

**The Disciple's prayer**

***Matthew 6: 9-15***

**"This then is how you should pray:**

**"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name,**

**Your kingdom come, Your will be done,**

**On earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors.**

**And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."**

***Luke 11: 1-4***

**"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him,**

**"Lord, teach us how to pray, just as John taught his disciples."**

**He said to them, When you pray say,**

**"Father, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come.**

**Give us each day our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation."**

**Oswald Chambers once described prayer as " the way the life of God is nourished. Our Lord (Jesus) was constantly in contact with His Father."**

**As John was telling us last week, prayer should not be a burden to us but a delight, a privilege and something that we want to do continually in order to bring joy to the Father and to develop our relationship with Him.**

**When a baby is born it has no means of communication with it's parents and is totally dependent on them to care for it and provide for it's needs. We read in the Bible how Jesus from a very early age was in communion with God His Father and how throughout His life and ministry He constantly turned to the Father for help, guidance and support. Even as He hung on the cross He still raised prayers to His Father, not for Himself but for those who were crucifying Him and those being executed with Him.**

**If Jesus needed to be continually in communion with God the Father then surely we, even more so, need to be in constant contact with God the Father. He after all sent Jesus to die for our sins in order that we might have that channel of communication with Him re-opened, and if He was prepared to pay that high a price then it must have been important to Him and of top priority.**

**Is our prayer life of top priority to us or something we get round to occasionally?**

**Jesus disciples had seen Jesus making time to spend with His Father in prayer many times as they travelled with Him. He was never too busy to draw to one side, or withdraw to a quiet place, in order to seek His Father's leading. So much so that in Luke's account we read that after Jesus had spent some time in prayer; after He finished the disciples went up to Him and one of them asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray , just as John taught his disciples to pray"**

**Three things are of note here at least. One, at this point they are recognising who Jesus is: Lord is defined as "a person or deity who has authority, control or power over others acting like a master, chief or ruler" They have recognised by now that Jesus is not only a teacher but something above and beyond that deserving of special respect.**

**The second is that John the Baptist had also recognised the importance of prayer in his and his disciples relationship with God. Research suggests that the Jews said prayers on a regular basis but these were very regimented and ordered and almost always lead by one of the priests. They had a set format and were mainly prayers of adoration and praise and doxologies; written hymns of praise, and nothing of a personal relationship with God.**

**John the Baptist initially and then Jesus taught them an outline prayer of a more personal nature where they can be intimate with God and in their conversations/prayers with Him. Note it is an outline prayer and elsewhere in the New Testament you can read several prayers that use this outline as a basis but more of that shortly.**

**Thirdly the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. There must have been many occasions where Jesus could have sat down with them and said, "Okay lads prayer is so important in your relationship with God that I've come to establish for you, here's how you do it..." But no, He waits until they recognise the importance of prayer to Jesus which they have seen first hand and also remembered that John the Baptist placed a real importance on prayer to the Father as well, such that they had obviously talked about it among themselves and appointed a spokesperson to ask Jesus, " Lord teach us to pray." In doing this they were also recognising that the prayers Jesus prayed were different from what had gone before. Hence we've titled this sermon the "Disciple's prayer" because it is a prayer given to the disciples by Jesus for them to pray and use as a template for their prayers.**

**So they and we are given directly by Jesus a template for prayer. Nothing fancy or ornate because that's not how we or He speak or spoke to our fathers and God is our ultimate Father who wants to have an intimate relationship with us not a distant formal one with no display of love or affection but a close personal relationship where we can share our inner most thoughts and concerns with Him.**

**To emphasis this Jesus starts the prayer, " Our Father". It might be helpful to think of the prayer as a letter we are writing to God in heaven and every letter starts with addressing the person to whom you are writing. Note Jesus says, "Our father" not my father, it is an inclusive address not an exclusive one. We are recognising that all the saints have access to the Father upon acceptance as Christ as Lord.**

The address continues, “in heaven” a recognition that our Father, though wanting intimacy with us is also the God of heaven and as such we can come to Him for forgiveness of sin and with our petitions knowing that as a heavenly Father He is not only willing to listen to us but is also able to do great things for us more than we can ask or imagine. We may approach with boldness because through our adoption as sons and daughters we are His children but also, because He is our heavenly Father, with reverence as well, as we recognise His sovereignty, power, mercy and grace.

