

Series: Treasure in Heaven

March 17, 2019

## **Title: Treasure #2: Prayer**

**[Slide 1]**

**Text: Matthew 6:5-15**

### **Keep it Secret**

#### **Treasure #2: Prayer**

In these weeks leading up to Easter, we're on a treasure hunt. Jesus has provided the Treasure Map for us in Matthew 6. Our treasure hunt is focused on three activities that Jesus says come with an incomparable reward: Heaven's Treasure – given to us by our Heavenly Father.

Last week we looked at Treasure #1: Giving. We saw that giving to those in need is one of the ways that God uses us to repair and restore His world. Today we are going to look at Treasure #2: Prayer.

So how do we go about discovering this treasure and the blessings that come with it?

#### **Street corner prayers:**

Treasure hunts are best done in secret. When it comes to Treasure #2, Jesus gives very strong instructions about making sure that this treasure hunt is done in a very personal and private way:

**[Slide 2]**

*Matthew 6:5 NIV*

*<sup>5</sup>"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."*

Jesus lived in a very religious society where people were expected to pray at various times during the day. If you wanted to be "somebody," you needed to let them know that you were good at praying! What better place than in the middle of the synagogue or the middle of town! The bigger the audience the better.

But Jesus says that this kind of behavior was totally self-defeating. The only reward it brought was the temporary praise or envy of others. It had nothing to do with talking to God or growing a deep relationship with Him!

### **Keep it secret:**

Instead, Jesus says:

### **[Slide 3]**

*Matthew 6:6 NIV*

*"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."*

The room Jesus was talking about was an inner room with no windows to the outside – like a closet. It was the most secluded place in the house. No audience there except the Father in Heaven!

Going into that very private place would be like going into the inner sanctum of the Temple itself. It was there – in a windowless room, hidden from the rest of the outside world by a thick curtain -- that God had promised to dwell among His people.

Jesus is saying that our personal place of prayer needs to be that private and sacred. Only then will we experience the Father's reward.

### **Keep it Simple**

#### **"Pagan prayer"**

The second key to discovering the treasure of prayer is to *keep it simple!*

Jesus points out that God isn't impressed with long-windedness:

### **[Slide 4]**

*Matthew 6:7 NIV*

*"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words."*

The gods of the pagans were often thought to be indifferent to human concerns. You couldn't assume that a particular god or goddess loved you or cared for you. You went to a temple, brought sacrifices, and said prayers so that you might hopefully get the god's attention and extract some kind of blessing. In that case, the bigger fuss you made the better!

### **Your Father already knows:**

Jesus says that, unlike the pagans, we have a Father in Heaven who already knows what we need:

*Matthew 6:8 NIV*

*"Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*

Our Father in Heaven knows us and loves us – long before we compose a prayer. David wrote:

### **[Slide 5]**

*Psalms 139:1-4 NIV*

*You have searched me, LORD,  
and you know me.*

*You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.*

*Before a word is on my tongue  
you, LORD, know it completely.*

He doesn't have to be impressed. He doesn't have to be begged or bought off. He isn't playing "hard to get." He's already on your side!

### **Keep it simple:**

Prayer can be intimidating. What am I supposed to say? How am I supposed to say it? Should I pray for things I need, or only for others?

Jesus has good news when it comes to prayer: keep it simple. Just speak from the heart to the Father who loves you more than you can ever know! Your conversation doesn't have to sound religious. You don't need a degree in theology to talk to your Father in heaven.

Just be you.

## **The Second Treasure**

### **Jesus' Prayer:**

So what does "simple prayer" look like? Jesus gives us the supreme example:

*Matthew 6:9-13 NIV*

*"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."*

### **Kingdom prayer:**

Here is a prayer that begins with focusing our attention not on ourselves or our problems, but on the God who made all things and has promised to restore every part of His Creation. That's what it means for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done.

When we pray that God's Name be made holy, or hallowed, we are asking that God reveal Himself in His world and establish His rule. We are praying that all of God's Creation -- Heaven *and* Earth – be restored.

Jesus tells us to pray specifically for four things. These four requests focus on four ways that God's Kingdom comes into our daily lives:

- **Daily bread:** We live in a needy world. We need each breath, each heartbeat. We need food and water. And so much more. Our Father knows what we need, and He has promised to meet those needs, as Paul says, "according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."
- **Forgiveness:** Forgiveness is the ultimate secret weapon of the Christian. It unravels the hurt and anger of a broken world. It stops the cycle of revenge and violence. Forgiveness is God's greatest tool for repairing a broken human race.
- **Guidance:** Every one of us is on a journey we have never taken before. We need God to show us the way. Even more, we need His Presence in the journey. We need to know He is here every step of the way.
- **Deliverance:** We need God to rescue us from the evil around us. Like David we can call upon God to deliver us:

### [Slide 7]

*Psalm 18:6, 16-17 NIV*

*In my distress I called to the LORD;*

*I cried to my God for help.*

*From his temple he heard my voice;*

*my cry came before him, into his ears.*

*He reached down from on high and took hold of me;*

*he drew me out of deep waters.*

*He rescued me from my powerful enemy,*

*from my foes, who were too strong for me.*

### **The Second Treasure:**

When I need to know something or need to know how to do something I go to my phone. They call it a "smart phone." And smart it is – way smarter

than me. But only if it's either online or talking to a cell tower. Otherwise, it's a dumbphone.

Same is true for you and me. God made us to be His smartphones in a world that needs to know Him and needs to know how to live rightly. But we're of no use unless we're connected to Him.

And that's where prayer comes in. Prayer brings all of God's provision, forgiveness, guidance and deliverance into our lives. Jesus sought out this treasure on a regular basis – praying all night on occasion! And Jesus has pointed the way for you to have this same treasure right now. So find that secret place, keep it simple, and invite God into your world.