

Matthew 6:9 A Worshipping Family

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[0 : 00] Well, as I said tonight, I'd like us to turn back to the passage that we were reading.

And we're going to focus especially on what Jesus taught in regard to prayer and where he gave his disciples the Lord's prayer. So we'll just read these verses again to remind ourselves what Jesus said.

He said, when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

So obviously, and there were people who liked to go into a public place and pray and put on a big show so that everyone would see what they were doing and be impressed by their actions.

Jesus says, don't be like that. He says, but when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

[0 : 58] And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases like the Gentiles do, for they think that they'll be heard for their many words. And the Gentiles is people who aren't Jews, people from the different nations surrounding Israel.

And they seem to have had the habit of just maybe repeating lots and lots of phrases and not really meaning what they were saying, but just going through the motions as it were.

And that's probably something that a lot of people still do today. Jesus says, don't be like them. He says, do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Pray them 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 have forgiven our debtors.

Another way of saying that is forgive our sins, what we've done wrong as we forgive those who've wronged us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Now, there's a lot of wonderful teaching in there.

[2 : 00] The Lord's faith itself is absolutely just a brilliant prayer with so much rich teaching for us. I must not be too long tonight, so I'm only going to focus on one area.

In particular, we're going to look at the very first line. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. For many of us, these words would be very familiar. We probably learned it when we were we.

When I was in school, we used to say it every day in the morning. They're very, very familiar to many of us, I'm sure. If they're not familiar, don't worry about that at all.

For lots of people, these are familiar words. This statement is a wonderful introduction to the Lord's Prayer. There's more than just an introduction because like many things in the Bible, something that is familiar and something that can look quite simple still contains a huge amount of important teaching.

And that's certainly the case here because behind that little phrase, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Behind that phrase lies some of the most wonderful teaching that the Bible gives to us.

[3 : 09] And that's what I want us to think about together for a wee while tonight. And we're going to say five things that we learn from these one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight words.

Just a wee statement, but still it says at least five important things. Number one, as Christians, we must remember that God is our Father.

And that sounds so simple and it is, but yet it is one of the most central and one of the most astounding truths of the Christian faith. If someone came up to you and said, what is a Christian? What would you say? Some people would maybe say, well, somebody goes to church or somebody who lives a good life, somebody who reads the Bible, somebody who's been baptized.

None of those are the right answer. If you ask the question, what is a Christian? Well, one of the best answers is this, a Christian is someone who knows God as their Father.

[4 : 15] Because when we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we are adopted into God's family as His children.

That's really the central truth of the Christian message. And that's what we're told in John's Gospel when he talks about why Jesus came. He says, Jesus came to his own and his own people did not receive him.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Notice what that says.

That word really sums up what Christianity is all about. It tells you how you become a Christian. You become a Christian by believing in Jesus. And it tells us what happens when we do that.

We become the adopted children of God. And that's really very simple.

[5 : 15] And it's something that we can understand. And even from everyday life, we see examples of this in everyday life. The message of Christianity is just as simple.

And yet often we can make it very complicated, can't we? Because we can think to ourselves, well, I can't be a Christian because I'm not good enough. Or I can't be a Christian because my faith isn't strong enough.

Or my knowledge is inadequate. I don't know enough. Or maybe I won't be able to keep it up. I might not be able to go to the prayer meeting every week. I might not make it to church every Sunday.

I can't keep it up. We can put all these complications in our minds. And yet at all times we must remember that being a Christian is a beautifully simple thing.

If we put our faith in Jesus, then we become God's children. And He is our Father.

[6 : 20] And you might say, yes, Thomas, that sounds so simple, but how do I have that kind of faith? How do I have faith that's strong enough to be a Christian? How do I have faith that will be good enough?

It's so easy to think like that. Well, that raises the question, what kind of faith is God looking for? What kind of faith is God looking for? Well, here's the answer.

It says, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. So what kind of faith is God looking for? He's looking for childlike faith.

And of course, that makes perfect sense. God wants us to come with a childlike faith because that's exactly what He wants to make us. He wants to make us all His children.

He wants to be our Father. And of course, these two words, our Father, they show just how privileged we are as Christians.

