

“THE LORD’S PRAYER”
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Homeward: “A series about learning to orient our lives.”

How are your New Year’s resolutions going?

- Two weeks in, we’ve passed the initial adrenaline rush of a new year that carries so many of us through the first few days of a new workout routine or diet plan. How’s it going?
- I’m curious. How many of you would say the new routines are coming along, they’re going well? Raise your hands. How many of you feel like you’re struggling a bit?
- I’ve got some that are going well and some that could be going better.
- So I was wondering, as I was thinking about my own goals for 2022, how long it really takes for something new to become a habit. I read a lot of different estimates for that number, but many experts think that, on average, it takes people about 66 days, so just over 2 months, for our brains to recognize something as a habit.
- Now, what was really interesting to me—I read this in a study done by Harvard last February—is that there is a difference between a habit and a routine. I’ve never really stopped to think about the difference. But according to the article, a habit is technically a behavior done with little or no thought, whereas a routine is a series of behaviors frequently, and intentionally, repeated. And for a behavior to become a habit, it has to first be a routine.
- Now, maybe this is a no-brainer for most of you, but this was interesting to me. Because there are certain things that are habits for many of us that we would feel bad without. For example, brushing your teeth. Hopefully that’s a habit most of us would feel bad without.
- Now, why am I bringing this up and making us all feel bad about our new year’s resolutions? I don’t want to do that by the way, none of us will ever do those things perfectly. But I bring it up because we’re in the second week of this series on prayer, and I feel like when we talk about prayer many of us have the same response as we do when we talk about new year’s resolutions. Not all of us, but for many of us it’s one of those things that if someone were to ask how is your prayer life? Or what does the discipline of prayer look like in your life? We would get a little squirmy because prayer can really be one of those things that we know we should be doing more if we’re followers of Jesus but we don’t really know how, or it feels really hard to incorporate into our routines and we maybe have these bursts of energy from time to time where we really try to pray more and then just feel a little aimless after that.

There's a spectrum when it comes to prayer, right?

- There's some people I like to call direct line people. You know, they seem to just have a direct line to heaven. My mentor, Janice, is one of those people. But yeah, they seem to hear from God in ways we would consider more tangible, more experiential. And if you have one of these people in your life you've probably noticed this quality and they're the people you want in your corner praying for you when you have a need of some kind. Or if Janice gives me advice about something I listen up because I know she's listening to God. So there are those people.
- There are people who have perhaps given up on prayer. I haven't seen my prayers answered so why keep asking? Why keep trying? Prayer can be disheartening at times when you've been going at it for a long time, and you're still not seeing the changes you want to see or hearing from God in the way you'd like to hear from him.
- And then there's the rest of us in the middle—we know we should pray, and we try. We do it, and sometimes it feels dry. It feels hard. But we keep trying, and certain times feel easier than others. I would put myself here in the middle.

Prayer is hard.

- It's hard because it requires hard work. Discipline. Focus, and also, dealing with things.
- The spirit of our age is both tolerant and avoidant. Don't like something? Cancel it. Switch off the news. Shut off the pain. Avoid it. Ignore it. Live in denial of it. But also tolerate everything because to be discerning is unloving.
- When you pray you can be neither tolerant nor avoidant. And that is both what makes it hard and what makes it beautiful because to pray you have to acknowledge pain—your own and others'—but in prayer you bring that pain into God's presence.

So how do we pray? How should disciples of Jesus pray? That's the question we're going to be exploring today.

- Thankfully, we aren't the first people to ask this question. Turn in your Bibles for a moment to Luke 11. We're going to be spending most of our time today in Matthew 6, but I want to start in Luke 11, starting in verse 1. The chapter opens and Jesus is doing something he often does, guess what it is? Prayer. He's praying. Verse 1 starts off:

(Vs) Luke 11: 1 "It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, when He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."

- Jesus' first disciples are just as confused about prayer as any of us has ever been. But it's because they apparently noticed something about Jesus and the way he prays that makes them ask the question. What's interesting is these guys are Jews, and in Jewish religious tradition there are at least three formal prayer times every day. You can do that in the synagogue or within your own home, but morning, noon and evening you're praying. So these aren't guys who don't pray. They know how to pray, at least in the traditional sense they've grown up with. They probably pray more than us.