There then follows six petitions following which may be incorporated into each and every prayer we bring before Him. first three relate to God and His honour, the latter three to our own concerns The order of the petitions is such that through them we are taught to, as it tells us elsewhere, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you ( Matthew 6:33)

The

1. *“ hallowed be Your name”*: we need to give God the glory in all things; to recognise that He is sovereign over all and that we and others need to glorify Him above all and recognise that all things come from Him. Unless we do this all that follows will be meaningless.
2. *“Your kingdom come”*: In Matthew and Mark, Jesus preached this message on more than one occasion;

Matt 3:2 *“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”*

Mark 1:15 *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”*

Jesus is asking us to pray into His promise for promises should quicken and encourage prayer not supersede them.

3. *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”* : We are asked to recognise that God’s will needs to be done by us on earth as it is in heaven so that we may be pleasing to Him. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane *“not my will but thine be done”*, similarly we need to be of like mind and pray that what we do and say will be pleasing to God and that it will be in His will.
4. *“Give us today our daily bread”* : This is a prayer of dependence on God for His provision. Not for fancy things but for the basics of life, bread, in order to meet our needs not our wants. For Him to give it to us daily as He did the manna to the Israelites in the desert so that they were reliant on Him each and every day not just as a one off. And for Him to give it to us, not to me exclusively, but to all the saints, that inclusivity that we had at the beginning as we said *“Our Father”*. We should have a compassionate nature to those around us as Christ did. Finally we need God to *“give”* it to us. Each and every one of us is dependent on God’s provision. No man can be an island.
5. *“ Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors”* Again a recognition of who God is and that He has the power to forgive us our debts or sins but also a two edged sword for as it tells us in v 14 our forgiveness from God is dependent on our forgiving our debtors. How hypocritical it would be of us to expect God’s forgiveness if we in turn did not forgive those who have sinned against us.

6. *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”* : Having prayed for forgiveness of our sins it is only natural that following on we should ask God to help us from returning to the very thing or things which we have just been forgiven for and to help us resist the devious whisperings of Satan trying to draw us back into them.

And finally, our versions here are from the New International Version but in the King James Version and many of the early manuscripts (visit [www.kjvtoday.com](http://www.kjvtoday.com)>is the doxology of the Lord’s prayer in Matthew 6:13 a late addition? For a full discourse on this subject) there is a doxology added which many churches still use today;

*“for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen”*

With it we are reinforcing God’s position as Creator and sustainer of all things;

*“Thine is the kingdom.”*: God created all things, and He created man in His own image, and we acknowledge Him as Lord and Ruler of all.

*“Thine is the power.”*: Only God has the power to sustain His kingdom and to make good all His promises to his people.

*“ and the glory”*: Every thing that we do is done for the glory of God as a recognition of who He is and what He has done for us through creation and through the redeeming blood of Jesus.

*“for ever”* : recognising the eternal nature of God and our promise that one day we will be with Him in eternity where we will continue to praise His Holy name.

*“Amen”* It is our affirmation that we are in agreement with what we have prayed and our recognition of who God is and our debt to Him our statement:

*“Let it be so.”*

As I said at the beginning Jesus gave it to the disciples when they recognised the importance of Jesus’ prayer life and how His relationship with the Father was so much more intimate than theirs because He was faithful in prayer and obedient as God lead Him.

Do we recognise the importance of prayer in our own lives and in the life of the church today. There is a very sad saying that is still true in a lot of places even today with everything that is going on around us; *“ If you want to fill a church call a praise party; if you want to empty it call a prayer meeting.”*

Here in NCF we currently have three prayer meetings going on, on Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Are they the best attended, no but they are happening and those who go are seeing God answering prayers which is really exciting. Are you able to get along to one of them to encourage those who already go and to be a pleasing fragrance to God? There may be very good reasons why you can’t and I’m not looking to put you on a guilt trip but have a think about it.

Prayer meetings are not the only way and I know that several of you meet in ones and twos regularly to pray together and that’s great as well. Over the coming weeks we will hear more about different aspects of prayer but this prayer that Jesus gave to His disciples is the foundation stone of it all and if Jesus thought it was important enough to give to them and us then perhaps it

is good that we are spending this time looking at prayer not as a one off exercise but as part of our growth as Christians and as a Christian church together trying to please God and I'm pretty sure He will look down and see us studying and putting into practise our prayer lives He will be smiling.

**AMEN**