

**THE SERMON: The Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-13)**

We find ourselves in Matthew chapter 6, Jed spoke last week about how Jesus is transitioning His sermon to begin to dissect the **MOTIVES** behind our actions... Not just calling us to pray or give or fast but to examine the motives **BEHIND** those actions. Digging yet another layer deeper into us.

Today, as Jess read the text, we're going to be talking about **PRAYER**. And we have to understand that this is a topic that we're bringing, quite literally, hundreds and hundreds of different experiences to the table on... Right? Some of us might've been raised praying before meals, but a lot of us weren't. Some of us grew up praying "Hail Mary's" in church, some of us grew up THROWING "Hail Mary's" on the football field. Some of us in this room have **never** prayed, while others might have a **strong, meaningful prayer life**.

An interesting fact from **Barna Research** is that **84%** of adults polled claimed they had prayed (in some form or fashion) in the past WEEK. But there are a lot of us would've responded "NO" to that poll...

**Most major religions involve prayer in one way or another.** Some sort of ritualize the act of prayer, requiring a set sequence or placing restrictions on who CAN or CAN'T pray, while others, much like us, as Christians, teach that prayer can be practiced sort of spontaneously by anyone at any time.

**Prayer is an intimate thing.** It's not like talking about the weather around the water bubbler at work... It's more like the late night conversations you have around a summer campfire with your closest friends. Prayer is a gift... A gift **FROM** God and **FOR** our relationship with God.

And what we see in this text is a model prayer from Jesus for us. **He starts out by explaining how NOT to pray, babbling on or publicly boasting about our spirituality.** He says, "*Get in your bedroom, get alone, lock yourself in a closet, and spend time alone with God.*" **He wants these times of prayer to be intimate.** Not saying that we can never pray in public, as Jesus is doing right here, praying before a huge crowd, but all of those times of public prayer should be from the overflow of our private prayer lives...

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**What's IRONIC is that for many, and maybe even some of us, this prayer has become pretty overplayed and flat from its years of memorization...** And yet, when Jesus spoke these words, they were revolutionary. I mean, He starts the prayer by saying "Our Father..." and the word He uses there is "Abba" which is like us saying "Daddy..." It's an incredibly familiar term, speaking to the closeness of Jesus' relationship with Him. The Jews at the time would use terms of **REVERENCE** like "Almighty God" and "God Most High." Terms emphasizing His **HOLINESS...** **Then Jesus comes along and says, "Abba..."**

So I want to look at this text with fresh eyes, as though we **HAVEN'T** recited this 1,000 times in Sunday school. Because I think that's what Jesus is getting at here. **When Jesus teaches us to pray, and the specific order and model He chooses, He's teaching us to OPEN OUR EYES; to be FULLY AWARE.**

And here's my big idea for today... If you're taking notes:

**Prayerful people live their lives with their eyes wide open.**

When Jesus walks us through this prayer, He's teaching us to:

- **FULLY** know God
- **FULLY** and **HONESTLY** examine our own lives
- **FULLY** depend on God. (*LIVING WITH EYES WIDE OPEN...*)

Many people choose an approach to life that I like to call the **OSTRICH APPROACH**. They stick their heads in the sand and hope for things to go their way. They hope all the bad things go away and that all the good things come really easy... And we've all had seasons of our lives that are marked by a desire to "escape" and "ignore." **But Jesus doesn't want that for His followers.** He wants us to be **FULLY** aware, sober, and clear-minded... **Living with our eyes wide open.**

It's fair to point out that some people view **PRAYER** as the "ostrich approach." They think that retreating to your room, or shutting your eyes and talking to some magical being in the sky is an escape. But that's not what I've found. **I've found that when I shut my eyes to**

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**pray to God, I see my life most clearly.** And I see the people around me most clearly, and I see God most clearly.

We can **picture prayer as a window** across the room... When you're 10 or 15 feet away from a window, you have a pretty limited field of view out of it... But as we draw closer to that window, spending more time in prayer, drawing closer to the window, more things come into view... **We see a much more clear, panoramic image.** The more we pray, the closer we get to God, the more clearly we see. **I want to live my life with my nose pressed up against that window.**

So let's look at this prayer... Jesus begins with this:

*(v. 9) Pray like this... "Our Father in heaven, may Your name be kept holy."*

Those first two words... **"Our Father" are perhaps the most important words in the entire prayer.** Everything hinges on them. We could spend an hour on that first WORD, "Our" talking about the importance of community, but unfortunately we can't...

