

On September 28, 1882 the Worcester Ruby Legs from Massachusetts played the Troy Trojans from New York in a pro baseball game. It was a famous game in pro baseball history because it set a record for the lowest number of fans in the stands. Six people watched the Trojans trounce the Ruby Legs 4-1.

That record stood for almost 125 years. On April 29, 2015 the Baltimore Orioles and Chicago White Sox played their game in front of empty seats. Zero fans. This bizarre development was mandated by Major League Baseball in wake of protests and outbursts of violence in the city of Baltimore. Here's how an Associated Press article reported one incident from the fan-less game:

Chris Davis might have hit the quietest home run for the home team in Orioles history. As the slugger pounded the ball deep onto Eutaw Street, just a few feet from where fans normally would have sprinted after a chance to catch a souvenir, there was almost nothing to hear. The only muffled cheers came from a pocket of die-hards locked out of Camden Yards yelling "Let's Go O's!"

On this day, 30,000 Orioles fans had been muted. The wild applause had been silenced. There were no fans to stand for a standing ovation. Just Davis' teammates in the dugout coming over for high-fives. "When you're rounding the bases, and the only cheers you hear were from outside the stadium," he said, "it's a weird feeling."

No live audience, no cheering fans, no applause. As a Christian, how much does the audience affect your performance? How much does the cheering

crowd motivate you to do a good job? Or are you content to live before the Lord, the "Audience of One"?

There's no denying... that as followers of Jesus... we will continue to struggle with wanting man's approval. ... At times we desire the applause of men... and we seek to win their approval... but there should at least be combat against those sinful desires... in a new heart that God gives to every member of His Kingdom. ... Our ultimate desire should be for God's recognition... regardless of what man says. ... We should not give in order to impress others... we should not pray in a way that highlights our spirituality... and we should not fast so that others are aware of our supposed humility. ... Rather... new desires are part and parcel of a righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees... which Christ is bringing about in His people.

Matthew 5:20 (ESV)

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

We come this morning... to the sixth chapter of Matthew... in our study of this Gospel. This chapter continues the Sermon on the Mount... and further develops what we just read from Matthew 5:20 (exceeding the righteousness of the Pharisees)... ... It is the second of three chapters... in the Gospel of Matthew... on this most famous sermon of our Lord.

This morning we will see the Lord turn His attention to almsgiving (or helping the poor)... prayer... and fasting — three areas where wrong motives can easily enter in... especially the desire for the praise or approval of men. ... Jesus says that our exceeding righteousness should be evident in our **desires**.

You see... our sinful nature is so subtle... that it can defile even a good thing... like sharing with the poor. ... If our desire is to get the praise of men... then like the Pharisees... we will call attention to what we are doing. But if our desire is to serve God in love and please Him... then we will give our gifts without calling attention to them. ... As a result... we will grow spiritually... God will be glorified... and others will be helped. ... But if we give with the wrong motive... we rob ourselves of blessing and reward and rob God of glory... even though the money we share might help a needy person.

Matthew 6:1-4

Does this mean that it is wrong to give openly? ... Must all giving be anonymous?

Not necessarily...

Acts 4:34-37 (ESV)

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Laying their giving for the poor... down at the Apostle's feet... is not exactly a secret act. Furthermore... everyone knew about Barnabas' generosity and they gave him a new name because of his encouraging acts. There seems to be a lot of open giving here.

Giving... just to be seen and praised of men is denounced here by the Savior. ... God is not condemning giving that can be seen of men... but rather giving to be seen of men.

Going back to our example from Acts chapter 4... right after Barnabas had given and received a new name for it... the very next verses show how Ananais and Sapphira thought that they might try to gain some fame for themselves. They gave TO BE SEEN ... and paid with their lives for it.

Jesus advised His followers... that when we give to a ministry... we are not to do it to impress others. In fact... Jesus even says we are not even to pat our own selves on the back... in our own thinking... "*Hmmm... I did a very good deed today...*" ... This is what He means in verse 3...

Matthew 6:3

Be as inconspicuous as possible... and do not make a big deal of it EVEN to your own self.

God will duly reward you even if no one else gives recognition for your gift. And remember God's rewards are always the best rewards, and they will not corrupt you like men's rewards often do.

Matthew 6:5-6

Once again... Jesus addresses our desire. The new heart that He gives to members of His Kingdom... will not have us pray... in order to be esteemed by others. ... Our motivation is not based on a desire to be perceived... by those around us... as profoundly spiritual.

