

Series: The Sermon on the Mount

True Devotion

Matthew 6:1-18, Luke 21:1-4

Sermon by Care Pastor Melonie Richards

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, October 26, 2025

Naomi: A reading from Matthew 6:1-18: “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven, so when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full, but when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you, and when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, to be seen by others. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full, but when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you, and when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. 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, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins, and when you fast, do not look somber, as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full, but when you fast, put oil on your head, and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen, and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you,” the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Melonie: Thank you, Naomi. It is a long passage. Amazing worship. God is in the house this morning, is He not? I want to start with a question. Have you ever felt like you have been doing the right spiritual practices, you have been praying, you have been giving, maybe fasting, reading your Bible, but you still feel dry, exhausted, distant, maybe unseen? A few weeks ago, I was on a mission trip in Senegal, West Africa, and I experienced something that was really impactful. Before dawn, in the dark, the loud-speaker would come to life, and over this crackling noise would be this call to prayer. Men would get up, they would roll out their mats, bend down their knees, bow their head, and recite their morning prayers. This happened five times a day, morning, midday, afternoon, evening, or mealtime, and then before bed. It was really rhythmic. It was very disciplined. It was devotion, and yet it left me asking, “Can we have all this devotion and yet feel disconnected?”

So, we are in the Sermon on the Mount series. It has been amazing. If you have not heard the other ones, I encourage you to go back and listen. On this particular passage, Jesus speaks to this very issue. He speaks to earning his devotion, earning his love, earning that relationship. He speaks to applause and how

we seek applause, and maybe you are here this morning, or maybe you are watching online, and you feel like you need to be here to earn God's approval. You need to gain His favor, or maybe you have been doing a lot of Christian activity and a lot of service. You want to feel good. You want to meet that need. You want to gain that approval. Maybe you are reading your Bible. You are doing the read-through-the-Bible, and you have got to get through the list. You have got to check it off. We have this to-do list mentality. Jesus gives us another way. He shows us that we do not have to earn God's approval. We do not have to work hard at getting people and their performance rating. We do not have to do all these things to gain relationship with Him, to have this intimate relationship with Him, so this morning, that is what we are going to look at. We are going to look at this way that Jesus is wanting to invite us into. I would like to open us in prayer.

Father, thank you. Thank you that you are so strong, you are so mighty, you are so good, and you are here with us this morning, and Jesus, really without you, we have nothing, and really it is in your presence that you are inviting us, and so we do not want to hear from Melanie. We want to hear from you, from your word, what you have to say, and so we are excited, because we know you want to meet us here, so we offer this time to you, Lord, and we give you ourselves. We ask that you would give us ears to hear your word and hearts that would just be softened., Lord, thank you. Thank you for being present already, Lord. We love you, in your name, amen.

So, Jesus addresses these three practices, giving, prayer, and fasting, and the Jewish person of that day, the religious leader, this is how they measured their piety and how spiritual they were. So, we are going to start off looking at giving, and we are really going to focus on the word. It is really God's word. It is alive, and it is active, and that is what wants to transform us. I love his word, and I am so thankful we have the freedom here to gather and to look at it, so we are going to look at Matthew 6:1-4. We have a lot of verses this morning, a lot of ground to cover. I am going to read it again. Thank you, Naomi, for reading. It says, "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So, when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full, but when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, He will reward you."

So, in the ancient world, this whole idea of trumpets Jesus refers to, the giving was like this loud splash, look at me. The commentaries also say that maybe part of this was the container that they used at that time actually looked like a trumpet. So, He is saying, do not give like an announcement with trumpets. He also talks about hypocrites, right? In these 18 verses, he mentions them quite a few times, and maybe you know this, but the actual word "hypocrite," it means actor. It is someone who is playing a part. In that day it was wearing a mask, and we think about movies, and we think about shows, and who does not love a good drama, and who does not love good actors, right? But Jesus, He is calling us not to be actors. He wants us to be authentic. He wants us to be authentic in our giving, and what He is telling his new disciples, He had just called them. They were new. They were wondering what to expect from this rabbi of Israel, the people sitting on the grass and listening to the message. He is telling them, do not give to get. Do not give to get publicity. Do not give to make recognition for yourself, and I was thinking, where do we see

this today? Where do we see a lot of boasting about who is doing what, who is giving what? Of course, what comes to mind is social media, on our Instagram, our Facebook, our TikTok, right? We see a lot of people,” look at me, look at me.” They are posting about themselves subtly, or maybe not so subtly, wanting that attention.

