

WHEN YOU PRAY

Wednesday, February 4

Reading: Matthew 5:1-16

Matthew 5:16 *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

The gospel of Matthew gives us the version of the Lord's Prayer with which we are most familiar. He places it almost exactly in the middle of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. This message was not just for His closest disciples. The crowds were listening! To fully understand this prayer, it is helpful to understand the sermon that is built around it.

Jesus begins with the character of those who are blessed. The Greek word *makários* is difficult to define with a single English word. Translations use "blessed" or "happy", but it goes deeper than this. It means blessing, having the favor of God, marked by the fullness of God. Surprisingly, those who live a blessed life are opposite of the world's way of thinking. The "happy ones" are not the rich and powerful, but the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, those who hunger after God, who are merciful, peacemakers, and persecuted. The world views these as losers or people who need to change. Jesus says that these people should "rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven." The key is that these things occur because of their right-living (because of righteousness), because they are following Christ ("because of Me"). We usually call these The Beatitudes. I like calling them the BE-attitudes! These are the attitudes that are to BE in our lives.

Jesus next talks about the mission of those who are blessed. "You are the salt of the earth." In that day, salt was used to preserve food and to add flavor. In this corrupt world, Jesus' followers are to be a godly influence and 'preserve' it, holding back the full power of evil. Also, our lives should make the gospel 'taste better' to the world. Eating salt also makes a person thirsty. Our lives should make unbelievers thirsty to have the blessing of God on their lives as well. Being a witness is not just about sharing the words. It is about sharing our lives – living in such a way that people see Jesus working through and in us.

"You are the light of the world." Just a small light in a dark room reveals what is hiding in the darkness. The world is steeped in the darkness of sin. Our lives and testimony should be a light that exposes sin and illuminates the glory of God (see John 3:16-21). We are not to hide our witness but let it shine – by our words and deeds.

How does this relate to the Lord's Prayer? True prayer involves having the proper attitudes! We should be striving to live out the BEattitudes in our daily lives. And we should be salt and light in this world. Then people will "see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Re-read the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12. Which ones are the hardest for you to apply in your life? Pray for the Lord to help you grow in those areas.

How can you be salt and light? Who in your life needs your godly influence to shine so they can see God's light?