

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Pray Like This...

PART

1

TITLE

Pray Like A Child...

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:5-9



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Good morning to you Providence. Hope you are well. My name's Dave, one of the pastors here. I have the joy of teaching you this morning. Our lead pastor, Brian, is with his family down in Georgia slinging some mud on some four-wheelers, so hopefully he makes it back next week. We are excited to be able to look at this series on prayer and walk through that. If you're visiting us live stream, we say good morning to you, but if you're our guests with us, it is so good to have you. Church family, it's great to see you.

I hope and trust you had a good Christmas with the kids and family and maybe the craziness. I know my family and I, we had a blast. We were praising God for many things. One in particular was a honey-baked ham. It's just amazing how God ordain and created a pig to be cooked and then glazed with honey. That's just a kindness of God in so many ways. And so we praised him for that.

Here's what we're going to do. No greater way really to start a new year than looking at a biblical perspective on prayer. Many of you, including our staff, our team, have been praying really like crazy for the last year and a half. God has moved us to a vision of three years. We're a year and a half into that called plant. A part of that vision is we want to show you it's threefold, right? Where we have been looking at to plant our lives in the church. The idea there is to be encouraging us to not just be spectators but to be participants in and on mission with each other, and encouraging one another, and doing life with each other, and being a part of a life group, a smaller group than this room where we could pray for each other and get to know each other and really spur and stir one another toward love and good deeds as the book of Hebrews says.

We also talked about planting the gospel in the city where we are desiring to take every day conversations and turn those to spiritual conversations that would lead to gospel conversations. Where we could see 69 people move to the city each day. People are coming. God's raised up, by his kindness and grace, this city to be one of influence even worldwide, and for us to be intentional to be able to plant seeds of the gospel. And see, maybe even a thousand of you watch someone come to faith and trust in Christ. What a joy that would be to be able to experience that. We're praying that. We're depending on God for that.

The last one is to plant churches in the world. We have nine church plant partnerships in North America where God's doing amazing things. Just a hour and a half flight up north to Toronto, 7 million people in that city with less than 2% of those know Christ. We've got church plant partnerships globally speaking with many pastors that are in hard areas of the world that we're supporting and encouraging. Even this year one of our own staff the Lord moved in his heart to be able to ... he and his wife, his family, and another family from our church are moving in six months to London, England. A city of 11 million people with less than 2% of those who know Christ. To plant a church. To get this good news of Christ to as many people as possible.

All of these right things, these aspirations that we have in some degree you think maybe would they be pulled off by the skill of man. And we say, "No. It's not going to happen unless the spirit of God works, unless the spirit of God makes this happen." And so we're depending on him. We're praying to him. We want to be a people marked by not talking just about God, but talking to God. That's our desire.

We're excited to see what the next year and a half of this vision would look like as we continue to pray and walk through what God's doing not only in us and to us, but also through us. And so with that said, let's pray and talk to him now before we read our text and unpack this morning sermon. Okay?

Father, thank you for today. Thank you for the opportunity to be able to in another way to call on you, to depend on you, to lean into you, to open your word and have your word open us in a sense, and to be able to read it and have it to read us, and to be able to transform us, not inform us, but to transform us, God, to be more like your son. So, Lord, would you do a great work through this text we pray. In Jesus name, amen.

If you don't have a bible I want to encourage you. You can take one, in the seats in front of you, you can have that as a gift from us. Maybe you're new to Christianity or exploring Christianity and you don't have a bible. Take that as a gift. We're gonna be in that bible under the seat on page 811. In your bible, probably a different page, Matthew chapter six. Matthew chapter six.

Again, if you're new to studying the bible, you'll see a larger number. That's your chapter. If you scroll down to the smaller number, five, that will be where we'll read today in our verse. The context here is Jesus has started his ministry. It's the Sermon on the Mount. Maybe you've heard of that. This is a portion of that. It runs from chapters five to seven, but in chapter six he teaches his disciples. He's on a mountainside close to the Sea of Galilee and he's teaching them. He's walking with them how to pray. This is what he says.

Verse five. This is the word of God. "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your father who is in secret. And your father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them for your father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this. Our Father in Heaven. Hallowed be your name. Our Father in Heaven. Hallowed be your name."

Well, this morning I want to show us three simple truths about God and prayer. The first one is this. It's God is concerned with how we pray. God is concerned with how we pray. So, Jesus, as he's teaching, right, before he tells us to pray like this, he tells us how not to pray. He does this because he knows the human heart. He knows the human heart is inclined to make much of itself and even use spiritual things to draw attention to oneself. In one sense, we are consumed with ourselves, and he knows this. And so from verses five through eight he walks through you must not be like the hypocrites. They love to stand. They love to pray and to be seen at the street corners. He's walking through this, right?