[7 : 22] We can talk to God just as a child can come and talk to their Father, just as we own will be able to always talk to Colin, always there. I mean, I don't know if Owen speaks much yet.

He will soon a lot. And you've got to be there to listen all the time. And we had that amazing privilege with God.

We can talk to Him. Access is always open. His ear is always listening. It also means that we are known by God because a Father knows their children.

Father knows what they need. A Father knows when something's wrong. A Father is concerned for their welfare and God as their Father cares for us so deeply.

We're also able to draw near to God. That's one of the most amazing things of being a Christian.

We don't have a God who's far away. Some people think that that's what God is like, that yes, He made the world and then He just left it and he's just kind of distant.

[8 : 20] And there's this maybe force or being or something or other out there. A lot of people think like that. That's not what the Bible says. The Bible says we have a God who we can draw near to. In fact, we have a God who is holding us in His arms.

A God who is right there. That's the kind of God the Bible presents to us. And that God is our Father. That means we are Fathered by Him.

He is our parent to us. We're under His protection, under His guidance, under His leading, under His discipline. That's part of good parenting too.

And all of these things are for our benefit to help us. We are so privileged. We're known by God. We can draw near to Him. We can talk to Him. We're Fathered by Him.

Above all, we are loved by God. Those who come to God in faith are loved with the love of the perfect Father.

[9 : 20] Always remember that. Some people think, you know, God would be annoyed with me if I started following Him because I'm a disappointment or God won't really want to look after me because I'm not good enough.

None of that is true. God wants to Father you with a perfect love.

And that's a reminder that that's what you're pushing away when you push God away. That's what you're pushing away.

So as Christians, we want to make sure that we never forget that God is our Father. That's the extraordinary privilege of the Gospel. And for those of us who are maybe not yet Christians or thinking about it or not sure, you need to ask yourself, do I want God as my Father?

That's the question you need to ask. And I really hope you do because it is the most amazing, amazing thing. God is our Father.

[10 : 23] And on a practical level, it's important here to remember that God is the model Father. So for Colin and Rachel, as you raise, we own, remember that your role model is not just your parents or grandparents.

Your role model is also God himself, the God who is wise, patient, strong, compassionate, gentle and loving.

So we must remember that God is our Father. Finally we have to remember that as children of God, we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Always remember that the Bible is absolutely logical. People often think that faith and reason are enemies, but that is absolutely untrue. The Bible is not a collection of some kind of vague, optimistic, hopeful, fairy stories.

The Bible is an absolutely logical and coherent presentation of truth. And it robustly fits together in all that it says.

[11 : 29] The Bible makes sense. So if we apply that to what we're saying just now, if God is our Father, then logically, what are Christians? They're brothers and sisters.

Because if you have the same Father, you are in the same family. And that's one of the amazing things that when you meet a Christian who you've never met, even from the other side of the world, if a Christian meets a Christian for the first time, they're not strangers.

There's a bond and a connection between them. It's something really interesting in the Lord's Prayer. Have you ever noticed this? If we go back to what Jesus says, first of all, when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.

So when Jesus is about to give the Lord's Prayer, step one is be on your own. And yet in verse nine, he says you pray our Father.

So when you're in your room on your own, nobody else is around you. You don't say my Father, you say our Father. Because you are still part of this family that has been growing and growing and growing and growing for the past 2000 years.

[12 : 42] Jesus is reminding us that even when we are alone, we must never forget that we're part of a wider family of God's children. And as brothers and sisters in Christ, we should always keep that unity and fellowship at the forefront of our minds.

And everything that we do as a congregation should reflect the fact that we're a family. And we should always treat each other as a family, as a good, loving, caring family.

That means sharing our time together. That means showing concern for each other. That means actively supporting and helping one another. If anyone was to come into this church for the first time, and tonight some people are coming to the church for the first time because you live away, I would hope that your initial impression is these people are just like a family, because that's exactly what we are.

It's exactly what God has made us. We are a family. And that is part of the reason why we are here, to baptise Owen.

Because Rachel and Colin have come to us and they've said, we want to bring up our child as part of this church family. And baptism is an outward sign of membership of the church.

[14 : 02] That's what baptism is. It's not just water, it's not holy water. It doesn't transform anything. It's just a sign. But it's a sign, an outward sign of being a member of this church.