I was also thinking about silent auctions, right? You go to a silent auction, and you are giving to this great cause, but you are also getting something in return, right? You are getting that item that you want, and the Lord is telling us, do not give with those types of motives. Give because you love me. Give because we are in relationship, and I think He wants us to take this motivational inventory, to take a moment to say, ‘Lord, why am I giving? Why am I doing this? Is it because I love you? Or is it because I really want attention, I want to get something? Where am I giving to get to earn his favor? What is my heart posture?’ God is not really looking for our performance. God is not looking for our perfection. Jesus wants us to give with pure motivation in a way that brings Him glory, not self-glory.

Verse 3 says, “When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” Do it quietly, do it in secret. Is there an example in scripture that you can think of where Jesus gives an example of like how we are to give? What came to my mind was Luke 21:1-4, and this is where Jesus points out a widow, and I love that He is pointing out a widow. In ancient Israel, a widow was a least of these. She was not someone who would have been celebrated. She was not someone who would have been known. She was someone who has been forgotten, and so Jesus tells the story. He is sitting in the temple, and He is watching this happen. The widow goes, and she puts in her two little coins. It does not make a big splash. It is not loud sounding trumpets. It is quiet, and it is meager. It is not a lot, and that is what is pleasing to God. He sees her heart. He sees our heart. He sees how we give. Even if it is a small amount, it means a great deal to Him, and I just love that, giving from that heart of love rather than a desire for applause. True giving is not about applause or recognition. Where is your heart right now? Where do you want to give? I love the giving report we had from Paul. Thank you. Like, I love that Waterstone gives. We give. Let’s continue and do that with a motivation that is pleasing to our Father.

So, then He goes on to talk about prayer, and what is our posture in prayer? Is this a performance place, or is it really this private intimacy? It is interesting, the structure of the Sermon on the Mount, prayer is the middle of this whole sermon, and then these three practices that we are talking about this morning, it is the middle of the three practices. It is really at the heart. I think the Lord is saying to us, prayer is important, and it is about our heart. It is not about our performance, so we will read that portion again, Matthew 6, 5 through 15. It says, “and when you pray,” notice in all of these spaces, it does not say, “if you pray.” It says, “when you pray, when you give, when you fast. Do not be,” again, ‘like the imposters, the hypocrites, the pretenders, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners. Why? To be seen by others. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full, but when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, He will reward you, and when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.’

There was this whole idea of this ancient pagan prayer world in the Roman times and ancient Israel, and the public prayers, they were offered loudly and with a lot of repetition. They were offered at

these festivals and events, and if the priest who was doing this on behalf of the community, if he got one word wrong, they had to repeat the whole thing, so this prayer had to be perfect. They had to get it down. It had to be perfect. I am so thankful that that is not what the Lord is looking for in us. It also was repetitive. They felt like if we say this enough times, it is like when a kid wants something, and they just keep coming over, can I have, can I have, can I have? Then as a parent, you finally, you are like, okay, you get tired, you get weary, so they thought that if they did this, that would help their God give them what they wanted. It was this pagan prayer ritual, so Jesus is, He is coming against that. He is giving us a warning. “Do not be like that. Do not be like the culture of the day. Be different,” and again, we see He is not looking for prayer babbling, for vain repetition, for this talking, for attention. God is not looking for our performance or our perfection. Their prayers were long. They were repetitive. I am sure a lot of people were falling asleep. Maybe some of you are now, but that is not what the Lord is looking for. He is looking for a heart, the heart of the matter.

I am wondering, have you ever been in those spaces where you are praying with people, and you have someone who is praying with you, and they are agreeing, and you hear them saying uh-huh, and yeah, and amen? And that makes you think, “Oh, I am praying well, am I not? Because everyone is going along with me.” Or maybe you have had these situations where you are wanting attention, you are wanting some recognition. This is a little bit embarrassing to admit, but I am going to share this story with you, so we have started an in-person prayer time here at Waterstone. We would love to have you come if you are looking to pray more. It is the first and third Wednesday of the month at 12:15 p.m. for an hour. So, a few weeks ago, Paul announced this, and of course, He is just announcing, letting you know when it is, what it is about, but when he announces it, he shares that these two staff members have initiated this, and I am sitting there thinking, “I was a part of that. I am helping plan that. Goodness, I have been at this church praying for decades, and I get no credit, no recognition?” So, I look at my husband, and I give him a look like, “Are you kidding me?” But I’m like, “Okay, I’m just going to leave that.” I go, I come into Waterstone that week, and one of my coworkers looks at me and was like, “Did that bother you that Paul did not say your name?” And of course I had to be honest and admit, yes, it did bother me, and that was when the Lord quickened my spirit, “and what are you sharing that message on? Prayer and recognition, and oh, look at your heart.” It is funny how He does that, isn’t it? When you are learning something, He really highlights it for you, so Jesus is saying, though, we want to be seen. We want to be known, right? That is a normal human tendency. That is how He has made us, but it is He. It is his seeing that is important. It is interesting that He mentions the seen and unseen, all this whole concept quite a few times. We see it in verse 4, we see it in verse 6, and then in verse 18, this concept of the hypocrites are seen, but really, I am seen, and that is what is important, this concept of being known.

