

Today we bring to a close, our examination of prayer; we started in September with Jesus' teaching **on** prayer by studying line by line, what we know as the "The Lord's Prayer" - Our Father, Who lives in Heaven...", and then examined a few examples of Jesus **in** prayer. We bring this to a close today with what is commonly known as the "**Great Priestly/Pastoral Prayer**", which I find, many refer now to as the "Lord's Prayer", being the prayer our Lord Jesus prayed.

I recently read an article titled, "**Against the Grain - 12 Disruptive Leaders Shaking up the World**". The word "*disruptive*" might bring to mind a 5-year old child who moves around like a whirlwind, *disrupting* everything in their path.

The first time I encountered the word **disruptive** not in the context of a disruptive child, was when it described technologies which *disrupt* the way we are used to doing things; a very simple example of a *disruptive* technology would be, buying online, which means, we no longer hold clothes up to us in front of a mirror in the shop while a helpful, well made-up teenage shop assistant says, *Suits you perfectly!* Buying online also means we don't press the fruit or poke the meat to check its freshness; we simply identify the product we want, click on it, pay for it and wait for it to be delivered.

The author chose 12 **disruptive leaders**, three women and nine men, who are changing the way cities, states and nations think and behave. These 12 **disruptive** leaders, do not speak the post-colonial language of the second half of the twentieth century, language and ideas tainted by two world wars, of revolutions of the people, freedom from oppression, and the politics of the right and the left; these 12 disruptive leaders convey a new and refreshed vision for the people they lead, a generation with no connection to the past.

One of the 12 disruptive leaders is Sheikh Mohammad bin Salman, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, who has been in the news recently. He says, "*We are simply reverting to what we followed, a moderate Islam, open to the world and all religions. 70% of the Saudis are younger than 30. Honestly, we won't waste 30 years of our life combating extremist thoughts. We will destroy them and immediately*".

The one of the 12 who caught my attention, was the President of Argentina, Mauricio Macri who said, "*We have entered into a period of permanent reform.*"

Argentina must not stop and must not fear reforms, because to reform is to grow, progress and evolve”.

Jesus was a disruptive leader, who changed the language of practiced religion, opened our minds to a new vision of life, showing us a way forward through a restored relationship with God.

This late night prayer in the garden is striking because it goes against the grain of the prayers of Rabbi's and prominent teachers and preachers of Jesus' day, who taught their disciples wordy prayers of acclamation, adoration and praise. *Stand in the street corners, pray these prayers aloud,¹ and don't forget to mention the name the Rabbi who taught you the prayer.* These religious leaders had no expressed responsibility for their followers, nor did they feel accountable to God for their disciples.

My first job was a Sales and Marketing executive in a small family owned factory which made a range of plastic products, from bags and wrappers, to melamine plates, cups and saucers, ashtrays and other household and personal use products.

I joined on a Monday. Friday was pay-day, and the Managing Director took me to the factory floor and with a sweep of his hand said, *“I want you to know, Kalyan, you are responsible for all these people!”*

I froze, my mouth went dry! He would have seen beads of perspiration running down my face. He put his arm on my shoulder and said, *“You must understand Kalyan, unless you come up with a viable marketing plan and sell what we produce, these people cannot be paid!”*

The Managing Director made it clear, we had an agreement; the efforts of my work should result in the workers being paid, and this would form the basis of my reporting back to him.

¹ Matthew 6:5

This prayer, Jesus' final conversation with His Father, He is reporting back to His Father on the task agreed between them: *you gave me authority over all life, to give eternal life to all you have entrusted to me.*²

At the start of Jesus' ministry, He taught us **how to** pray³. Now, in the garden, at the end of His life, Jesus demonstrates how He practices and lives the life of prayer He taught us. The first thing we appreciate is this, prayer helps us grow in intimacy with "Our Father in Heaven", and as our relationship develops and becomes more personal and open, God trusts us and reveals the secrets of His kingdom; He opens our mind to His plans; He unlocks our spirits to understand, the role He has planned for us in His Kingdom.

At Easter, we shall look at this prayer in greater detail, but for now, there are four things we can learn from this prayer, and apply in our lives:

First, life as we have it, is all about the glory of God; this life is not about ourselves, what we do and do not do, what we think or do not think. Jesus opens His prayer putting this in context - *Father! Glorify your Son that He may glorify You.*

Our understanding of the word *glory* is based on our view of royalty: kings and queens, palaces, robes, riches etc. We talk about such people, *in all their glory.*

In the Bible, the word *glorify* (or to *give glory*) describes the act of *giving total and absolute credit to God, with a heart that is overflowing with pure joy, and a spirit of unadulterated thankfulness.*

God is the author of life; He is the creator of all things seen and unseen. He created us to live in, to delight in, and to enjoy His creation. We know the story; we know what happened next. Sadly, we fell prey to a lie, to fake news that life would be better if we disregarded His instructions, to become **as God**.