As I said earlier, Jesus uses that word **"Abba"** when He approaches God. And there's beauty in that closeness, being able to approach the Father of all living things, the Creator of the Universe, with the intimacy that we would our own, flesh and blood, biological father.

But that's where some of us get hung up... I think how we view "Father" and **what comes to mind when we hear the word "Father"** INFLUENCES how we pray. Right? Our own experience with our earthly fathers speak into this... Whether we like it or not.

**Bring to mind an image of your father.** The fella that played a role in bringing YOU into this world...

- Maybe that image is a **recent** one, and you still KNOW and LOVE your father. Maybe you sat down next to him this past Christmas, and maybe your childhood was loving and secure and encouraging.

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- Maybe the image is of your **adopted father**, maybe it's a **family member** that raised you, your **uncle** or **grandfather**, maybe it's your **step-father**...
- **And maybe you can't bring any image to mind...** Maybe your story is like millions and millions of others that didn't have a father figure at all.

**Truth is, is that some of us had ENCOURAGING, SUPPORTIVE fathers, and some of us had ABSENT, ABUSIVE fathers...** So we have to understand that we all approach this text with vastly different perspectives.

If we had an angry father, we might view God as an angry Father.  
If we had an absent father, we might view God as an absent Father.

**I drew great clarity from looking at one of the Hebrew names for God**, it's referred to almost 50 in the Bible. You might've heard this before, it's the name *EL SHADDAI*... And it's translated to mean "All Sufficient God."

**El** is the basic word for God meaning "strength, might, or power" and **Shaddai** comes from the word "*shadaim*" which is the Hebrew word used for "breasts"... Indicating "sufficiency and nourishment." **I thought this was crazy when I first heard it.**

That God is MIGHTY and POWERFUL and yet He is also GENTLE enough to nurture a newborn child. It's an odd image, but it's beautiful.

That's the image we should draw to mind when think of God as Father. Powerful but gentle, mighty but kind, Holy but approachable.

**All Sufficient.**

**El Shaddai.**

So in our times of prayer, we have to begin our time with God by **acknowledging Him as our Father**, and reminding ourselves that we're approaching a Holy God... Not to be done with a flippant or careless attitude.

So that's how we should **start** our prayers. Let's look at the next verse:

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*(v. 10) "May Your **kingdom** come soon,  
May Your **will** be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

Jesus starts us by worshiping and praising God, "May Your name be kept holy..." and then moves into a time of **ALIGNING WITH HIS WILL**.

**This prayer opens our eyes to God at work all around us.**

Because without it, if we're honest, it's INCREDIBLY easy to have blinders on towards this. Towards His Kingdom and His will being done.

**I have an incredible capacity to IGNORE God's work unfolding around me.** Sometimes when prayers that I've been praying for FOR MONTHS are answered, I'll rationalize it by thinking something like this, "Well, the medicine they were taking finally worked." Or "Thank God for modern medicine!" Or "I'm glad they finally got their act together." **It's ridiculous!** I need to give God WAY MORE credit, by **OPENING MY EYES**.

This past week, I really felt like God was telling me that, "Coincidence is a myth for prayerful people." **Coincidence doesn't exist for prayerful people.**

When we're living with our eyes **WIDE OPEN**, living prayerfully, **every** moment of **every** day, **every** person we run into, **every** opportunity that comes our way can become an **ANSWER** to one our prayers... **We live in expectancy.** (Colossians 4:2) Prayer breathes the **life** back into **life**. Our eyes open up to the people, circumstances, and situations around us.

And we begin to see God's Kingdom advancing, and His will being done.

**We could talk for DAYS about God's Kingdom**, there are entire series of books trying to unpack this topic... **And praying towards and aligning our hearts with God's will is NOT a small or simple prayer.** But our starting point in this conversation is having our eyes open to God's work around us... Knowing that His Kingdom IS advancing, and knowing that WE PLAY A ROLE in God's will being

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done here on earth... **All begins when we begin to pray this prayer.**

So we start by acknowledging God as our Father, then we align with His will, and THEN we pray for the needs of ourselves and others. (And notice I said "**NEEDS**")

*(v. 11) "Give us today the food we need..."*

**This prayer opens our eyes to God's provision in our lives.**

These next three petitions are all about ourselves.