I wonder this morning, do you feel seen? Do you feel known by God? Do you think that He wants to see you, that He wants to know you? Maybe you are feeling forgotten. Maybe you are feeling put on the shelf. This is the space the Lord is saying, “I see you. I want to know you. I want to hear your prayers. They matter to me.” On my trip to Africa, we did some prayer walking. If you have never done prayer walking, I would encourage you to do it. It is basically just walking the land. It is using the land to cue you in what to pray for, and so as we are walking on these dirt roads, some of them muddy, it is a good reminder to me that roads are a luxury, sidewalks, those are a luxury, a lot of things we take for granted

here, but as we are walking down this dirt road in this neighborhood, there is a school, and there is a fence, and it is recess. The kids all start coming out of the fence, and they're playing in the dirt road, and there's one little boy, and the little boy starts walking. He walks off by himself. He turns the corner. He continues walking. He is just standing there for a minute, and then he decides to go back, and he turns, and he walks, and in that moment, the Lord really quickened my heart, and I love how He will bring his word alive. I had read that morning about Ezekiel 34, verses 14 to 16, where God is talking to Israel, and He is saying, "I see those who are wandering. I see those lost sheep. I am bringing them back. I see those who are injured. I see, I love them," and in that moment, that is what He was saying. "I will bring those strays back," and if you are wandering, and if you feel lost, He sees you, and He wants to bring you back. He wants to invite us into this relationship, and sometimes there are seasons when it does feel dry and distance, but that does not mean his heart isn't for you and that He does not love you. It is like any relationship. There are quiet times, and there are active times. That is not a gauge. Our circumstances, our feelings, that is not a gauge of his heart.

So, we've talked about this idea of the giving. We've talked about the idea of prayer. What about this whole thing of fasting? We're going to go ahead and read that segment in Matthew 6:16-18: "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full, but when you fast, put oil on your head, and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father who is unseen, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." So, we have this whole idea of fasting. It is interesting, right? When we have a medical procedure, we have to fast before that. Sometimes we have this physical fitness. It is called intermittent fasting. Maybe you are familiar with it. It makes you eat and you fast certain times so that you'll be healthier and lose weight. What about spiritual fasting?

I think it is a forgotten practice in our culture. I think we do not often do it. When Jesus is talking about fasting, the New Testament word translated is actually to not eat or to be empty. The beautiful thing about fasting is that it is a space of dependence and sacrifice, and in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is really giving them a new idea, because the Jewish way of fasting, the religious leaders, they were putting ashes on their head, their clothes looked dirty and old, and they were drawing all that attention to themselves, and the ashes on their head, that really represented grieving. These ashes were like, "I am grieving, I am distressed, it is all about God," and He is saying, "No, that is not what I see in their heart. Really, it is about them getting attention." So that is why He is saying, I do not think this is a hygiene verse per se, right? "Wash your face, put your hair, all good." It is really about the heart, and He is calling them to a deeper place of authenticity.

What are your fasting practices? Do you have one? I would encourage you to start. It is a sacred space. I have a friend, and we've challenged each other to fast once a week, and we fast really one meal. It is not a forty-day fast like we see Jesus did, and actually, my dad has done that three times, which I find amazing, but it is a fast of a meal to set aside time to pray for our family, and it really helps me that we do this and we have accountability, but it also is this space of dependence. It is a beautiful space of sacrifice. When I was in Africa, I decided I would go ahead and do that Wednesday morning fast. I will tell you, I did not want to do it. It was hot there. It was really hot. You are sweating. I also picked up a little heat

rash, and so my physical posture was one of hardship. “Lord, I do not want to do this. I can’t do this.” We were doing a retreat for middle schoolers, and it was on that day, and I thought, “Lord, I do not have the energy.” The coolest thing is that when you offer this to the Lord, He shows Himself strong, and He gave me the energy, and He gave me the ability to do that, and that really builds our faith, and that shows it is about Him. It is really not about us. It is about His power. It is about His strength, and that is the invitation we have, that He is our Father, and He wants to meet, commune, meet with us in that fasting place. So, I would encourage you to consider, where can you fast? It is really this giving up of control.