- There's something about Jesus' prayer that is different to them. That could be any number of things. The biblical authors make a point of saying Jesus often withdrew to pray, so probably he's praying more frequently than just the three times a day that would have been standard. I imagine the disciples notice a familiarity he has with the God he prays to that they maybe don't personally have. Of course, Jesus is more than just a direct line person because he's the Son of God, but he probably has a prayer life that is visible enough in its power and intimacy that his disciples want what he's got.
- So how does he answer their question? Well, he answers it here in Luke 11 and also in Matthew 6, which is where we're going to read and study today. And I want us to read his response out loud together. This is Matthew 6:9-13...

"Our Father who is 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 also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

- There you have it. The Lord's prayer, everybody. This is a very famous prayer.
- There's probably very few of us that haven't heard it at least once. Some of you may even have the words memorized. I have had this prayer memorized for as long as I can remember. I have some Catholic friends and formerly Catholic friends who grew up praying this prayer every night, but I didn't grow up Catholic, so I was trying to remember where I learned this...and I think it was a toy my grandma got me when I was little.
- I have this memory of a doll with blonde hair and a purple dress, and when you put her hands together she would recite the Lord's prayer. So I did a google search, and in the archives of Ebay I found this listing for a doll made by the cosmetic company Avon. She's called a Precious Prayer doll.
- She's a little creepy, but this makes total sense to me because my grandma, God bless her, loved Avon. And she loved things like this, thought they were so cute. SO yeah, this is how I learned the Lord's prayer. I'm so grateful my grandma passed this onto me because there were, I think, pieces of it that would come back to me over the years that were really helpful, like praying that God's will would be done. And definitely asking for forgiveness. But it has only been in the last year that the Lord's prayer has really come to my attention as an important part of my Christian life I've been neglecting.
- When I say I've been neglecting it, what I mean is, Jesus gives us this prayer, and he says, "So pray in this way." That's in Matthew 6. In Luke 11, he says, "When you pray, say this." What do you think Jesus means when he says "pray this" or "pray like this"?

- I think he probably means what he says. Right? So novel. He probably means, “Pray this prayer.” Or at least, “Pray very much like this prayer.” That’s crazy, right? Profound. But seriously, I don’t think I’ve ever really taken that very seriously, ‘cause I didn’t pray the Lord’s prayer for a long time. And I think we should.
- The more I’ve studied and prayed the Lord’s prayer the more I have stumbled upon what feels like a universe within it. It’s a lot like the wardrobe from C.S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. It looks so ordinary, but push open the doors and wander around a bit, and you’ll uncover a whole world within it.
- So here’s what we’re going to do today. We’re going to study Jesus’ teaching on prayer. In Matthew 6, he gives us two ways not to pray and one way to pray, so we’re going to talk about the differences between those methods, and then we’re going to walk through the Lord’s prayer line by line and just give ourselves at least a thousand foot view of what’s going on in this little poem.
- Here’s my quick but important disclaimer (well, two disclaimers) before we get into all that: this prayer is far more than a bedtime prayer or a children’s rhyme. It is a summary, a nutshell version of Jesus’ entire mission. It is an anthem of the movement he came to start. What movement is that? Well, Jesus came announcing the kingdom of heaven.
- In Matthew 4:17, Jesus begins his ministry and tells people: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*
- It’s just a few verses later that Jesus opens up the sermon on the mount which is where the Lord’s prayer is, and begins teaching his disciples what it means to live as members of God’s kingdom. Yes, they’re ethical teachings, but they are not just that. These are not just moral teachings. Jesus is not just a moral teacher who came to set an example so we could be nice people.
- Jesus is a king announcing his reign, announcing a kingdom not of this world but one that is crashing into this world, not to destroy it but to renew it, and these “ethical teachings” are his way of setting the expectation for what it means to live as a loyal subject in that kingdom.
- This might seem like two different ideas, but what Jesus is showing us about his kingdom has everything to do with prayer.
- His teachings on prayer are right smack dab in the middle of this sermon about the kingdom. We’ll talk about that more towards the end, but I’m just giving you a heads-up: that’s where we’re going. The kingdom.
- The second disclaimer is Jesus’ kingdom is very un-American. It’s counter-cultural in every culture. So just keep that in mind as we read through Matthew 6. We’re dealing with kingdom ethics now.
- So we’re bringing our question to the text, and it’s not a modern question, it’s an ancient question. A question humans have been asking probably since the beginning, but certainly since the first century. We come asking, how do we pray?

