

February 2, 2020

The Lord's Prayer
Our Daily Bread (Part Two)
Matthew 6:5-13

Opening words: The Lord's Prayer has been called "The Greatest Prayer" and the cornerstone of the Christian faith. It has been recited by billions of believers through the ages and is cherished by everyone, regardless of theology or tradition. We recite the words regularly at Western Reserve. It is safe to say we recite the Lord's Prayer about 200 times a year, including Sunday morning worship services, Lenten vesper services, Holy Week services, as well as weddings and funerals. We know the words, but do we understand the meaning behind those words? In this sermon series, *The Lord's Prayer*, your understanding is my goal.

In this series, we have learned the Lord's Prayer is a model prayer. That means, the various elements of the Lord's Prayer must be found in all prayer. In the first three weeks in this series we learned our prayers should contain a praise, obedience and physical needs element. Today, we look at the next line in the Lord's Prayer, *forgive us of our debts as we forgive our debtors*. In our tradition, we use the word trespasses. Our scripture reading for the entire sermon series is Matthew 6:5-13. Let me call this message *Our Daily Bread (Part Two)*.

Matthew 6:5-13 "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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

This is the question that dominates today's message. Are you making any progress in the Christian faith? I ask myself that question daily. Some days I believe I am. Some

days I am not so sure. It is a hard question. If you agree it is a hard question; say, **"Amen!"** Are you making any progress in the Christian faith?

Leroy Eims (1925-2004) served with The Navigators for over fifty years and wrote a best-selling book called *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. In that book he told about his family driving from Fort Lauderdale to Tampa one spring. As they drove, they traveled past miles of orange trees. At one point they stopped for a late breakfast. Leroy ordered an orange juice. The waitress politely told him that was impossible, because the restaurant's juicer was broken. He found that to be both comical and sad. There he was surrounded by millions of oranges, but there was no juice to be had. His situation on that day reminded him of the average church. The average church is surrounded by the Good News, but many are ignoring it. Could that be the story of the church today? May be that is why Jesus told us to pray for our spiritual needs?

Today, we look at the next section of the Lord's Prayer, *"And forgive us of our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."* To understand that section you must re-examine the previous line, *give us this day our daily bread*. Some believe that line stands alone. If you do so the line is about our basic physical needs, air water, food, shelter and sleep. That is what we looked at last time. Others believe that line is coupled with the next section of the prayer: *And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. They connect the phrase *Give us this day our daily bread* with John 6:48, where Jesus calls himself the bread of life. Suddenly the whole section becomes about praying for our spiritual needs. We are to spend time with Jesus daily. That is important because the battles in life are not with other people. The battles in life are against the Dark One. If we are going to win that battle, then we must be spiritually mature, and we can't become spiritually mature without spending time with Jesus. That leads me to these two questions. Do you consider yourself spiritually mature? Are you making any progress in the Christian faith? If that makes you think say, **"Amen!"**

Three years ago, my Lenten sermon series was called *Don't Give Up*. In that sermon series, I looked at five of the spiritual disciplines. The spiritual disciplines help us grow and mature spiritually. In that series, I encouraged you not to give up prayer, fasting, worship, meditation or the Bible. That list was not complete. Through the ages many philosophers, theologians and writers have identified many other things that may be considered spiritual disciplines. Those things include things such as fellowship, journaling, stewardship, self-examination and silence. The issue is not a lack of spiritual disciplines. The issue is practicing the spiritual disciplines. Perhaps, that is why we have a hard time answering the question of the day, are you making any progress in the Christian faith? It is not enough to have a religious opinion or spiritual thought. The spiritual disciplines must become part of your daily habits.