And it's unique that Jesus starts with PHYSICAL needs. Why not jump right into the spiritual? Why worry about food and material provision when we could be praying about forgiveness and spiritual warfare?

R. T. Kendall writes:

*"The truth is, it is extremely difficult to cope spiritually when we are unwell—hungry, thirsty, tired, deep in debt, going without sleep and having no money. I think that is why Jesus put this request first, prior to spiritual needs.*

*General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, used to say, 'It is hard to preach the Gospel to someone with an empty stomach.' Likewise, it is hard to pray when we are overwhelmed with daily physical, emotional and material problems."*

**It's important to remember Jesus' audience for a minute...**

These were people that ABSOLUTELY needed to pray for daily food, shelter and provision. In an agricultural society, a crop could fail and it could cripple a whole city. These were day laborers that were paid at the end of each day, and usually barely enough to provide food for their families, much less save, or have 401ks.

**And here's where the success of our Western culture can get in our way of experiencing God.** D.A. Carson writes:

*"Life in Western society is not quite as precarious as it was in the first century. We have received so much more. But sadly,*

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*our very wealth has contributed to our **thanklessness**, to our spiritual bankruptcy..."*

**One of the reasons I know my daughter is my daughter is because of her love of Cheez-its.** She's insatiable. She barely speaks, and yet we can't even SAY Cheez-it without her picking up on it. **Her obsession, like all moderate to severe addictions, started rather innocently,** with me, her loving, kind, wanna-be El Shaddai father offering her one. She took it, looked it over, and slowly ate it. I seem to remember her eating it, one corner at a time, and I'm not even sure if she asked for another one after. **She was satisfied.** It was good!

But now... It's ugly. You can't even offer her a cupful Cheez-its without her complaining for more. In fact, as she's shoveling these things in her mouth, she's asking for more. And I'll say, "*Finish what's in your mouth.*" And she'll chomp and chew and force herself to swallow before saying "Ahhh!" just to get another Cheez-it. **She's at the point where the thing she's asking for doesn't even satisfy her long enough to pause... before asking for another.**

**Aren't we the same?** Think of the things in our lives that we consume. The provisions we take for granted. COSTCO... Need I say more? We buy some things before we even run out of it, because we can't imagine life without it. Responsible? Sure... **But when there's surplus, it's hard to cherish it.** When you're at a buffet, you don't tend to eat slowly and cherish the food. (Well, I don't, at least)

**Let me tell you how this has played out in my life... This Worship School I'm a part of, we were encouraged to take a Friday and fast during daylight hours.** So we're only talking from like 7am to 6pm. Skipping two meals, then breaking fast with communion, then having a great dinner with close friends.

And I enjoyed this practice so much that **Elyse and I decided to do it for every Friday in January to kick off 2014,** then that bled into **February,** and now **March...** And now (*with the exception of a terrible week-long battle with a stomach bug*) we've fasted every Friday this year so far. **What we've learned from this is how much more we enjoy food when it's in held in gratitude.**

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We eat more slowly, we cherish each bite, each sip of wine, knowing that the goal isn't to gorge ourselves, but to **CHERISH** this food and His provision... And I have no idea how long we'll do it, but it's been really rewarding so far.

You know, there's something powerful about praying to God, asking Him to provide for you, then to sit down for a meal... And there's the food. **The answer to the prayer.** God's faithfulness shown immediately. It might seem overly simple, but that's because **IT IS. God isn't calling us to live complicated, hard to interpret lives...** He's calling us to find JOY IN SIMPLICITY. Prayerful people live their lives with their eyes wide open.

For some of us in this room, we really identify with that first-century audience. Where praying for daily needs is a NECESSITY... And for others, it honestly might not cross our minds. Which is why it's all the more important to have this be a regular part of our prayers... It can **serve as a reminder for us to slow down, and to be grateful for the things He HAS provided for us.**

**Jesus is calling us to open our eyes to His provision all around us.**

In verse 12, Jesus moves into praying for our spiritual needs...

