

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: Prayer and Fasting, the AR-15's of Spiritual Warfare

March 10, 2019

Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Today's Scripture: Matthew 6:9–18

Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 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.

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. (ESV)

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (ESV)

Introduction: We are behind enemy lines. There is no more dangerous place to be than here. Yes we have one another, but as a unit we are outnumbered. There are enemy forces all around us ready to attack and destroy us. How are we going to survive? And perhaps a bigger question is why did God plan it this way? If we surrender, or lay down our weapons the enemy will leave us alone, but if we aggressively attack the strongholds of Satan and bash down the gates of hell, we will need weapons to be successful. God has put those weapons into our hands.

Can we make this personal? What are the conflicts facing you and your family? What are the individual trials you are facing? Is there someone out there that wants your job and is slandering you? Is there a teacher at school that despises Christians and wants to single them out?

Main point: Jesus taught us to pray and fast in such a way that God's glory comes first, our basic needs second, with all humility and dependence, using both to attack Satan's kingdom and rescue prisoners from his chains.

Context:

Exegesis

1. This ought to be called The Disciple's Prayer not The Lord's Prayer.
2. We are taught to place God uppermost in our thinking and before all things. Only then will everything else feel right and be right.
 - The prayer begins by addressing the person we are praying to i.e. "Our Father". Can you pray to Jesus? Yes, but normally our prayers are directed to ABBA.
 - Abba is such an intimate name. Children used it to talk to their daddy's. This puts prayer into the context of children coming to their loving dad (who is all powerful, caring, forgiving, loving, merciful and kind and . . .) to ask for His help.
 - It's not a subject bowing before a monarch, or a defendant asking for mercy before a judge.
 - The more we know the character of God and His desire to have intimate conversation with us the more we will enjoy our prayer life. If you think God is harsh, demanding, critical, or offended easily by your thoughts that you are ashamed of having, your prayer life will be miserable or non-existent. Do you think God is shocked that you have those thoughts? He knows our weaknesses.
 - This is the one and only Father who is sitting on Heaven's throne. "Our Father in heaven". This is referring to His authority and power.
 - If you are confused about the sovereignty of God and the absolute power He has over all things, including the evil acts of ungodly people, then your prayers will be hesitant, doubting. For example, Arminians who don't believe as we do in the sovereignty of God over human will ought to pray like this: "Our Father, who sits on a throne of partial authority, and is handicapped to change the outcomes of people's choices, and is fighting the eternal battles with one hand tied behind your back, please do everything in your limited power to protect me from the evils that surround me."
 - *Psalm 135:5–6 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. (ESV)*
 - Our first request is that God make His own name hallowed which means venerated, revered, deeply honored and respected.
 - So, how does God do that?
 1. By bringing more people into the Kingdom of Heaven from the kingdom of darkness. This is an evangelistic request. We want more and more people to give God the glory he deserves, and in part we are asking for His help in making that come true, but

2. It also means that we are taking his name and person very, very seriously. We want Him to know that He is ultra-important to us and He has the throne of our lives. There is no other god we are worshiping.

- Our second request is that His Kingdom come. Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom when he went around preaching that the Kingdom of God has come into the world. The King arrived but the totality of His rule from shore to shore is not yet. Think millennium. Think righteous rule from Jerusalem. Think the erasure of all corruption, murder, no more cartels killing innocents. Think politicians who are honest. Think no more abortions, no more domestic abuse, not more fentanyl overdoses.
- Our third request is that His will be done. Thelema = law. Wouldn't it be great if His law permeated every corner of the earth?

3. The three basic needs of all humans are covered in this prayer.

- Our daily sustenance (provided by the Father) covering the present.
 - Give us tomorrow's bread for today (or day to day bread. Remember the orphans in the Korean orphanage that wouldn't stop crying until they got a piece of bread in their hand in their crib?
 - A good portion of our worry is over whether or not we will be able to eat. God has promised to feed us (or starve us for a witness if need be) and this idea is broad. It expands to cover all of our needs. Cold? Lord give us warmth. In danger? Give us protection. In ill health? Give us healthy bodies or the faith to endure terminal illness.
- Our need for forgiveness (provided by the Son) covering the past.
 - Our sins have been forgiven at the moment of salvation. (Gospel) But, there is always a continual need for daily cleansing. Peter wanted Jesus to bathe him all over and Jesus told him he was clean when he was washing their feet. That's symbolic of daily cleansing of sin. 1 John 1:9. If we confess . . .
 - This debt we owe God for covering our sins is enormous and can never be repaid. Since we have been so enormously blessed we need to be a blessing to others by forgiving their sins.
- Our need to be victorious over sin (provided by the Spirit) covering the future.
 - Lead us not into temptation is misunderstood as if God was already doing that and we want Him to stop. We know that's not true. So the truth is we are already heading in that direction. We are asking Him to lead us away from temptation and rescue us from the evil one and his servants.
 - To tolerate sin in our lives is like a soldier stripped of his weapons and taken prisoner. We are in chains when we allow unforgiveness, anger,

greed, lust to control our lives, but if we conquer them we are ready for war. Nothing sadder than a Christian as we say who is still living in Babylon. Babylon is this world's system of thinking, acting and living.

4. In case we didn't hear Him the first time, Jesus repeats the necessity to forgive others. God does not tolerate forgiven children refusing to forgive others. His frown of displeasure will remain until the child of God chooses to forgive.

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. (ESV)

- This unforgiveness on God's part is what I call "Frowning God". God is not obligated to smile at us when he has forgiven us our ten trillion dollar debt but we fail to forgive a ten dollar debt. More on this later in our series.

5. If prayer is our first offensive weapon, fasting is our second.

"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (ESV)

- *Mark 9:29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*
- *Acts 16:16–18 [16] As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. [17] She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." [18] And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. (ESV)*
- *Isaiah 58:6–12 [6] "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? [7] Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? [8] Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. [9] Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, [10] if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. [11] And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. [12] And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. (ESV)*

Application

- Each of you has something in your life you have spent a lot of time in prayer over. Come this Good Friday, why don't you join me in a two day fast of food, or news, or social media, or . . .?