It is not necessarily wrong to pray in public. The problem is not public praying. The problem is a desire that is directed toward other people... rather than God. So... the wrong which Christ condemns... is the motive for praying in public... namely... to be seen by men.

Our prayer life should most often be done in private. If you are not praying in private... which is where your intimacy with God will grow... then don't pray in public. Prayer should primarily be done in isolation (just you and God.)

A private place can be anywhere. Here it is called a "*closet*." It may be your car or office or bedroom or out in the forest — anywhere where you can get alone with God. Shutting the door in our text means to be in an environment alone with God... shut-out anything that would conflict with your intimacy with God.

Matthew 6:7-8

Jesus is prohibiting mindless, mechanical repetition, not the earnest repetition that flows from the imploring heart. It's not wrong to come to God many times with the same requests—Jesus encourages *persistent* prayer. But he condemns the shallow repetition of words that are not offered with a sincere heart.

Both Jesus and Paul repeated their petitions (Matt. 26:36-46; 2 Cor. 12:7-8). ... A request becomes a "vain repetition" ... if it is only a babbling of words... without a sincere heart desire to seek... and do God's will.

Repeating the same words over and over like a magic incantation... is no way to ensure that God will hear your prayer. ... But we can never pray too

much... if our prayers are honest and sincere. ... So... before you start to pray... make sure you mean what you say.

Look again with me at the marvelous statement in verse 8...

Matthew 6:8

If this is the case, then why pray?

Because *prayer prepares us for the proper use of the answer*. If we know our need... and if we voice it to God... trusting Him for His provision... then we will make better use of the answer than if God forced it on us without our asking.

The primary purpose of prayer is not to inform the One Who knows all things... but to enter into His presence with thanksgiving and praise... and to lay our burdens down at His feet... as we trust in His goodness and sovereignty. ... This realization alone is sufficient to change the perspective of the believer... as he or she faces the issues of daily life.

Since the Father sees all and knows all... He sees the facade and knows the heart of humankind. ... Since He is the Creator of all things... He cannot be deceived by an outward show... and pretense that some people persistently vomit before His throne.

Therefore, all of us who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ should continually search our own hearts to make sure that both our actions and our prayers are based upon genuine, pure motivations. More important than searching ourselves, we should be open to the Spirit's searching and

refining of our relationship to God, purging the dross from our sinful ways and molding us into the image of his Son.

Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV)

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Matthew goes on... to present for us the model that Jesus gave to us for praying. We know it as "The Lord's Prayer."

Timothy Kellar writes:

"The Lord's Prayer may be the single set of words spoken more often than any other in the history of the world. Jesus Christ gave it to us as the key to unlock all the riches of prayer. Yet is an untapped resource, partially because it is so very familiar."

Jesus did not give this prayer to us to be memorized and recited a given number of times. In fact... keeping it in the context of verse 7... Jesus gave this prayer model to keep us from using vain repetitions. ... And the first thing that I would like for you to notice as it begins with verse nine... is that Jesus did **not** say, "Pray in these words." ... He said, "Pray like this ("after this manner"). His initial thought is... "Use this prayer as a pattern, not as a liturgical formula."

And just before we look at Christ's model for praying... let me point out three more things that you should notice... that should help... as we work our way through it. #1) The purpose of prayer is to glorify God's name. Our primary request is that His will is done on earth. ... The model begins with God's interests... not ours... God's name... God's kingdom... and God's

will. ... When we pray... we are NEVER to ask God for anything that will dishonor His name... delay His kingdom... or disturb His will on earth.

The first petition in the prayer is for the glory and honor of God. The first and foremost aim of every person who has received a new heart... as a member of the Kingdom of God... is to glorify God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Our praying should be more than "*give me*" ... but should include a prominent desire for God to be honored.

#2) As we study this model prayer... I would like for you to notice that there are *no singular pronouns* in this prayer... they are all **plural**. ... It begins with "**OUR** Father." ... (You see)... when we pray... we must remember that we are part of God's worldwide family of believers. We pray within the context of a very large community of believers. ... Although we might pour our hearts out to God... asking Him for personal needs... it isn't at the expense of others who are also part of the Kingdom of God. We are not in competition with other believers or ministries. It is not all about *me*... and it is not all about *you*...

#3) The Person prayed to is God. It is not Mary... or some other "Saint"... or an angel.