*"...and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us."*

**This prayer opens our eyes to God's forgiveness...**

If we spend a long enough time away from God, and more specifically from **CONFESSION**, which is modeled here, we lose sight of the **BEAUTY & AVAILABILITY OF FORGIVENESS.**

**Jed told a story here once of his children**, and one of them had done something wrong, had gotten caught and got in trouble, but instead of coming back to Jed to talk about it, they had run and hid. **Jed explained that in his heart, he had already forgiven them**, obviously, because they were his child, but because they hadn't come BACK to Jed, they didn't receive his forgiveness. In fact, they didn't even know if he had forgiven them! And yet, all that was



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needed was a moment, in which they came back, and Jed could extend grace, forgiving them.

**And isn't it the same with us?** God has extended forgiveness to all of us, but if we don't GO TO HIM to receive it, we'll live our lives believing we're not forgiven, or, even worse, we'll convince ourselves that God hasn't extended it to us in the first place. **Our hearts will grow hard towards our need for forgiveness**, our HUMILITY is replaced with PRIDE, and we drift further and further down the path of self-reliance.

**We need to make a regular habit of CONFESSION.**

**Here at Harbor, we use this image of taking the trash out...**

That's how regular we should confess to God and others; to clear our hearts and minds of the shortcomings and sin from the past day or so. **So, honestly, I'm going to try to get creative**, since it's my chore to take the trash out, I'm going to use that time to pray to God, confessing the sin from my past day or so, and as I walk back inside and put a fresh trash bag in the can, I'll receive the forgiveness extended to me from God.

**ONLY** when we are aware of the forgiveness we've **RECEIVED**, can we begin to **EXTEND** it towards others in our lives. It's where we, as **RECIPIENTS**, become **PARTICIPANTS** in God's plan. **When the reality of Jesus' grace floods our lives**, we no longer live IN COMPETITION with everyone around us, and we begin to be conduits for God's grace to flow out through us into more and more people... **This is what it looks like when we make confession and receiving forgiveness a regular part of our daily rhythm.**

Lastly, we land in verse 13, in which Jesus prays:

*(v. 13) "And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one."*

**This prayer opens our eyes to temptation in our lives.**

Temptation is a very **REAL** thing... And it's also a very **SIMPLE** thing. The Enemy is incredibly clever and crafty, but the amount of tricks he has in his bag are pretty limited. A temptation is a lie that says, "God's way isn't the best way." **That's it.** It's calling us to question

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God's word, thinking... *"Maybe it's different for me. Maybe I'm the exception to the rule. Maybe God meant that for everyone else, but not for me."*

**When we identify temptations as temptations, and get HONEST ABOUT THEM with God, they lose their power over us.**

Temptations thrive on darkness and secrecy and shame... But when we invite Jesus into our lives, as the Light of the World, He shines His light into the darkest corners of our lives...

And Scripture reminds us, in **1 Corinthians 10:13b** that:

*"God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure."*

**Temptations rarely start in obvious, grotesque manner...**

**Because those wouldn't be TEMPTATIONS...** We'd avoid them right away. Darkness is much more clever than that. The Enemy knows that if he can trick us into thinking something is **harmless**, he has us right where he wants us. **He's trying to get us to exercise our willingness to COMPROMISE.** Just a little here, and a little there.

Compromising our **commitment** to our boss and a contract at work...

Compromising our **covenant** with our spouses...

Compromising our **character** to impress someone or to fluff our ego...

And before we know it, we're in a place we never planned to be, doing something we could've never fathomed doing.

**The truth is, is that we don't sin without temptation preceding it...** And the best way to avoid **sin** is to avoid **temptation**.

That's why some of the most Godly and influential people I know have to weirdest and most extreme **BOUNDARIES** set up in their lives. Boundaries around how they **EAT**, boundaries around relationships with the opposite sex, boundaries with what they **WATCH** or **LISTEN** to, boundaries with how they **SPEND THEIR TIME**... Which, from the outside, **APPEAR** very legalistic and prude

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and old-school, but in reality they're birthed out of a desire for godliness, and protecting the things most sacred to them.