Many of us, this past week, have probably taken Christmas photos, which I know everybody loves. Right? We gather at the family. When you go from one place to another, and you do it before you eat because after you eat, man, you're gone. Right? The shirttail comes out. The sweats are on. But everybody shows up looking all good. What happens is when you get that ... when everybody, like the whole family in front of the tree, right, in front of the fireplace, outside, wherever it's at, and you've got everybody there. And then you say, "Go", and either a neighbor's come over to take it or you've got a long selfie stick or something's happening. You take that picture, and then everybody runs to the phone to pull up the picture to not see how good the family looks.

That's not what you're doing, is it? No. Where do your eyes go on the picture? Your eyes go directly to yourself. Right? You start critiquing. Oh, man, my hair wasn't ... Can we do that again. Everybody, let's get back together one more time. Right? The shirt's messed up. You don't like the smile. You're looking at your smile and you don't like the way you smiled, and so let's do that again. What that tells us, what that shows evidence in our heart that we're consumed with ourself. We're consumed with how we look. We're consume with us as opposed to being concerned with God.

Luke chapter 22 says it like this. Now, listen. The context of this verse is amazing because Jesus is walking with his disciples, and as he's walking with them, it's come to the point of Passover. So, he's taking Passover, this amazing celebration of God's deliverance from Egypt. Right? He's remove ... He led the people out. He used the man named Moses to do it. He led them out of this bondage, which was really a reflection of the bondage of sin that we're in. It was pointing to a great rescue. But in this Passover they're celebrating it. They're there in Israel. As they come on this particular night Jesus, he takes the bread, he blesses it. He takes the cup, he blesses it. And he tells them ... He says, "This Passover meal, this is actually pointing to me, the Passover lamb. It's about me." In that context that Luke 22 then says they've taken the cup, they've taken the bread, it's the night he's going to be arrested, betrayed, crucified within 12 hours, and this is what happens.

"Now, there was also a dispute among them, the disciples, that were with him at the Passover table as to which of them should be considered the greatest." Are you kidding? Three years walking with the Savior. The Savior has just done the Passover meal with his boys. He's told them what's going to come. He's blessed it. He's prayed. And is at that table that this is in their heart. Right? And it's in this place, right, that this could be in our heart. This could be in our heart. Where we desire to be the greatest.

God, he wants our prayers to not be hypocritical but heartfelt. They love. Many of these religious leaders of the time, they were not even Christians. They weren't following Jesus. They love the praise of man more than the praise of God and his approval on them. They wanted the approval of man. It's shown in verse five. In verse five it says specifically that they do these things so that they may be seen by others. In verse seven it says that they use these empty phrases and these lot of words. He didn't want us to use a lot of words that are meaningless. He wants us to use words that mean a lot.

You're praying to the creator of the universe. John 12:43. It says, "For they loved human praise more than praise from God." Listen. Think about this for just a minute. If you and were as concerned over God and praying to God and being dependent on him and talking to him, this is what prayer is. As with our status on social media of who follows us, who likes our post. Right? I think maybe the third grade spiritual awakening could take place. If you think with me for just a moment how narcissistic our culture is, and the social media phenomenon that's impacting and having a staggering impact on the world at large. Of how consumed you and I are with these things and what people think about what we're doing.

It's showing up in London. As you know, one of our pastor's family is moving there this year to plant a church in a city with 11 million people, less than 2% of those follow Jesus. Their parliament, their government there, as they have certain offices of employment there, they're called ... they use the word minister. It has nothing to do with religious things. It's just called minister of finance, minister of commerce, the prime minister. Hello? Right? They use this word but it's not associated with following Jesus. This particular year, this past year, because of the depression that is rising at a staggering rate that's attributed mostly to the use of smartphones, that they have hired and employed a person called a minister of loneliness in their city to try to handle the narcissistic movement of being so consumed with self.

Listen. The more you want public praise, the emptier your soul will be. The more you crave it, you'll fill it up with anything. Look. The more you privately ... Listen. The more you privately encounter the living God in prayer for desire, right? This desire for public approval will lessen. It will loosen it'll grip on your heart. The more private encounter with the living God, the more this constant crave for approval from mankind will lessen. It will loosen its grip on you.