Matthew 6:9

The idea of praying to God as "Our Father" conveys the authority, warmth, and intimacy of a loving father's care. It implies relationship, resources, and

responsibilities beyond "all that we ask or think" – especially when you tag on the words... "Our Father – in heaven." ... God is not a prisoner in this universe -- He is beyond and above it. ... He is in the air spaces... in the stellar spaces... but He is far removed from His universe today. ... He is more than creation! ... He is the One sitting upon the throne of the universe... and He has it under His control!

To call God our Heavenly Father is to recognize our standing in Christ. Before plunging right in and talking to God... we should first reflect on our situation. He could rightly stand as a severe and condemning judge over us. But because of Christ... we have been adopted into the family of God. We come to Him only on the basis of His grace. God owes us nothing that we can demand from Him in prayer.

Hallowed be Your name. Hallowed means "to be treated with the highest honor and set apart as holy." But what are we praying when we ask that His name be holy? ... Is it not holy already?

Christians have God's name put on them. As His name bearers... we represent a good and holy God. So we are praying that God would keep us from dishonoring His name. We are praying that He would empower us to become... ourselves... good and holy. But it is not just ourselves. ... We are praying for Christians throughout the world to honor God with a Christ-like holiness of their lives... and that more and more people would honor and call on His name.

Matthew 6:10

"*On earth as it is in heaven*," describes all three requests of verses 9 and 10, not just the third one... ... "May your name be kept holy *on earth as it is*

in heaven...” May your Kingdom come *on earth as it is in heaven...*” AND
“May your will be done *on earth as it is in heaven...*”

Christians are called to pray and work for the continual advance of God’s **kingdom** on earth. The kingdoms of this world are filled with injustice, wars, and cruelties beyond measure. The people of God's kingdom should fervently pray for God's will to be done amidst the chaos that prevails within the boundaries of this fallen world.

In heaven... the Lord reigns... unopposed... by the willfulness of mankind and the schemes of Satan... In heaven there are only the hymns of praise and unquestioning obedience. ... Every disciple of the Lord's kingdom should be looking forward to that time... when such absolute devotion and obedience will exist on earth... in the same way that it does in heaven.

But as we wait for that coming day... (and Revelation is clear... it will come(!)...) This is also a request for God to extend His royal power over every part of our lives – our emotions... our desires... our thoughts... and our commitments. In addition to that coming day when Christ will return... this is a petition for God’s Holy Spirit to correct our desires... and for God to use His Word to correct our thoughts. This is a Lordship petition. ... We are praying for the reign of Christ in his body... the church—so that they increasingly reflect his love... obey His Word... honor Him... do good for all people... and proclaim the good news of the kingdom.

In the model prayer that Jesus gives... God-centeredness comes first... because it heals our hearts of their self-centeredness... which otherwise distorts our vision... and makes us pray wrongly. But now that the prayer is

nearly half over... and our vision is reframed and clarified by the greatness of God... we can turn to our own needs... and those of a hurting world around us...

Matthew 6:11

We are taught here to ask only for what we need for that day. This is looking to God everyday by faith. It is not for a year's supply but for a day's supply. That requires faith.

Proverbs 30:8-9 (ESV)

... give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

It speaks of our utter dependence upon God. Our bodily wants, our physical necessities, all are supplied by Him day by day. "Give us... our daily bread" -- just as Israel gathered manna for the day, they gathered nothing for the following day. They were not permitted to gather manna for the next week. They could not hoard it. This prayer gathers manna every day, "Give us this day our daily bread." It shows man that he lives from hand to mouth. It shows man that even his bodily necessities, his basic needs, come from God.

Matthew 6:12

Jewish teaching regarded sins as "debts" before God. You can use the word sins... if your Bible has the word "debts."

This request shows that members of God's Kingdom still have their faults... (we still sin)... and we need to deal with them on a daily basis. ...

Confessing our need of forgiveness acknowledges we are sinful - and *that* is humbling. Few want to admit they are sinful. But until you humble yourself about your sin... you will never obtain forgiveness of your sins from God. ... We must come in true repentance. ... And... true repentance will not harbor unforgiveness of others.

The Lord taught the principle that mercy must beget mercy. **Mercy received must be mercy reproduced.** ... If we have not recognized our own sinful condition... and helplessness... and then sought radical forgiveness from God... we will be unable to forgive and to seek the good of those who have wronged us. A lack of willingness to forgive someone else... is a good indicator that we are not right with God. How can we logically... consistently... or morally ask God to forgive us if we ourselves are harboring an unforgiving spirit?

