

Cheltenham  
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18 & 19 February 2017

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER (3)**

### **LET YOUR WORDS BE FEW**

#### **Message Notes**

Text: Matthew 6:1-18

The Hebrews believed there were three righteous acts that people had to engage in to be walking with God – giving, praying and fasting – and Jesus agrees...

*"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

**2** *"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

**5** *"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **6** But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. **7** And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.*

**8** *Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. **9** "This, then, is how you should pray:*

*"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 today 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 the evil one.'*

In verses 14 & 15 Jesus elaborates on forgiveness and then from verse 16 to 18 He addresses the third righteous act – fasting:

*"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **17** But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, **18** so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

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What I do in secret will manifest in public!

*"When you give...when you pray...when you fast"* – Jesus assumes that people who love God will engage in these three spiritual disciplines in the secret place...

### **1. Do not be like the hypocrites or the pagans**

*They love to pray in public to be seen by others, and they keep on babbling for they think they will be heard because of their many words.*

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Gk. Babbling = "to stammer" – to take a long time to get to the point; to prate tediously; to repeat and be long-winded!

Pagan prayers: Reminding the deity of favours done or sacrifices offered – contractual prayer

Greek prayers: Piling up as many titles of the deity as possible hoping to gain his or her attention

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Hypocritical prayers are built on a wrong assumption that I need to get God to do what I want Him to do. And I'm going to do that by talking more, talking louder, shouting, talking in tongues, talking more in tongues, talking louder in tongues, shouting in tongues. I'm going to twist God's arm or MOVE God (which is pretty hard). Real prayer is more about moving me in line with God's will and purpose rather than moving God to align with my will.

Matthew 6:8, *"Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him..."*

Q. So why bother to pray?

A. It's about relationship, communication & intimacy not a business partnership...

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Matthew 6:9, *"This, then, is how you should pray..."*

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Over 650 prayers written in the Bible and most of them are very short (the longest in the Bible is Jesus' prayer in John 17 that takes about 3 minutes to read. The shortest prayer in the Bible: Peter, *"Lord, save me."*

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Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, *"Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth; do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few."* (Cf. James 1:19; Eccl. 10:14)

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*"Prayer for Jesus include(d) long periods of Spirit-filled silent communion with God that was beyond the need for words"* (Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern eyes*, P. 92)

*In the seventh century Isaac the Syrian wrote about "stillness," which in his writings had been summarized as "a deliberate denial of the gift of words for the sake of achieving inner silence, in the midst of which a person can hear the presence of God. It is*

*standing unceasingly, silent, and prayerfully before God” (ibid. P. 92)*

In this day and age we are drowning in words and, as a result, they have become cheap. In The Lord’s Prayer Jesus invites His people to come into prayer where words are few & powerful.

## **2. Go into your room and close the door**

*“And pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

Translated: The room or closet; inner or private room, your own room. It was a room on the ground floor or interior of a house that was generally used for storage or privacy; a spot for retreat; a secret chamber. It was the only room with a door.

Psalm 91:1-2, *“Whoever who dwells in the secret place of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him.”*

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Our entire existence is built around our private life with God. If our life is only constructed in a public place it will eventually fall. Jesus teaches us to form our lives in the secret place, with short prayers and much silence – let your words be few!

## Discussion Questions

1. Jesus agreed with the people of His day that there were three righteous acts that people would engage in if they loved The Lord – giving, praying and fasting. How are you going with those spiritual disciplines?
2. Discuss this statement: "What I do in secret will manifest in public!"
3. Have you ever been in a prayer meeting where someone took a long time to get to the point? How did it make you feel? What was the effect on the meeting?
4. When praying have you ever reminded God of favours done or sacrifices offered (contractual prayer)?
5. Real prayer is more about moving me in line with God's will and purpose rather than moving God to align with my will – Discuss
6. Jesus' prayer times were often long but His spoken prayers were short. That meant He spent a lot of time in silence. How could that impact your relationship with God? ~ *"A deliberate denial of the gift of words for the sake of achieving inner silence, in the midst of which a person can hear the presence of God."*
7. Do you ever feel like you're bombarded by words?