This is what the gospel does. The gospel frees you. Think about this. If you're more concerned with having a like on something that you post rather than being loved by God, we probably need to reorient those things. We need to reorder those things. The gospel is the good news of Christ that he loves you. That even in a state of sin he pursued you. He rescued you. He's offered redemption through his son. And because of this good news, when you apply that to your heart, not only for salvation but for transformation and walking, the things of the world that so easily grip and entangle us will loosen its grip.

One pastor and theologian up in Minnesota. He's retired recently and just writing now. His name's John Piper. He says this. He says, "One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the last day that prayerlessness was not from lack of time." Amen. "Was not from a lack of time." And so listen. God's concerned, yes. He's concerned with how we pray, so let's pray to pursue God and not the praise of man.

He's concerned, yes, but secondly I want you to see that he's compassionate. That verse nine, he's compassionate in that we can call him our Father when we pray. God is compassionate. He shows this compassion to us in that we can call him our Father when we pray. No other religion in the world can address the almighty God of the universe as Father. And notice what it says. Not only father, it says, "Our Father." This is family language. This is what God does. He puts you in a family with one another where we are brothers and sisters in Christ and we can call him our Father.

Romans chapter eight says it like this. Romans chapter eight verse 14 says, "For those who are led by the spirit of God are the children of God. The spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again. Rather, the spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him, and by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

Father. Listen, I love being a dad of four kids. Back in the day when they were a little younger ... I actually run jump to them now, right? They kind of grown up. But back in the day when they were younger and I would come home, I love the fact that they would come to me. They would just come and they would just leap into my arms. I would throw them up, hit the ceiling. It was awesome. Right? Bring them down. Comfort them a little bit. You know? It's amazing that this is how God in a sense wants us to come to him, as a child. That we would pray to him like a child.

Why that's so hard is because the older you get it's more independent you became. Less you think you need God. This is why Jesus would actually use specific text, not to try to explain that salvation it was for babies or young people or young children. He was actually using the poster of how children come and how they're dependent as a way that adults should come to God in dependence and trust.

He says in Matthew 18. He says it like this. "Truly, truly I tell you, unless you turn and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." This picture of a son, I want to show you, a son jumping into a dad's arms. This is the picture that as adults, as young people, as older people that God wants from us in a sense to come to him, to leap to him, to not hold back. At any time to leap looking at this God who says we can call him Father.

How much more a privilege is it, not providence, this morning that we can call him Father knowing and have access to him knowing that we were once enemies with him. We weren't born children of God. We were born sinners. Right? We were adopted. He brought us into the family. We rebelled. He made a promise at the beginning of the book. He made a promise someone would come, and this person has come, Jesus. We been celebrating it the last month. This advent, this coming of the Lord Jesus. He came not to just live, but he came to die for our sins in our place. What great grace. Right?

This person Jesus has come. He's done this. He died on a cross. God poured out his wrath upon him. He absorbed all the wrath of God's holiness and then he was buried. And on the third day he was raised from the dead victoriously to vindicate the truth that he was the son of God and that he can forgive sins.

Listen. My kids, they can call on me anytime. They have full access at anytime. The reason being, it was because they were born of me. Right? John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he give the right to become children of God." My children, because they're born of me, they have a right when it's 3 a.m. in the morning and the storm ... when they were little. Right? They don't do it now. One of them does, but when the storm comes and the thundering and the lightening. I mean 3 a.m. they're all piling up on top of me. They want to be close to dad. There was something about being closer to dad, not just in the house with dad, but talking to dad that brought great comfort. They had full access to me at 3 a.m.

Look, your children don't have access. I'm not opening the door at 3 a.m. if your children come knock on the door. Right? I love your children, but they're not mine. No, but when God ... When you come to God and you've trusted Christ and you've placed your faith in him, you become a child of God, adopted. You have, watch this, you have full access to God, once an enemy. Now a child to call him Father.

Oh, listen. Listen. Many view God as one whose ... because maybe there's been a past or some history with a dad. Right? Listen. Don't look at God as Father through the lens of your experience. Look at God as Father through the lens of the scripture. Allow the scriptures to paint this picture for you. Not maybe a home that was dysfunctional with a father that wasn't there, that you didn't have access to. Many view God in this particular way. Right?

There's a clip I want to show you this morning of a professor in South Korea who is doing a live interview with BBC. His children have a surprise for him. Okay, so check this out real quick.

Speaker 2: Scandals happen all the time. The question is how [inaudible] those scandals.

Speaker 3: And what will it mean for the wider region? I think one of your children's just walked in. I mean shifting sands in the region. Do you think relations with the North may change?