**The thing most sacred to the Jewish people was the Holy of Holies...** The center of the Temple. And they had stone wall after courtyard after stonewall set up as **BOUNDARIES** so that they could protect it. It was most sacred to them...

We have to ask ourselves, ***“What boundaries do I have set up around the things most SACRED to me?”***

**In Matthew 26:41**, Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples and He says this:

*“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak...”*

Jesus isn't saying, “Just keep your heads down and pray and nothing will ever come to tempt you...” It's not passive, it's ACTIVE. He's saying, **“KEEP YOUR EYES WIDE OPEN and watch for temptation.”**

**But the reality is, is that His disciples failed at that... They gave into temptation, And Jesus died.** The reality is that TEMPTATION and SIN are very real... So real that Jesus went to the cross, to remove that barrier of sin between us and our Father.

**It's a beautiful thing that Jesus is both the EXAMPLE and the ACCESS.** He lays out what it means to pray, in crystal-clear detail here in the Lord's Prayer... And **THEN...** He becomes the means by which we can pray to our Father in the first place.

- Jesus is the only reason that we, with our dirty, broken lives, can **approach a Holy, perfect God as our Father.**
- He's the only reason we can be a part of His **KINGDOM**, be participants in God's Will playing out on earth.
- He's the reason our Father, **the Great Provider**, cares for our physical and material needs.
- He's the only reason we are **FORGIVEN**,
- And the only reason we can avoid **TEMPTATION...**

## ***Jesus is “El Shaddai,” our “All Sufficient God.”***

**(T) In all of this, my desire for us is to begin to view prayer as an OPPORTUNITY, not an OBLIGATION.** When we begin to view prayer as an opportunity, it changes everything.

**If there was ONE THING I would encourage all of us to do is begin asking ourselves how we can be more prayerful... How can we leverage the simple moments of each today to live more prayerfully?**

- How can we start each day reminding ourselves of God's HOLINESS and that's He's our loving Father?
  - It might mean rolling out of bed and directly onto our knees... Praising God that we woke up, and that we have a whole day to live under His gracious care.
- How can we pray for His **Kingdom** and His **Will** to be done?
  - It might mean shutting the radio off on the way into work, unplugging the iPod... And praying over the day ahead. Praying over the meetings and interactions you'll have that day... And praying that God's Will be done through us, and that we keep our eyes open to His work unfolding around us.
- How can we pray for our **physical and material needs**, while being grateful for the things He's already provided?
  - It might mean taking a minute to SLOW before eating your meal... Sometimes bowing our heads over our plates in prayer, smelling the food, filling ourselves with presence of mind and gratitude BEFORE diving in...
  - Or it might mean picking a day this next week to fast during daylight hours, to remind yourself that 'man doesn't live by bread alone,' and that His provision is ALL SUFFICIENT.
- How can we make **CONFESSION** a regular part of our daily rhythm?
  - It might mean finding a regular time to meet with a close friend, to spill our guts to them, and to receive God's forgiveness through them. **That's what I do!**
- And lastly, how can we avoid the **TEMPTATIONS** in our lives?

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- It might mean setting boundaries around certain places or people or things that tend to lead us down the wrong roads... And to pray through those things. **To invite Jesus into those dark areas and let His light steal their power over us.**

**How can we be expected to LIVE FULLY, LOVE DEEPLY, and GIVE FREELY if we don't regularly go to God in prayer?** There's no opportunity for transformation or spiritual growth apart from it... **Prayer is knitting our hearts together with God's.** Prayer is the CONCRETE EXPRESSION of the fact that we're invited into relationship with Him.

I love the simplicity of this Dallas Willard quote:

*"Prayer is talking with God about what we're doing together."*

**We have to wonder what our church might look like if we all lived prayerful lives...** We have to wonder how much of an impact we'd make on this region. We have to wonder how many lives would be transformed, how many marriages restored, how many broken friendships rekindled... **I want to be a part of a church like that.**

A church that takes Jesus at His word, and follows His example.

**Let's pray...**

**Our Father in heaven,  
may your name be kept holy.  
May your Kingdom come soon.  
May your will be done on earth,  
as it is in heaven.  
Give us today the food we need,  
and forgive us our sins,  
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.  
And don't let us yield to temptation,  
but rescue us from the evil one.**