

Twenty-Eight Days With Matthew

Day 6 – John 6

Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, as Matthew recounts the unfolding of the promised Messianic Kingdom, may I learn Your gracious will. May Your will be done on earth, in heaven, and in me. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Meditation:

Matthew 6 is best known as the location of the Lord's Prayer. Why did Jesus teach this prayer?

First, Jesus taught prayer so that His disciples wouldn't pray hypocritically. He didn't want them showing off like the Pharisees and spouting off meaningless blabbering. He wanted His disciples to walk humbly in faith and prayer before the Lord...without having to make a big show.

Second, Jesus taught this prayer because it was a hallmark of John's ministry. Luke noted this in chapter 11 of his Gospel.

"Lord, teach us to pray, just as John [the Baptist] taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1 [NIV]).

The most commonly cited hallmarks of John's ministry were preaching (cf. "Prepare the Way of the Lord!") and baptizing. Prayer, however, is seldom mentioned. John's ministry was bathed in prayer. The disciples also wanted to learn how to pray like John, John's disciples and, of course, Jesus. "Lord, teach us to pray," they asked. And so Jesus did.

Third, Jesus taught prayer because prayer was one of the hallmarks of the Kingdom. Prayer was one of the pillars of Judaism. Jesus, by including this prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, wanted prayer to be the hallmark of the new Kingdom as well.

Fourth, Jesus taught prayer in Matthew 6 because teaching prayer was an essential part of the prophetic tradition. Who could imagine Moses, David or Isaiah not praying? And who could imagine Jesus and His disciples not praying?

Finally, Jesus taught prayer—and specifically, the Lord's Prayer—because His prayer served as an encapsulation—a *summary*—the core beliefs of the Messianic movement centered around Jesus. If the movement were to change the world, it would not use earthly weapons. The only weapon Jesus' movement would use were spiritual, of course prayer was the weapon on choice.

The Lord's Prayer—or at least the words—are familiar. The meaning of the words may not be quite so clear. When one stops to think and consider the context of the Lord's Prayer, the central meaning of the prayer becomes clearer.

Twenty-Eight Days With Matthew

Day 6 – John 6

The Lord's Prayer is simply a prayer that the Father in heaven would 1) hasten the nearing Kingdom of Heaven on earth and 2) let His will be done. The request for "daily bread" is reminiscent of God's provision to Moses and Israel in their covenantal kingdom journey. Forgiveness and strength to endure when tested are the final requests in this simple prayer.

Jesus' return to the discussion regarding hypocritical prayer helps place the Lord's Prayer into a specific context sandwiched between two diatribes verses hypocrisy. According to Matthew, Jesus' main point was that prayer acceptable to God is done in humility. That, perhaps, is what the Lord's Prayer does best: lead the suppliant to a simple, humble relationship with the Father in Heaven.

In Matthew 6:17ff., Jesus essentially provided a check-list for Kingdom living:

- 1) Fast—but don't show off (6:18);
- 2) Don't store of material treasures (6:19);
- 3) Watch your eyes (6:22);
- 4) Choose your life's master wisely (6:24); and
- 5) Don't worry...because God is in control (6:26ff.)

Jesus concluded His teaching in chapter 6 with the most important central tenet of Kingdom living: Seek His Kingdom first, and God will take care of everything else (6:33). Now *that's* something worth praying for! That's what living in the Kingdom is *all* about.

Prayer:

Lord, Yours is the glory, power and kingdom. Teach us to pray, as You taught Your disciples. More importantly, send Your Holy Spirit to continue to urge us the pray each day. May we ever seek Your Kingdom first. May Your will be done and Your Kingdom come, Lord. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

Thomas F. Fischer

Copyright 2008 Thomas F. Fischer
www.DailyBibleHabit.com All Rights Reserved.

+ + +

Unauthorized Duplication Or Distribution Of This Material
(by printed, electronic and/or internet/email)
Is A Criminal Violation And Strictly Prohibited
For Questions, Please Contact www.DailyBibleHabit.com