Years ago, I am across an article about spiritual maturity. We are not to remain spiritual babies. We aren't to grow in the faith. I hate to admit it, but there are times, I look at things in a negative way. Perhaps that is why the article spoke to me. It came from the people at Crosswalk. It was called, Seven Signs You are Spiritually Immature. This is their list:

- 1) Spiritual infants are self-centered.** They arrive at church thinking, "What can I get out of this?" Then, they sometimes leave saying, "I didn't get a thing out of that today." Their theme is that church is all about them. Are you self-centered?
- 2) Spiritual infants are noisy.** They cry a lot, particularly when they don't think their needs are being met. For example, they criticize a mission project because they don't benefit. The money should be spent on something that meets their approval. They just can't complain enough. Are you noisy?
- 3) Spiritual infants are messy.** Toddlers do not clean up after themselves. That's someone else's job. On Sunday night after everyone has vacated the premises, I walk around the church building and you'll know in a heartbeat whether the congregation is mature or immature. Are you messy?
- 4) Spiritual infants are impatient.** The crying baby cannot be told that the milk is warming and should be ready in a few minutes. He wants what he wants, and he wanted it five minutes ago. To them, the church is there to provide services which members pay for with their offerings; if the services are inferior, they withhold their money or even leave. Are you impatient?
- 5) Spiritual infants are defined by what they cannot do.** They cannot cooperate, cannot submit to others, and cannot understand deep things. They are unable to apologize and mean it and resist sharing. Are you defined by what you cannot do?
- 6) Spiritual infants are explosive.** They are always mad. They are mad because their birthday wasn't in the bulletin. They are mad no one noticed they were on vacation or no one called. They are mad because no one supported their ministry. They explode over every little issue. Are you explosive?
- 7) Spiritual infants are irresponsible.** They're great at expecting a lot from others and nothing from themselves. They always know who is to blame for all that's wrong in the church. Aren't you glad we don't have any irresponsible people in this church? Are you irresponsible?

I did not list those statements so you could evaluate someone else. I listed those statements so you could evaluate yourself. Are you spiritually mature or immature? Are you making any progress in the Christian faith? Jesus tells us to pray for our spiritual

needs, because we need help spiritually. It is sad because the only reason the church exists is to grow people spiritually, to make disciples. The problem, is that churches are easily distracted. We witness it regularly in the local church and we are witnessing it at the denominational level. We come to church to experience life's very best, God. Sadly, that doesn't happen all the time. We are distracted by good things, church programs and property. Many are close yet far away.

When I was in high school, football was a big deal. I consider those days to be the golden age of high school football in Warren, Ohio. During my four years of high school, Warren crowned four state champions. Harding won the state championship during my freshman and senior years. Western Reserve won the state championship during my sophomore and junior years. Warren was economically successful, and many moved to the city of Modern Methods feeding those teams with outstanding players. If you were a standout player on one of those teams you were a local celebrity.

During my sophomore year of high school, the best player on the team was a boy by the name of Tyrone. He was a great player. He was a gifted athlete, big, fast and quick. During that season college scouts from around the country came to watch Tyrone play. He had offers from a variety of Division One schools. His selection was a big secret. The local media was there for the announcement. It was an exciting moment when he announced he was going to Washington State University, in the great northwest. The entire east side of Warren beat their chests with pride. When he signed his name on the national letter of intent, the recruiter from Washington State gave Tyrone a grey and crimson ballcap, the official colors of Washington State. Stitched on it were the letters, WSU. He gave him a football jersey with Washington State across its chest. He gave him a football with Washington State Cougars painted on it. Everyone cheered and everyone dreamed of Tyrone's big future in the northwest. The next day Tyrone came to school wearing that football jersey with the cap on his head. He held his football in his muscular arms. Everybody patted him on the back and congratulated him. I was standing next to one of the assistant basketball coaches, Dick James. When Tyrone passed Mr. James, he yelled out, "So, Tyrone, you are going to Washington State!" Tyrone broke out into one of those Heisman Trophy possess and yell back, "Yes sir, Mr. James. I'm going to Washington State so I can be near the president." The whole hall grew silent. No one knew what to say. Tyrone was so close, yet so far away.

Don't be like Tyrone. Don't be so close, yet so far away. Don't get so involved in the organizational life of the church that you die spiritually. Keep your eyes on Jesus and pray his words, *give us this day our daily bread*. That means you are spending time with Jesus daily. And if you spend time with Jesus daily it will change you, *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. Let me ask you the question of the day one more time: Are you making any progress in the faith? I hope your answer is YES! And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"