And Rachel and Colin have come to us to say, that's what we want for Owen. We want to bring him up as part of the church. Back in the Old Testament, the sign was circumcision, and of course that could only be applied to boys, infant boys, a week after their birth.

But in the New Testament, the New Covenant era, baptism has replaced that sign of circumcision, and of course it can be applied to boys and to girls. It's something that can be applied to everyone. And part of what baptism is symbolising to us is that we are a family. A family who loves God, and a family who loves one another.

So number one, we remember that God's their Father. Number two, we remember that we, as children of God, are brothers and sisters for all of us who are trusting in Jesus.

[15:09] Thirdly, these words are reminding us that God is holy. Because after Jesus says their Father in heaven, he says, hallowed be your name.

Now many of us have probably known that phrase for many years. I knew that phrase from as long as I can remember, but it was a long, long, long time until I knew what it meant.

So I was saying hallowed be, it would have been hallowed be thy name I think I learned in school and I said it every day and I would say it all the time. And I think I was probably about, I don't know, 17 or 18 before I actually realised what it meant.

Because the word hallowed comes from the word holy. And so when you say hallowed be your name, we are reminding ourselves that the God who is our Father is also the God who is utterly holy.

Hallowed be your name is the same as saying, let your name be treated as holy. May God's name be treated as holy because that's what he is.

[16:16] Now what does holy mean? Well holy basically means set apart. If something is holy, it is in a category of its own. And of course that applies to God more than to anybody else because nobody else is God, only God is God.

He is set apart, he is unique, he is above all things. God is holy. He alone is sovereign over the universe. He alone is righteous.

He is utterly above us, utterly beyond us. He is in a category of his own. And for that reason his name is to be treated with great care.

And again that makes perfect sense doesn't it? God is God and he deserves our respect.

That's why we should never be casual about God's name, never half hearted, never ever careless. That's why the third commandment says, you shall not take the name of your Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold you guiltless who takes his name in vain.

[17:18] When something is precious you treat it really carefully. So for example here, we're here to say because Owen is precious, we would never use Owen's name as a curse, we would never mockingly use his name.

And if that's true of Owen, boy it's true of God. We want our lives to be lived in such a way that we remember that God is holy and that should shape everything that we do.

So when we pray hallelujah name we're saying God we want your name to be treated as holy in our lives. We want that to be true in every single thing that we do so that when people see us whether it's at church or at work or at home or in the community or in whatever we do we want our words, our conduct and our attitude to reflect the fact that we are living every day with a reverence and a respect and a devotion to our holy God.

And that may often mean that we can't follow every path that other people are taking and that's something sometimes we can face because we all live in a world where not everybody keeps God's name as holy and not everybody wants to respect God and we are aware that that's the case and that is always going to be something that we face but there will come times where people are going to go down a path and we are going to think to ourselves that's a path I can't go down because I want to honour God.

And of course the truth is we're better off away from these paths anyway aren't we? When I look back in my life the only things I regret are the things that God has said in his word don't do it.

[19:19] And we must never forget that the Heavenly Father whom we love is also the holy God whom we reverently fear.

And that's why we take what we're doing here tonight very seriously. Baptism is not a token gesture, it's not just a thing to take off a list, it's an act of devotion to God, it's something that we do seriously.

And when a couple like Rachel and Colin come to say we want our child baptised we take that absolutely seriously because that's a wonderful thing and it's that act of respect to God and an act of commitment to living a family life in a way that puts God first.

So we have to remember that God is holy. Fourthly, I'm aiming to finish our quarter past so that clock's slower so I think I'll look at that clock instead of that one.

Number four, we have to remember that we are worshippers of a holy God. That's just a really really important point, I'll try and explain what I mean.

[20 : 31] Sometimes people will think, well if God is our Father and if God loves us then we can just do whatever we like and he won't mind. Lots of people think like that, they think, oh well God loves me, God knows my heart, God will forgive me, that's his job, it doesn't really matter what I do.

And people think like that but the reality is that's a very very selfish attitude and it's a very foolish way to think. And the holiness of God that's highlighted in these opening words of the Lord's Prayer remind us that our status as God's children never ever gives us license to be casual about our relationship with God.