Our impression of God is that He is a strict disciplinarian, who has the power to inflict untold and unbearable pain.

² John 17:2

³ Luke 11:1

Reading this very important text with this view of God, we miss the real action. God does not stand by and say, *you deserve it because you disobeyed me*. God does not stand by and say, *I will let you wallow in your brokenness as punishment*.

God steps out instantly and decisively to correct the problem we created. The one who is punished, is the one who deceived us into believing a lie. To him God says, *you tricked the woman into believing a lie, so mark my words, her offspring will fatally wound you, which will be the end of you*. Instantly and decisively God puts this plan into action. He gives Jesus authority over all life, to restore to eternal life, anyone who accepts this expression of God's love.

Life as we have it, is all about the glory of God, who has prepared for us things the eyes have not seen, nor the ears heard, not even the mind ever imagined⁴.

The **second** thing we note from this prayer, God's invitation to eternal life in His kingdom, is based on the fact that Jesus has successfully completed what He set out to do, even before He has encountered the cross!

*I have accomplished the work you sent me to do; I came from you, now I am returning home to the glory I had before the world existed.*⁵

What confidence! The Father is confident in His Son's obedience, and the Son is confident His Father would not allow death to hold Him back. This confidence is so absolute, we can depend on, and rely upon it for our lives.

The **third** thing we learn from Jesus' prayer in the garden, hours before his arrest, trial and crucifixion, Jesus gives an account to God, for the lives of people whom God entrusted to Him.

Jesus prays, *To all whom You have given me, I have made You known to them; I have given them the word You gave me, and they have received it*.

This is an honest report, which is supported by the record of Jesus' teaching:

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:9; Isaiah 64:4; Psalm 31:19

⁵ John 17:4-5

He taught, *I have come that you may have life and live it abundantly*⁶, and He declared, *The Father and I are one*⁷; *...if you have seen me, you have seen the Father*⁸.

He summarised His life and His mission as follows:

*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you **do** know him and have seen him!*⁹

In this midnight prayer in the garden, Jesus is telling His Father, *You wanted people to know who you really are, and I have accomplished this task.*

And **finally**, Jesus reveals His absolute commitment to protect His church, those who believe and those who will believe, He is the Son of God, come to save and restore us to the Father.

He prays, *I do not ask for these only (those already His disciples and followers), but also for those who **will** believe in Me through their word, that they may **all** be one, just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in us, so that world may believe that you have sent me.*¹⁰

Throughout this prayer, Jesus repeats these four things, which should form the basis of our prayer life:

- May your glory, Father, be seen in all I do.
- I am confident I have accomplished what we agreed I should, and I know you are confident in my obedience, even to the cross.
- I have also accomplished the task of showing people who you really are, of correcting peoples' misconception of you.

⁶ John 10:10

⁷ John 10:30

⁸ John 14:9

⁹ John 14:6

¹⁰ John 17:20-21

- Finally, I ask you to protect and keep safe, from all harm and danger and from the cunning schemes of the evil one, all who believe in You, and all those who, because of their testimony, will come to believe in You.

As we close this chapter in our study of prayer, and we shall come back to it again at a later time, may I leave you with this encouragement, Jesus not only taught us how to pray, but He also demonstrated to us, the power of prayer, which is rooted in a growing personal relationship with, "Our Father, whose home is Heaven... may your kingdom come on earth, exactly as it is in Your home, in Heaven".

A personal testimony as we close: by 7pm last night I had a muscle spasm in my right hip which caused excruciating and severe pain. I was unable to do anything, including sleep. I prayed and tried to sleep. I awoke at 3 am and this message was going through my mind. I prayed with this confidence, that God hears and answers prayer. So, in the midst of severe pain, I praised God, that by morning I would be healed of this pain. Here I am, pain-free this morning!

Jesus invites us into this relationship with Him and with Father God, at all times being confident that the work of Christ on the cross was not futile. God invites us into His kingdom here on earth, to experience His love and faithfulness, and to be assured that Jesus' work on the cross has accomplished its work and opened the door to eternity with Him.

AMEN.