilege that we have. We can come to God as his children, and we can do that only because Jesus willingly paid the sacrifice for our sins.

The opening phrase reminds us of more than the paternity of God. It also reminds us of the power of God. Jesus says, Our Father is in heaven.

[10 : 46] The words in heaven there denote not the place God dwells, as much as the authority and power at his command as the creator and ruler of all things. God combines fatherly love with heavenly power.

What his love directs, his power is able to perform. When we have taken time to orient ourselves toward God, and to remember what manner of God he is, and that is our personal, loving, powerful Father, then the content of our prayers will be radically affected in at least two ways.

First, God's concerns will be given priority, and we see that in the prayer when it talks about your name, your kingdom, and your will. And then secondly, our own needs, though demoted to second

place, will still be comprehensively committed to him because we'll say, Give us, forgive us, and deliver us.

Before we pray, then, spend some time deliberately recalling who God is. Only then can we come to our loving Father in heaven with appropriate humility, devotion, and confidence.

That most certainly is why the model prayer focuses on the glory of God before it focuses on our own needs. So now that we've talked about the paternity of God, let's move to the second section of the model prayer.

[12 : 14] And in the second section, we see the petitions. Petitions. So the petitions is your next blank. Of course, we know that petition is a \$2 word for a request.

And in this section, we'll cover all six requests, starting with the three that are focused on God. As we said a minute ago, the three requests focused on God come in the final part of verse 9 and then in verse 10.

So here are those requests. Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The first request is, Hallowed be your name. The word hallowed means to sanctify or to revere or to make and keep holy.

The potentially confusing part of this request is that Jesus says we should pray that God's name be hallowed. We have to put ourselves in the place of the Old Testament Jews at that time.

[13 : 23] The Jews in the Old Testament and in Jesus' day avoided mentioning God by name. They referred to God as the name to avoid the actual term.

So the name here means God himself. The purpose of the petition is to express this desire that God himself may be revered, that God himself will be sanctified, and that the very name of God and all it denotes and represents may be honored and will be holy throughout the entire world.

The name then means all that is true of God and all that has been revealed concerning God. It means God in all his attributes, God in all he is, and God in all that he has done and all that he is doing and will do.

Think about how God revealed himself to Israel. He revealed himself to Israel under various names. He had used a term concerning himself where he said El or Elohim, which means his strength and his power.

When he used that particular name, he was giving the people a sense of his might. He also gave them a sense of his dominion and his power with that name.

[14 : 39] Later he revealed himself in the name Jehovah, which really means the self-existent one, or as he told Moses, I am that I am. But there were other names that God used to describe himself.

One was the Lord will provide, that was Jehovah Jireh. One was the Lord that healeth, that was Jehovah Rapha. One was the Lord our banner, which was Jehovah Nisi.

One was the Lord our peace, which was Jehovah Shalom. One was the Lord our shepherd, which was Jehovah Ra'ah. One was the Lord our righteousness, which was Jehovah Sedniku, and another term, which means the Lord is present, or Jehovah Shammah.

So in giving these various names to himself, God was revealing himself and something of his nature and of his being. So he also revealed his character and his attributes through his names.

So in a sense, you can see why thy name stands for all that. Our Lord here is teaching us to pray so that the whole world may come to know God in this way, and so that the whole world may come to honor God like that.

[15 : 58] We all should have a deep desire for the honor and glory of God. The second petition related to God is your kingdom come.

The kingdom of God really means the reign of God. It means the law and the rule of God. The kingdom can be represented in three ways.

In one sense, the kingdom has already come. It came when the Lord Jesus Christ was here. The kingdom of God also is here now in the hearts and the lives of all of us who submit to Jesus.

The kingdom of God is present in the church and in the heart of all of those who are truly Christian. Christ reigns in those people, but the day is still yet to come when his kingdom will be established here upon the earth.

Jesus says that we should pray for that day to come soon. And God's kingdom comes in two ways to the earth. The first is through the spread of the gospel. As people are saved, God's kingdom continues to come in them.

[17 : 06] The second way God's kingdom comes is when he will one day reign over all the earth, and that will happen when Jesus comes again to end the rule of sin.

When that happens, everything opposed to God eventually will be banished to the lake of fire, and God will assume his rightful place as ruler over all the earth.

The third petition flows from that. Jesus says, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We know the will of God by coming to know the word of God.

We know the word of God only as we study it, and as the Holy Spirit reveals the word's truth to us. Some people think that knowing the will of God is difficult, but to counter that, let's look at some verses that summarize God's will or how to discern God's will.

John 6.40 is where Jesus said, For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

[18 : 20] Romans 12.1 and 2 say, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

James 1.5, which we'll study more in depth on Sunday morning, says, If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who generously gives to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

God wills that we have peace even during life's calamities, and he promises to provide that peace if you will lay your request before him. We know that from verses like Philippians 4, 6 and 7.