- Jesus answers his disciples, starting in verse 5 of Matthew 6...

“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”

- Jesus does something good teachers frequently do: he gives some examples of what not to do.
- He gives us two examples: first, he says don't pray like the hypocrites. That's such an intense thing to call someone, and we usually associate that with the pharisees, religious leaders who were sticklers for the rules but missed God's compassionate and gracious heart in the process.
- And, that relates to the second example Jesus gives of how not to pray. He says, don't pray like the Gentiles with their many words. Now, is Jesus saying don't pray for a long time? Absolutely not. The night before he was crucified he was up most of the night pleading with his Father to provide another way of redemption for the world besides his own death. He prayed all night, a prayer that ended in submission.
- So that's not what Jesus is saying. He's referring to the habit of people who worshiped other gods in the ancient world. You can read examples in the Iliad or the Odyssey, but gods were seen as fickle in their relations with humans. So to get their attention or convince them to be favorable, people would go to the temple and pray these long flattering prayers, trying to win them over. Jesus is saying don't do that, for the same reason you don't need to perform for God or others when you pray. You don't have to convince the Father to listen to you.
- He says your Father knows what you need before you ask him—and his logic is so interesting because that's not a reason not to pray for Jesus. That's the reason to pray. God's already listening! He's already paying attention to you. In fact, he's paying such close attention to the details of your life that he knows what you're gonna talk to him about. So just do it.
- Why? Because there's a reward when we pray in this way. Did you catch that? He says the people who pray in an inappropriate way don't get a reward. Or rather, they do, but their reward is just their own self-gratification or maybe popularity or celebrity with people if they're especially good at performing. So if there's no reward for praying the wrong way, then by the same logic, there is a reward for praying the right way.
- What is that reward? Well, it's not getting whatever you want when you pray, but it is receiving God's best for you. This isn't like a transaction like other people don't get good things in life because they pray wrong. Jesus is getting at a heart posture.

- If you come to God in the sincerity of your love for him, seeking to invest in your relationship with him he always rewards that with at least three things by my thinking: 1) intimacy with himself. You get to know him by talking. That's usually kind of the end of our discussion about prayer, it's how you relate to God, and it is that, but there's other rewards too.
- The second is answered prayer. Again, this is not a vending machine situation. You pray the Lord's prayer and out comes a new car or a husband!! No. This is a Father and child relationship. I'm not a parent, but I can tell you I remember as a child with good and loving parents, when I disobeyed and did something unsafe or hurt someone else or disrespected my parents, not only did it mean I didn't get a treat or a toy or whatever I wanted, but it damaged my relationship with them. I damaged trust.
- And, that is the make it or break it part of the third reward, which is responsibility. Prayer and investing in the depth and intentionality of our relationships with Jesus open us up to greater responsibility in his kingdom. Do you want to be entrusted with greater responsibility in the kingdom of heaven? Then cultivate the kind of life that Jesus rewards.

Which brings us to the Lord's prayer, because it's the kind of prayer Jesus rewards. Let's go line by line, starting in verse 9...

"Our Father, who is in heaven..."

- Jesus is giving us more than just a way of addressing God or opening our prayers; he's giving us the foundation we pray and live from: I am a member of the family. And yet, my father is not just any father. We all have fathers. In prayer we speak to the Father in heaven. So from the opening lines of this prayer, Jesus is asking us to hold two things in tension: **that God is both involved in our lives and in charge of the cosmos.**
- We honestly could stop right there. Do you know how it would change the way we pray if we believed those two things? If we really believed God cared about the details of our lives? And who better to have on your team, the creator and sustainer of all? The God who cares intimately about the details of your circumstances also holds the keys to your circumstances. And oh by the way, the sovereign keys over the entire universe.
- There's more than this here too. Jesus' disciples were Israelites, which means they were familiar with calling God father, but they had a very specific association with it. For Jesus' disciples, God as Father was a very specific image that came from a memory that formed them as a people group. The first time God is called father in the Bible is in Exodus 4 when Moses goes before Pharaoh, and commands him to let the Israelites go from their enslavement. He says:

"Thus says the Lord, "Israel is My son, My firstborn. Let My son go that he may serve Me."