It is this space of dependence, and sometimes I think we make it ultra-spiritual, and we have to do it this way, and we become legalistic about it, which is the whole point of what Jesus is coming against in this culture. It is legalism, and so sometimes it can be a creative type of fasting. I will admit that sometimes I have fasted, I was going to say clothes, but that is not right. No, I have fasted wearing different clothes every day. I have fasted by wearing the same set of clothes for a week. I have also fasted makeup. I come from a Texas family where you do not go out without your lipstick, and so I would go a whole week without makeup, so ask the Lord, where are some spaces that you can fast creatively to honor Him? I think as we do that, He meets us in those spaces. So, we see that true fasting really transcends this ritualistic observance, this practice of being spiritual, of wanting to gain attention and to look good. It is just really that dependence on God, so we have talked about giving, we have talked about prayer, and we have talked about fasting. I feel like we could have a whole sermon series on each of these, but we are going to just cover them this morning, and then we have the Lord’s Prayer.

I love the Lord’s Prayer. It is probably one of the most prayed prayers of all time. It is prayed at weddings, funerals, churches, activities, and it is interesting to me that it is a little bit ironic. Jesus is telling the people of that day, “Do not pray ritualistically,” and sometimes we take the Lord’s Prayer, and we pray it ritualistically. The point of it is the heart, and so as we look at the Lord’s Prayer briefly, let’s look at not just the words. Let’s look at the heart of what Christ is saying, so this first part of it, and it is two sections, it says, “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.’” So as the start of the prayer, there are two sections, a focus on God, and there are three aspects, and then a focus on us and three aspects. How does the prayer start? “Our Father.” It does not say, “My Father.” It does not say, “Your Father.” It says, “Our Father.” How would the audience in Christ’s time, in the time of ancient Israel, how would they have heard that? I think our tendency is to hear it individualistically. I think about my Father. What is my relationship with my Father? But in their mind, it would have drawn them back to this bigger story, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, so Jesus is calling them into this bigger picture of God and how great He is. It goes on to say, “Hallowed be your name.” Hallowed just means holy, and that is this respect piece. Hallowed, sacred, mighty are you God. “Your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.” It is really focusing on God and what He wants and how He wants it done. It is a bigger focus. It is a concept of His greatness, and then we move to this section that is really more of a focus about us. It is our dependence, it is about our debt, and it is about our deliverance, and so as we focus on the first portion there, it says the daily bread. “Give us today our daily bread.” So most likely, again, as we look at scripture, we want to think of what that original audience was. What was Jesus saying to them? How would they have translated it?

That would have taken them back to Egypt and them coming into the wilderness and the manna that God had provided. It was saying to them, “I am your provider. I am going to take care of your needs. I know what you need,” and in that day, they would go either to the tabernacle and then later the temple, and within the Holy of Holies, in the presence of God, was the showbread. Have you ever heard of that, the showbread, which was the bread of God’s presence? The bread of God’s presence, and that to them was a reminder of how He met them, the spaces that He met them and their ancestors a long time ago. It was about God meeting their need.

My question today is, “What is your need?” Where do you need God to meet you? Maybe it is a financial need. Maybe you are wondering, like, “How am I going to pay that bill?” I know I grew up in a family where my parents were on Campus Crusade for Christ staff, and they had monthly investors, and we did not always know where the money was going to come from and how the need was going to be met. At one point when I was in college, they had a situation where they could not pay their bills. There was no money for the mortgage, and so it looked like we were going to lose the house. One day, this gentleman comes, knocks on the door, has his checkbook, and says, “Hey, the Lord has told me to write you a check,” and he wrote a check to our family for \$10,000, and that was how God provided, and God does not always rescue us in ways that we think He should. It is not this story of pray and He meets the need. It is the genie in the bottle, but He does meet us in whatever that need is. Maybe it is a medical need you have. You do not know about your health. You do not know what is going to happen. That is really the invitation to ask God, “Lord, meet my need. Show me what I need.” How can we commune together in this space of need? We do not have to panic. We do not have to worry. We do not have to figure it all out. We just have to trust. We have to say, “Lord, I do not know, but you do. Come, meet my need. Give me my daily bread.”