Matthew 6:13

God does not tempt us. James 1:13 is clear about that...

James 1:13 (ESV)

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

In this petition we are asking God to guide us so that when we succumb to temptation... we don't stay in it. Both phrases of Matthew 6:13 must be understood together. Section one and section two of this verse explain each other. It does not mean to keep us out of all temptation, but when we are in it, do not leave us there. "*Leave us not in temptation*" is what it means when both parts of this verse are taken together.

Matthew 6:14-15

The work of forgiveness is an important work for a person. ...So many things are made *important* in this world... that are *not* important. We are being taught here that forgiveness is important... even though the world does not give it much importance.

Two Kentucky farmers who owned racing stables had developed a keen rivalry. One spring each of them entered a horse in a local steeplechase. Thinking that a professional rider might help him outdo his friend, one of the farmers engaged a crack jockey. The two horses were neck and neck with a large lead over the rest of the pack at the last fence, but suddenly both fell, dropping their riders to the track.

The professional jockey remounted quickly and rode on to win the race. Returning triumphantly to the paddock, the jockey found the farmer who had hired him fuming with rage.

"What's the matter?" the jockey asked. "I won, didn't I?"

"Oh, yea," roared the farmer. "You won all right, but you crossed the finish line on the wrong horse."

In his hurry to remount after the fall, the jockey had jumped on his competitor's horse. ... You know... success is meaningless... unless we succeed at what is most important. Forgiveness is vital. Don't think it isn't.

After Jesus had finished the model prayer, he proceeded to instruct the people on an important aspect of that prayer. Jesus returned to the concept of forgiveness. This instruction affects all of the relationships that impact

the human experience: a person's relationship to God and a person's relationship to others. The way Jesus connected these two aspects emphatically demonstrates that they are intrinsically and inseparably linked, and this link is expressed within the context of forgiveness.

A believer's relationship to others is really a reflection of his or her relationship to the Lord. Because the believer has experienced the forgiveness of sin, he or she should never again look at others in the same way. Through every word and action, the believer should demonstrate not only that he or she has received God's forgiveness, but that forgiveness is likewise expressed toward all from those have received it. This removes prideful and superior attitudes and results in the ability to relate to others with a spirit of humility and forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:31-32 (ESV)

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Is God calling you to forgive someone you have been holding a grudge against...? ... Do not hold onto it any longer.

Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting can be a powerful tool to your prayer-life. If you seek a greater intimacy with God... this is a discipline that can give you a greater sense of closeness with the Lord. ... But if you do it to show others how holy you are... there isn't much benefit at all. Just like giving to the poor and our praying... fasting should be done in secret.

Almsgiving (and by that... I mean giving to the poor)... and prayer... and fasting... are three areas where wrong motives can easily enter in... especially the desire for the praise of men.

In April 1967, hamburger lovers in Uniontown, Pennsylvania met a newer, bigger burger—it was called the Big Mac, and for 45 cents it delivered, as a 1970s jingle would have it, "two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, and onions on a sesame-seed bun."

A year later, the Big Mac was on the menu at McDonald's restaurants all over the United States. By 1969, it accounted for 19 percent of the company's total sales. Today, the company sells about 550 million Big Macs annually in the United States alone, and millions more in 100 countries around the world.

But you've probably never heard of Jim Delligatti, the McDonald's franchise owner who invented the Big Mac. Delligatti owned about a dozen franchises in the Pittsburgh area by the mid-1960s, but he struggled to compete with the Big Boy and Burger King chains. After pitching the idea to his bosses and facing stiff resistance, McDonald's finally relented and agreed to let him try it out. The first Big Mac was introduced on April 22, 1967.

Sales perked up immediately. The company rolled it out nationwide, backed by a powerful advertising campaign. In 1986, *The Economist* magazine introduced its Big Mac Index, which shows whether a currency is overvalued or undervalued based on the cost of a Big Mac in one country relative to the cost in another. In 2007, Mr. Delligatti opened the Big Mac

Museum Restaurant in North Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, with a 14-foot-tall Big Mac sculpture as its centerpiece.

Many people assumed that Delligatti must have reaped a windfall worth billions. Not so. In 2007 he told a local newspaper, "All I got was a plaque."

Human praise is so empty. ... Why live for the underwhelming praise of man (which will be your only reward when you do spiritual things to be noticed by others)...? ... We need to live for the praise of the "Audience of One"—God's approval and pleasure.