- For Jesus to tell his disciples to call God Father, they know he's telling them to get ready for the new Exodus. This is freedom from slavery, from sin, from despair. This is not just intimacy, this is hope.

- Jesus is drawing on all these things to give us a nuanced picture of the God we're addressing: he is our Father, intimately connected to us and devoted to us, and he is also the almighty God come to set us free. When we pray, we pray in recognition that the kingdom of God has arrived to set people free, and we pray into this reality of greater freedom for ourselves and others. Our Father in heaven...

"Hallowed be Your name."

- "Hallowed" is a very old word that means to make something holy. Now, isn't God already holy? Yes, of course he is. But there have been many times throughout history when his name has been profaned, or treated as unholy. In fact, every time the Israelites landed themselves in exile because of their sins, people blamed God and profaned his name, and whenever God would bring his people out of exile, it had just as much to do with his name as their wellbeing. For example, in Ezekiel 39:7, God says:

"My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel."

- When we pray for God's name to be hallowed, we're praying that the nations of the world would see who God really is. That he would no longer have a bad reputation with other people. And we are people upon whom the name of the Lord has been set. So when we pray this we pledge our lives to carry his name with righteousness and honor.

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

- What exactly are we praying for when we pray for God's kingdom to come? This is really important for us to understand because it's critical to this prayer, to all prayer, to how we orient our lives homeward.
- This is that kingdom concept we mentioned briefly earlier. Jesus has arrived, but not randomly. Jesus comes in fulfillment of a story that's been unfolding for thousands of years. It's the story of God and humanity. It's the story you will find in your Bibles. The story you will find in your Bibles is God created a good world where he and humans would dwell together in unified, loving relationship. Humans rebelled and we continue to ruin ourselves, each other, and God's world. So God, over thousands of years, works with humanity, promising in Scripture that he will come again as king to reclaim the earth and rule and reign over his people. Heaven is not just a place you go when you die. It's God space that once completely overlapped with human space, and Jesus has come to reunite those two realms. When we pray for God's kingdom to come, we're praying that heaven and earth would be reunited fully once more.
- And this is the crux of this prayer in my mind. Because it's such a powerful opportunity to pray for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done in the earth—and in our own lives. And if we start our prayers in this posture of, "Lord, not my will but yours be done," then as we move into the second half of the prayer, we are ready for it.
- Did you notice the first half of the prayer is focused on God - his name, his kingdom, his will, and the second half is focused on us? Our bread, our sins, our deliverance. And the hinge, the phrase that transitions us from praising God to praying for our own needs is this statement of surrender to his will.

- When I say surrender, I don't mean shrugging our shoulders. I guess if God wants to do something, I can put up with it. What I want doesn't matter anyway. That would be fine if our God was remote, detached, uninvolved, but it won't work for the God Jesus prayed to. It won't work for those of us who have staked our lives upon who Jesus is.
- Theologian N.T. Wright calls this sentence "thy will be done," the prayer of submission and commission or subversion and conversion because it is the prayer you pray if you are ready to sign on for the kingdom.
- When you're ready to put your hand to the plow and not look back and really dig in and start following Jesus and furthering his kingdom with everything you have, this is the prayer that orients you that direction and recalibrates everything else in your life so that you can leave behind that which so easily entangles you and get going with God.
- Because we're children of God, members of the family, we can be confident when we ask:

"Give us this day our daily bread."