Then He goes on to talk about debt and forgiveness, “and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.” That is what it says in verse 12, and this whole idea of forgiveness is the powerhouse of our faith. This is where God comes in and does what only He can do, the forgiveness. It is not in our human nature. Last week, Paul spoke about revenge, and when we are wronged, we want to take revenge. We want to make it right. We want justice, and what God is telling us as our people, as his people, is we do not have to do that. He has already done that. He has paid the debt. Christ has paid the debt. Verse 14 and 15 come in, and I think this is a little bit confusing. It says, “for if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” So, at first glance, these verses feel a little bit confusing, don’t they? Because it feels conditional, it feels legalistic, it feels performative, which is exactly what Jesus is addressing of the people of that day. He does not want this legalism. So, when we look at scripture, we do not want to take a couple verses here, just pull them out of context, and build a doctrine on it. We want to look at the whole scripture. We want to interpret scripture with scripture, so what if this scripture really is more about practical living? Maybe Jesus knows that unforgiveness leads to bitterness and it leads to all kinds of consequences.

Where are other scriptures that we can think of that God talks about forgiveness? One that came to my mind is Matthew 18, and maybe you are familiar with this section. Peter comes to Jesus. He is asking Jesus, “Hey, how many times do I ever forgive this guy, because it is getting to be a lot?” and Jesus says, “seventy times seven,” which in the original audience, they would have known that that is like this

unlimited number, and then Jesus gives this story to us and to them, and it says about this servant, he goes to this king, and he owes this king millions of dollars, and the king is like, “Hey, I need you to pay that,” and the servant is like, “I do not have it, I can’t do it,” and the king forgives the debt. He releases the debt, and then the servant goes out to his friend, and his friend owes him \$5.00, and He is like, “Give me that \$5.00. You have to give me \$5.00, or you are going to jail,” and Jesus is saying, “Do not be like that because I am the king. I have paid the debt. I have forgiven all. Do not be legalistic. Do not be like those in this culture trying to earn favor, trying to call in debts, trying to do justice on your own.” So where do we need to release someone from debt? Where have we been hurt? Maybe you are going through a divorce. We do not get married thinking that we are going to be divorced. Maybe it is a broken relationship. Maybe you have been hurt. Maybe it is someone who is gossiping about you, and they are hurting your reputation. Or maybe someone has stolen money from you, and I do not think Jesus is saying, “Quickly forgive. It does not hurt. Just move along.” I do not think that is his point.

There is a book that has impacted me a lot recently. It is called, “Soul Care.” It is by Dr. Rob Reimer. He has a whole chapter on forgiveness, and one of the things that he says is, “Forgiving others is vital to our spiritual vitality.” I sometimes wonder if some of our spiritual vitality is related to some of our unforgiveness. He also says, “It is utterly absurd for us to hold someone in our debt in light of the remarkable forgiveness God has offered us.” One of the ways we cannot experience forgiveness well is if we jump to quick forgiveness, and in his book, Dr. Reimer gives this illustration of if you have a five-gallon offense, you have been really offended, and we offer a quick cup of forgiveness. “Oh, I forgive you. I forgive you,” and we do not give a five-gallon forgiveness. If we do not really take time to sit with the hurt, to process it, and to release it, then it is not going to work, and it is going to lead to more bitterness. I think we need to really take time to think about forgiveness, to look at how Christ forgives, to release others from their debts to us. I would like to honor my husband in this area. He does it really well. Whenever someone is hurting or says something hurtful, he takes a step back, and he says, “I do that too,” and he looks at his own humanness, and then he also says, “Christ forgave me.” I can’t hold this offense against them.” I encourage us to take time to think and to do that.

So, Jesus talks about our dependence, He talks about the debt, and then there is this whole concept of deliverance. What do you think of when you hear that word? It is October. We are coming up to Halloween. I think a lot of times our thoughts of deliverance come from Hollywood, from movies that we have seen, from dramatizations. I also think sometimes there are certain church circles where it can be abused, and their deliverance is not really what we see in scripture. The thing is that the scripture says, “and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Deliver us from the evil one. That word just throws us off, but we see throughout the gospels, throughout scripture, that Jesus is calling his people to deal with darkness and with evil. He is calling them to not sit in it, to not accept it, but to release people in deliverance, to allow them to walk in freedom. In John 17, Jesus prays for his disciples. He prays for protection from the evil one for them. Evil is real. We need to deal with it. We need to know that God has given us authority. We do not have to sit in darkness. We do not have to give way to the demonic.