If we are committing to God, if we are trusting in Jesus as Christians then we take that seriously and we acknowledge the fact that that should shape everything that we do.

Because if you think about it, it's absolutely heartbreaking when you see parents who are loving and dedicated and devoted to their children and yet their children turn around and treat them with contempt.

It's a heartbreaking thing for the parents and for the onlookers, for all their family.

[21 : 58] When you see children doing that, it's incredibly hard for everyone. I'm quite sure that Colin and Rachel and every other parent here would never ever look at their child and think well I don't care what they do, I don't care if they end up in a mess, I don't care if they never talk to me, I don't care if Owen turns round age 20 and says I never want to speak to my parents again.

That will be a worse nightmare and as I'm not sure that that will not happen, I'm not saying that that would happen, of course it won't and as you carry on as devoted parents together it's extremely unlikely to happen.

But if that thought horrifies us, how much worse it is when people fail to honour and respect God as they should. Because God is so good to us in so many ways and God forbid that any of us would go through life without any sense of commitment or reverence towards God.

It's vital that for every person who is trusting in Jesus, for every person who is a Christian, it's vital that they go through life with a constant awareness of the fact that we are so privileged, so blessed to be God's children and constantly conscious of the fact that God is holy and that we want to obey Him and honour Him and worship Him.

That's why we want to make sure that our life as a congregation is never half-hearted, never casual, never complacent. That doesn't mean that it's miserable or somber, not at all.

[23 : 45] We've got more reason than anybody to be full of joy. But we're not casual either because we are incredibly privileged to worship the God who is awesome, majestic and altogether holy.

So we said, first of all, what are we saying? God is our Father. We've got to remember that.

Secondly, we've got to remember that if He's our Father, we are all our family, brothers and sisters. Every single Christian becomes a brother and a sister of one another.

We also remember that God is holy and that means that we are worshippers of a holy God. And fifthly, to really sum it all up, this statement is saying that together we are a worshipping family.

The words, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, show us that we have an extraordinary relationship with God. He's our Father and we are children together, united as brothers and sisters for all who are trusting in Jesus.

But we are not only in an extraordinary relationship with God, we are in a relationship with an extraordinary God, the God who is majestic, righteous, glorious and altogether holy.

[25 : 06] And the truth has been emphasized in this statement, sum up what the first catechism says. The second catechism number one says, what is the chief end of man? What's man's main purpose?

The answer is, man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And that's because God is holy, therefore we want to worship and glorify Him.

And God is our Father, therefore we enjoy His goodness, protection and care. And all of this means that we as a church are a worshipping family.

We dearly love our God and we dearly love one another. And we come together each week on a Sunday and on a Thursday evening and we worship as a family.

And that's what we do. So please keep coming, come on Sunday, come on Thursday, because we are just gathering together as a family to worship.

[26 : 11] As a church, we are a worshipping family. And for Colin and Rachel and Owen, that's exactly what we want you to be as well.

And as you baptize your precious wee child, you're doing so as a worshipping family. You're making a promise to God and you're making that promise in front of us all, that's how you're going to be today, tomorrow and for all of your lives.

And you know, that is the best way to live your life. That's the best way to bring up a child.

Because in God we have an amazing loving heavenly Father. And here in our church, we have a family of believers who love each other and who are here to help each other every step of the way. So these words, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, they're reminding us just how amazing God is. And they're reminding us just how amazing it is to be a Christian.

[27 : 23] Amen. Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, because you, oh God, are holy and you, oh God, are our loving heavenly Father.

And these two things just are one of the many reasons why you are so perfect and so wonderful and why knowing you is the greatest privilege that any of us can have.

Because in a world full of darkness and sin and sorrow and all sorts of awful things, you are the God who is holy. You are the one who's different. And whilst we can look at people who will let us down, we know that you will never let us down.

Because you're a holy God. And in a world of heartbreak and sorrow and pain and suffering, you are the one who is loving.

And you've loved us with such a perfect love that you are willing to die for us. And that when your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, went to the cross, that's exactly what he did.

[28 : 45] And all we can do is thank you and worship you and we pray that every one of us would just be wholeheartedly committed to following you all the days of our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.