Philippians 4, 6 and 7 say, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

[19 : 31] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. The next verse in Philippians contains another thing to remember.

Listen to Philippians 4, 8. It says, John MacArthur, in part, summarized God's will like this.

He said, A part of the right understanding of an attitude toward God's will is what might be called a sense of righteous rebellion.

To be dedicated to God's will is by definition to be opposed to Satan's. To pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven is to rebel against the worldly idea that sin is normal and inevitable and should therefore be accepted or at least tolerated.

We know that God's will already is done perfectly in heaven and we're to pray that God's will increasingly gets done here on earth. Have you ever thought about where God's will should get done here on earth?

[20 : 59] Well, actually, the church is the place where God's will should be done on earth, so we all have an obligation to help make that happen. And when we pray that God's will be done, we know that God will honor that prayer.

Listen to 1 John 5, verses 14 and 15. 1 John 5, 14 and 15 tells us, And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request that we have asked of Him. The 1 John passage serves as a good transition to the remaining three requests in the model prayer.

Those requests are the requests that focus on our needs. So listen to verses 11 through 13 and you'll hear those requests. Jesus said that we should pray for our needs similar to this.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[22 : 13] Remember what we said in verse 8 two weeks ago. Jesus said in part, Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. That raises the question of why God wants us to pray for Him to meet our needs.

So here's the answer to that question. As a faithful father, God knows our needs. Prayer is designed to let God know that we know our need and in our need we trust Him to provide.

And we'll see this theme recur as we look at each request. Verses 11 through 13 have one request each and the first one in verse 11 is give us this day our daily bread.

Martin Luther defined daily bread like this. He said daily bread is everything that is needful for the preservation of this life. Food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, spouse, child, good government, peace, and that God may preserve us from all manner of calamity, sickness,

pestilence, dear times, war, insurrection, etc.

John Stott expanded on Luther's definition when he said, by bread, Jesus meant the necessities rather than the luxuries of life. The petition that God will give us our food does not, of course, deny that most people have to earn their own living, that farmers have to plow, sow, and reap to provide basic cereals, or that we are commanded to feed the hungry ourselves.

[23 : 54] Instead, it is an expression of ultimate dependence upon God, who normally uses human means of production and distribution through which to fulfill his purposes.

Moreover, it seems that Jesus wanted his followers to be conscious of a day-to-day dependence. And we see the day-to-day dependence in the reference to our daily bread.

The next petition focused on us comes in verse 12. Verse 12 says, And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

The parallel passage in Luke is where Jesus explains what he means by debts and debtors. So listen to Luke 11.4. Jesus said there, And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

Understanding that Jesus means by asking for forgiveness of debts, he's talking about sins, is easy. And many of you probably have 1 John 1.9 memorized.

[25 : 05] 1 John 1.9 says, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

the controversial part of Matthew 6.12 comes in the second half of the verse. It's the part of the verse where Jesus says that we should pray that God will forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.

John Stott made the following comment about this part of the verse. He said, This certainly does not mean that our forgiveness of others earns us the right to be forgiven.

It is rather that God forgives only the penitent and that one of the chief evidences of true penitence is a forgiving spirit. Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offense against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling.

In other words, we should be willing to forgive others of their sins against us because God has blessed us by forgiving our sins against him. Jesus comes back to this concept in the last section of tonight's passage and we'll spend more time exploring Jesus' teaching about forgiveness when we get to verses 14 and 15.

[26 : 25] So hold that thought. For now, though, we'll move on to the final request about us and we see that request in verse 13. Verse 13 says, And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Now, in full disclosure, some scholars believe that verse 13 has two requests. In their view, the part of the verse concerning temptation is one request, and the part about delivering us from evil is the second request.

Regardless of whether we treat verse 13 as one request or two, Jesus' meaning is the same. And we need to consider verse 13's temptation part alongside James 1.13.

James 1.13 says, Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

If God tempts no one, why does Jesus tell us to pray, lead us not into temptation? Well, the Greek word translated temptation is basically a neutral word in the Greek.

[27 : 39] Greek. It has neither a connotation of good nor evil. The root meaning has to do with testing or proving. We know that God will test believers for our own benefit so that we will know whether our salvation is real.

We see that in James 1.2.3. And in James 1.2.3, the same Greek word translated as temptations in Matthew 6.13 is translated as trials.

So listen to James 1.2.3. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

What Jesus means when he says, lead us not into temptation, is that we should ask God to help us prevent our own sinful nature from turning a trial or a test into a temptation to sin.

John MacArthur wrote, Jesus is speaking of a heart desire and an inclination that cause a believer to want to avoid the danger and trouble that sin creates.

[28 : 52] The redeemed soul so despises and fears sin that it wants to escape all prospects of falling into it. Choosing to avoid temptation rather than having to defeat temptation.