There is also a great chapter on deliverance in “Soul Care,” if you are looking to dive deeper. As I said, I wish we could dive deep into all of these subjects, but we do not have time. Do you have any personal examples of deliverance? One in my life was when I was going through divorce. I had a time

when I would wake up in the middle of the night, and there would be heaviness on my chest, and I could not breathe. I could not talk. I could not breathe, and in that moment, I just spoke out the name of Jesus, and it was gone. It had left me. Do not forget how powerful the name of Jesus is. Do not forget that we can seek freedom from darkness.

So, as we wrap these thoughts up on the Lord's Prayer, do we have an example of where Jesus prayed the Lord's Prayer? I think He did pray it, but in a not a full, ritualistic way. When we look at Matthew 26:36-44, The scripture says, "Going a little farther, He fell with his face to the ground, and He prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me,'" and here is the line, "Yet not as I will, but as you will." It is that phrase, your will, not my will. He says this twice in this section of scripture. So, we have looked at a lot so far. We have looked at the three practices. We have looked at the Lord's Prayer. In closing, I just want to highlight true devotion. It does not seek recognition. It is really about a relationship. It is not seeking approval. It is seeking affection. It is seeking affection from the Father. We do not have to work to be seen by others. We do not have to gain their approval. We do not have to perform. It is really this freedom that Jesus is calling us into, and some of us are tired. We are tired of trying to earn God's favor. We are tired of being good enough, and Jesus is saying, "Come to me." God is not looking for performance or perfection. He is really looking for our presence with Him. Throughout those 18 verses, the word "reward" is used quite often, seven times to be exact, and Jesus knows that as humans, we are reward driven. That is how we are made. We want to be acknowledged. We want to be known. We want to have this reward. Is it coming from people, and that is temporal, or is it coming from God, and that is what is really lasting? That is the invitation. In Matthew 11:28, it says, "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you," what? "Rest. I will give you rest" in that relationship.

Where is God inviting you today? Is He inviting you into spaces of giving, where your motivation up to now has been really to gain, selfishness? Are you giving out of love? What about prayer? Has it become rote? Is it routine? Is it just some spiritual practice? He is inviting you into a deeper place of a relationship. What about fasting? Maybe you have just thought of that as being for the super spiritual, and it is not really for me. Where is God calling you to be more dependent, to give up control, to depend on Him, and to build your faith by seeing Him come through? Maybe you are here, or you are watching online, and you do not really know Jesus, and He is inviting you into a relationship. He wants us to give Him our hearts. He wants us to be present with Him. I would like for us to take a moment of silence and just a moment to ask, "Jesus, what do you want to say to me today about my relationship with you?" So, we are going to bow our heads and just spend some time asking and listening. He wants to speak to us.

So, I am curious, did Jesus say something to you? Sometimes Jesus does not come on our timetable. Sometimes it is in other moments, but if He said something to you, share it with someone, pray with someone about it, listen to it, and if He did not, I would encourage you to keep asking, because He wants a relationship. He is inviting us to that. The good news is we are already loved. We are already seen. We are already invited in, and my hope is that we can move from performance really into God's presence, that we can move from religion and religiosity into relationship. God Almighty, our Father, and Jesus and the Holy Spirit, they are inviting us into intimate relationship. Will we come? Matthew 6:4 says, "Your Father who sees what is done in secret, He will reward you," and that reward is his presence. I would like to close us in prayer.

Father, thank you. Thank you that you are our Father. You desire to know us. You want to be present with us. Lord, sometimes we have a hard time hearing, and you know that. Would you clean out our ears? Would you clean out our heart? We want to be pure before you, Lord. We want to know you, the richness of your presence, and so today we are offering ourselves to you. We are listening, and we are here, and we are grateful, Lord, that you want us, that you love us, that you have chosen us. Worthy is your name, Lord. Worthy is the lamb that was slain, high and exalted. We praise you, and we worship you today, in your name, amen.

We praise you, Lord. You are with us. We are excited that He wants us to be in his presence. He does not care about our performance. He does not care about all those things that we think sometimes are so important. He wants our hearts. I would like to close today by reading the Lord's Prayer. I would love for you to join me. You all have these bookmarks. I encourage you to take these with you this week. Spend some time, sit with the Lord, pray the prayer, and hear his heart. He is so good, so let's read this together.

"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, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Go in peace.

43:15 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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