- As we talk about these three requests for bread, forgiveness, and deliverance, I want to point out right off that bat that Jesus could easily have made these individual statements. And that's usually how we take them, but being a part of God's kingdom is being apart of the family of God, which means every time I recognize my own needs and bring them before the throne of heaven, it's a reminder and an invitation to pray for and with others, too. Provision for others. Forgiveness for others. Deliverance for others.
- One of the things I find most fascinating about this prayer for bread, for our daily needs, is that it's not first. When I pray, my needs are usually what's at the forefront of my mind and probably are what inspired me to pray in the first place, but Jesus puts this prayer after these three lines of adoration of the Father. Now, this is not to say we won't have moments or seasons where in our desperation we are not this organized in prayer, and we fall at the Father's feet begging for his help, provision, or intervention. And that's okay. But for these other times where we have the privilege of being a little more collected, and in those moments, I think there are multiple reasons for this order.
- Something else N.T. Wright says about the Lord's prayer that I love is:

"The Lord's prayer is not about a change in content. It's about a change in priority."

- We don't have to change our content, the fact that we have needs, but the priority we see here is our adoration of the Father comes first, and then we bring our needs to him. That's reverent for sure, but I think it's as much for us as it is for him. Because usually when I come all stressed to the Father, but I stop first to acknowledge his character and kingdom, by the time I get to my laundry list of needs I am far less worried because I've reminded myself who I'm talking to.
- And you know, God never asks us to deny our desires. Just the opposite, in fact—he invites us to bring them to him. In the process, our desires get straightened out, you see that? Because if I have this desire for a new job or a spouse or a better relationship with my child or a way to pay my bills, if there's anything I'm wanting or asking for that's not good for me, as long as I'm praying the first half of the prayer too and chasing after God's will and kingdom, any misordered desire I have is going to get reoriented in the process. We can stop stressing and just ask.

- If we know who God is and we just ask like trusting children, we'll find that what Jesus says in Matthew 7 just a few verses later, is absolutely true.

"What man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

- You see? We don't have to fear God's going to give us something bad. He's good, so he only gives what's good. But at the same time, we can trust that because we have a good Father, when we come to him and ask for bread—our daily needs—he has so much more in mind.
- Like the Israelites in the wilderness: God gave them bread from heaven (manna) daily. They had to trust him for that provision every single day, and it was hard. But that provision for daily needs eventually gave way to this lush and abundant promised land. Your God has good in store for you too.
- Alright, next phrase...

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

- We talked earlier about how we live in a culture of tolerance and denial. That's important to acknowledge again here because our culture cheapens sin, and as a result it cheapens forgiveness.
- Let me explain. Jesus told a story about forgiveness we know famously as the parable of the prodigal son. In it, a son squanders his family inheritance on poor choices, living in sin, leaving home, and he loses everything. He eventually comes crawling back to his father, but before he can even finish begging just to be a servant in the house—before he's even made it to the doorstep—his father has come running to meet him and embrace him. It's total forgiveness in an instant, the minute the son decides to head homeward. That's the picture Jesus gives us of the Father's forgiveness of us.
- But what if that story was told with the contemporary values of tolerance and denial? We'd say the son was just doing his thing, just whatever makes him happy. If it feels good to him and fulfills him that's fine. And so he comes home, and the father is either tolerant of him, "Yeah sure, whatever, it's fine you're back." Or he is some simpering fool denying it all, "Oh, yeah my boy, we don't see eye to eye on everything, but he's a good boy. He's fine."
- If we cease to acknowledge the severity of sin, we also change the character of God in our minds. But the beauty is, the moment we acknowledge our sins, and ask for forgiveness, we get to experience the running Father, coming out to meet us and hold us close and restore us fully to the family instantly.
- And this second half is a hard statement. Forgive us, as we forgive others. Jesus says a couple verses later in verse 15:

"If you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses."

- I told you this was un-American. This is not an equal opportunity statement, ya feel?
- Here's why this is important. It's the kingdom again. Jesus' kingdom has arrived, and entrance into it comes through the forgiveness of our sins through faith in Jesus. But to deny someone else forgiveness once you're a member of the kingdom is to deny the basis of your own new existence. You just can't do it. And this is at the heart of Jesus' teaching. He tells religious leaders in Matthew 22 that the greatest commandment is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." That's not a first priority, second priority statement. It's a both/and.
- Now, this teaching about love and this teaching about forgiveness are very similar. Jesus is saying to be forgiven you have to forgive others, and to love God you have to love others. But it's not because that's how you earn forgiveness or love. We can't earn God's love or forgiveness. The Christian life is all about receiving. Receiving from God's hand. Receiving his grace. Receiving his love and forgiveness.
- So what Jesus is saying here is way more profound than a conditional statement. He's just recognizing if you are unable to forgive others you won't be able to recognize your own sin and receive God's forgiveness of you.
- What's most encouraging to me about this is, once again, the prayer doesn't start here. We don't come to God first as prodigals returning home. We are not permanent prodigals. We are permanent children, which is why we start by calling God Father, and when we're seated around the dinner table with our Father, we can share with him whatever we need to own.
- These commandments are really hard, which is why the prayer concludes with this line:

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

- Now, this word "temptation" is really more easily understood as "testing." James 1 tells us God isn't tempted by evil, and he doesn't tempt anyone. But he does test his people sometimes. And so Jesus is saying we should pray not to enter into those tests—because they're hard! And it's a prayer that we would be able to resist the temptation we experience on a daily basis, too.
- As far as being delivered from evil, it should be no surprise to any of us that there is evil in the world. When we identify ourselves with Jesus, we can expect to experience the same trials and tribulations he did: he was tested in the wilderness, taunted by demonic forces, criticized by spiritual leaders, threatened and oppressed by political forces, betrayed by his friends, and rejected by a good chunk of the people he knew.
- When you sign up for the kingdom of Jesus, you are signing up for battle.
- There's always been multiple kingdoms at play: God's kingdom versus Rome and other major empires. God's kingdom and its triumph over darkness. God's kingdom versus our own kingdoms of self. But if you are in Christ, Paul says in Colossians 1, you have already been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the beloved son. And in that kingdom there is work to do.

- It's not just a battle on behalf of our flesh, you know, trying to resist temptation and put sin to death in our lives. It is that, but it's a battle for the world. The Lord's prayer ends with this "deliver us" line, and it's a prayer for the world to be delivered. This is not a prayer from a distance. It's a prayer that lights the way as we walk ahead into the darkness to take part in other people's deliverance from evil.
- So, that's the Lord's prayer everybody.
- There's one other line that is in some of your Bibles, but not all. "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever, amen." That's not in the earliest manuscripts because it was probably added later by early Christian churches just as a way to wrap up or conclude the prayer. So we won't linger there, but it's beautiful, and I love to conclude with that line anyway when I pray the Lord's prayer.
- So as we conclude, I want to leave you with two thoughts about prayer. The first is very practical...
 - The Lord's prayer is clearly not a tame prayer, but it is a template. It's the answer to our original question, "How do we pray?" Jesus gave us a template. That doesn't mean you shouldn't ever pray again without utilizing the Lord's prayer. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing, which would be hard to do if this was all we ever prayed. But I think it is a really helpful tool if you want to make prayer a habit that eventually becomes a part of your daily routine because it's all encompassing.
- What I want to suggest is that you start praying the Lord's prayer daily, but use it as an outline. I like to pause after every major phrase or thought and fill in what comes next with some of my own thoughts.
- It's just a really beautiful and simple way to incorporate prayer into your daily rhythms and to pray specifically and in a focused way. It keeps us on track and praying for the right thing. And Jesus himself commanded it, so you know you're praying how he himself would.
- The second thing I want to leave you with is an encouragement and a challenge:
 - If this is a prayer for the kingdom, and it is a prayer for a kingdom that is just as much invading earth as it is already in heaven, then we can't just pray the Lord's prayer. We have to live it.
- This is a prayer that embodies Jesus' mission to the world and the way we're supposed to live and interact with our Christian brothers and sisters. And you might say, "Well, the church doesn't look very much like that. Or most churches don't anyway." And you might be right. But what are we doing about it? It's never too late to reclaim the vision. It's never too late to lift our eyes to higher ideals and get after the mission of Jesus, which may involve calling our church communities higher. It will, I'm sure, involve changes to our own lives.
- But it starts with this prayer. This prayer isn't magic. But when we pray in the way Jesus taught us to, invoking the name of the king of the kingdom, things in our lives, in the world, jump to attention. And our hearts change in the process. So that we might be to truly proclaim and SEE in action that closing line, "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever! Amen."