Jesus himself modeled this idea during his prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane. So listen to Matthew 26 verse 39. Matthew 26 39 says, Here's another quote from MacArthur.

He said, Our proper reaction to times of temptation is similar to Christ, but for us it is primarily a matter of self-distrust. when we honestly look at the power of sin, at our own weakness, and our own sinful propensities, we shudder at the danger of temptation or even trial.

This petition, he says, is another plea for God to provide what we ourselves lack. It's an appeal to God to place a watch over our eyes, our ears, our mouth, our feet, and our hands, so that in whatever we see, hear, or say, and in any place we go, and in anything we do, he will protect us from sin.

The second half of Matthew 6 13 builds on that. The remainder of verse 13 says, but deliver us from evil. Some manuscripts have the evil one at the end of verse 13, so that the verse says, but deliver us from the evil one.

[30 : 44] And the evil one, of course, is Satan. He's evil personified. This petition, then, is a safeguard against presumption and a false sense of security and self-sufficiency.

We know that we never will have arrived spiritually, and we never will be free of the danger of sin until we are with the Lord. Because of that, we need protection and deliverance from that sin by God, our heavenly Father.

So, we've studied the paternity in the prayer and the six petitions recorded in the prayer. We have one more section remaining. In verses 14 and 15, we see the promise.

So, the promise comes in verses 14 and 15. Jesus said there, for if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. In these verses, Jesus goes back and provides his own commentary about what he said in verse 12.

[31 : 55] Notice that the petition on forgiveness is the only one for which Jesus provides additional insight. That must mean forgiveness is very important. saved. Some people incorrectly teach that Matthew 6, 12, 14, and 15 show that believers can lose their salvation.

We know that can never be the case. We ask for forgiveness when we first believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. That request involves the acceptance of Christ's death as the one sufficient sacrifice for all our sin, past, present, and future.

And it's something that is done once for all. True believers can never lose their salvation. Several passages in the Old and New Testament show that, and we need to take a few minutes to remind ourselves of that before we look at this verse in more detail.

The end of Jeremiah, chapter 31, verse 24, is where God says, For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

forever. Psalm 103, 12 says, As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

[33 : 13] John 3, 16, of course, is where Jesus said, For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Eternal life is eternal. If we could lose eternal life, we never had it because it wasn't eternal. Finally, Philippians 1, 6 says, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

So what then does Jesus mean when he says the words of Matthew 6, 14 and 15, and even Matthew 6, 12? Well, James Montgomery Voice puts it this way.

He said, The Lord is not speaking of the forgiveness we receive in the first moment of our salvation. He is speaking of forgiveness that comes later, that comes repeatedly, a forgiveness that restores a broken relationship with God.

He continued, We need to get one great principle straight. When a sinful human being becomes a Christian, he does not cease to be a sinner any more than he ceases to be a human being.

[34 : 27] I like that sentence. Think about that again. When a sinful human being becomes a Christian, he does not cease to be a sinner any more than he ceases to be a human being.

He says, Oh, he has a new nature planted within him by God. That new nature will constantly lead him along the paths of holiness if he will yield to it.

But the Christian also has a sinful fallen nature that he will never eradicate in this life. This old nature will get him into trouble again and again, and every time it breaks out, he will find that it also breaks the fullness of his fellowship with God.

He continues, What is the Christian to do in these circumstances? The Bible teaches that he is to return to the Lord again and again and confess his sin and ask for forgiveness and cleansing. If he neglects to do this, he will lose the joy of his salvation. If he asks for forgiveness, he will enter increasingly into the joy of a deepening fellowship with God.

[35 : 34] Let's think of an example likely from our own lives that helps show this even more. Think back to when you were kids and disobeyed your parents.

You still were your parents' child. That is always constant. However, when you disobeyed your parents, your relationship with them was strained until you asked for forgiveness. And that is what Jesus is alluding to here in the closing verses of the model prayer. We can never lose our salvation, but our sinfulness can break our fellowship with God until we ask him to forgive us of those sins and restore that fellowship.

Remember how David said in the Psalms, Restore to me the joy of my salvation. He never said, Restore to me my salvation. He said, Restore to me the joy of my salvation.

Jesus carries the example even further on forgiveness when he says that God's forgiveness is related to how we forgive others. So listen to what Dr. Harry Ironside wrote in his commentary about these verses.

[36 : 41] He said, God's forgiveness of God's forgiveness of daily offenses depends upon our attitude toward those who offend against us.

If we refuse to forgive our erring brethren, God will not grant us that restorative forgiveness for which we plead when conscious of sin and failure. This, of course, has nothing to do with that eternal forgiveness which the believing sinner receives when he comes to Christ.

It is the father's forgiveness of an erring child which must of necessity take into account the attitude of the failed one toward other members of the family.

Before we leave this portion, we need to emphasize again that when we receive forgiveness related to salvation, that forgiveness is both certain and is forever.

We saw the verses earlier that showed that when a person comes to God through Jesus Christ confessing his sin and seeking forgiveness, he can be absolutely certain that God will provide the forgiveness that he asked for.

[37 : 46] The reason why we can say that with such confidence is because God said so. It really is as simple as that. We looked at some of the cross references already, but here are a few more.

Hebrews 10.14 says, For by a single offering, he is perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. That verse is speaking of Jesus and his offering of himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

In John 10.27-30, Jesus said, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life.

So there's that eternal word again. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

I and the Father are one. So in a sense, Jesus has his hand around us, protecting us, and then God the Father has his hand around Jesus' hands, giving us double protection.

[38 : 58] So here's another quote from James Montgomery Voice. He said, We can be absolutely certain of the forgiveness of sins. We can be certain because the forgiveness is based upon the faithfulness and justice of God.

God has promised to forgive, and he does not break his word. What is more, he is just in his forgiveness. The Lord Jesus Christ has paid the full price for our sins.

On the basis of that, the justice of God necessarily requires him to grant us full forgiveness. That's full forgiveness. It is a wonderful truth, for it means that God has made provision in advance for our daily and sometimes hourly cleansing of sin, and that his faithfulness and justice stand behind these promises.

Nothing in you can ever astonish God or take him by surprise. He knows exactly what you are. Moreover, he's recommended his love to you on the basis of the fact that while being in your sinful condition, Christ died for you, and we know that from Romans 5.8.

When we consider these facts, we should always be ready to forgive others, just as God has forgiven us. Concluding his commentary on this passage, John Stott wrote this about the three petitions in the model prayer that pertain to our needs.

[40 : 25] He said, A Trinitarian Christian is bound to see in these three petitions a veiled allusion to the Trinity, because it is through the Father's creation and providence that we receive our daily bread, through the Son's atoning death that we may be forgiven, and through the Spirit's indwelling power that we are rescued from the evil one.

No wonder some ancient manuscripts, though not the best, end with the doxology attributing the kingdom and the power and the glory to this triune God to whom it belongs.

Remember the main idea. Properly motivated prayer exalts God and trusts Him to provide what is best for us. The order of the model prayer is intentional.

No matter what we're going through, we should always approach God first with His glory and honor in mind. When we view God in His proper place, that puts us into our proper place.

Think about something else in the model prayer in its entirety. This is what I wanted to show you by having all of the prayer in one lesson. This quote comes from Martin Lloyd-Jones when he discusses Jesus' abrupt switch from telling us to pray for the glory of God to telling us to pray for our daily needs.

[41 : 51] Jones said, The God who is the creator and sustainer of the universe, the God who is forming His eternal kingdom and who will usher it in at the end, the God to whom the nations are but as the small dust of the balance, that God is prepared to consider your little needs and mine even down to the minutest details in this matter of daily bread.

That is the teaching of our Lord everywhere. He tells us that even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without our Father and that we are of much greater value than many sparrows.

He says that the very hairs of your head are all numbered. And if we only could grasp this fact that the almighty Lord of the universe is interested in every part and portion of us, he said, There is not a hair on my head that he is not concerned about, and the smallest and most trivial details in my little life are known to him on his everlasting throne.

He goes on to say, This is something you find only in Scripture. You go straight from thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven to give us this day our daily bread.

But that is the way of God, the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, who nevertheless, as Isaiah tells us, dwells with him also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit.

[43 : 23] He goes on to say, That is the whole miracle of redemption. That is the whole meaning of the incarnation, which tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ takes hold of us here on earth and links us with the almighty God of glory.

Thy kingdom come, the kingdom of God, and my daily bread. So you see both things in one prayer. We go from the exaltation of God to praying for our needs and knowing that God our Father will meet those needs.

John Stott said something similar to Lloyd-Jones when he said, We need to remember that God loves his children with most tender affection, that he sees his children even in the secret place, that he knows his children and all their needs before they ask him, and that he acts on behalf of his children by his heavenly and kingly power.

If we allow scripture to fashion our image of God, if we recall his character and practice his presence, we shall never pray with hypocrisy, but always with integrity, never mechanically, but always thoughtfully, like the children of God that we are.

Next week is Thanksgiving, but the nature of God and his care for us should fill us with thanksgiving every day. God's nature and care for us also should motivate us to pray, and that's what Jesus assumed when he said that believers should pray then like this.

[44 : 55] So with that, let's pray. Father, we thank you for the reminder tonight of your glory. Help us be ever mindful to be the church that we should be so that we help your kingdom come here on earth.

We also thank you that even with your glory and holiness, you are concerned about the most minute details of our lives. Help us remember that and help us always be ready to bring those details to you in times of need.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.