Speaker 2: I would be surprised if they do. Pardon me. My apologies.

Speaker 3: What's this going to mean for region?

Speaker 2: My apologies. Sorry. South Korea's policy choices on North Korea have been severely limited in the last six months ...

That was a live interview with BBC. It didn't go well. This professor is giving an account over some tension between North and South Korea. That was his wife that came in. As I saw that I was laying on the floor laughing. I also begin to think how the door was supposed to be locked. Right? The kids got in. And how the door of heaven is never locked for those in Christ. It's never locked. Right?

When you run to him ... Listen. The word interrupt is not in God's vocabulary. You can't interrupt him. I mean he will never do the Heimlich on you. Did you see the guy gave his daughter the Heimlich. Not right now. No one will ever slam the door. No one will take you from God. No one can snatch you from his hand the scriptures teach.

Listen. You and I have access, full access because of what Christ has done, to God. We have access to God. I have access to one house in North Raleigh with a key that fits. I do have the garage code to my in-laws, thank God. I could get to their kitchen and their refrigerator, but I don't have a key. They won't give me a key and they've changed the garage code a couple of times. But I have one key, access to one home.

Listen. Listen. In Christ, in Christ you and I have full access to God. Full access to God. To the throne of God. Revelation chapter four says ... In Revelation chapter four says that the angels are singing at the throne of God. They're singing, "Holy. Holy, holy is the Lord God almighty. He is the one who has come. Dominion, glory, power, and all of us worship he is worth of." Imagine that scene. That scene is constantly going on and our prayers, because of Christ and the resurrection of the king and your faith and trust in him, and he's a high priest who's gone ahead of us, our prayers make it up to God's throne. Anytime. Every time. As you're walking with Christ and you have a relationship with him, God says, "My throne." His throne of grace.

None of us in this room probably have access to any kingdoms or thrones in any governments, housing, mansions, whatever. And yet, yet we have access to God. We can talk to God. I can't even talk to the ... I don't have access to get through the gate downtown to the governor. I don't have access. I have no access. I can't talk to him. Doesn't know my name. I have full access to God, the creator of the universe, the sovereign one whose made all things.

Listen. Hebrews chapter four says it like this. "Therefore, since we have a great high priest whose ascended into heaven, Jesus, the son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are. Yet, he did not sin. And because of this, let us then ..." Look at this. "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence." He's not only made a way ... He's not only made a way to talk to him. We don't have to fear, tremble to get there. Full access to come and approach the throne of grace without being wiped out because of his holiness. "... with confidence, so that ..." Look. "So that we may receive ..." Oh, look what comes flowing from this throne of God when we talk to him. Look. You and I can "... receive mercy." Oh, mercy, "... and find grace to help ..." Oh, I need so much help. I need so much help. "... to help us in our time of need."

Is that landing on you? Can approach God. You have full access to God. Take that for granted? You can talk to him. What a gift. Oh, God, what a gift. Let's trust. Let's trust Jesus. Let's trust Jesus, the son of God, and pray to God as Father.

Oh, he's got concerns, yes. He's compassionate, yes. He's compassionate. Oh, we can call him our Father. But he has ... Watch this. He has capacity. Number three: God has capacity as he reigns in heaven to handle what we pray. He's got concerns how we pray. Yes. He has compassions and that we can call him Father when we pray. But he has capacity as he reigns in heaven to handle what we pray.

Notice the text. It says, "Our Father ..." Where? "... in heaven." Now Jesus is not trying to give us a GPS location for God. He's not dropping a pin in the text to say this is where you find him. He's reminding us that heaven is over earth and it's a place of authority, it's a place of power. It's not limited by land or ocean or mountaintops. Isaiah will say that heaven is God's throne room and earth is a foot stool for God.

Oh, he's lifting our eyes. He's lifting our eyes to where the Father reigns in sovereign authority and control, and says, "This is the one to whom you are praying to." He's inviting, because of his capacity in the heavens, he's inviting us to come to him and bring anything and everything we have. It's never too much. It's never too much. The Psalmists will say of God that God says, "The world is mine and the fullness of it."

Listen. Listen. From the smallest of requests to the largest of regrets and from the simple fullness of heart to the severity of feeling hopeless, God ... Listen to this. Don't miss this. God has more capacity in him than we have requests in us. This is the God who we call Father. Oh, listen. Everything has a maximum capacity at some point. It's limited. This room is limited with seats. Right?

One of the largest planes that have recently been made, it's the Airbus A380. Right? Show you a picture of it. It's the big one, the double-decker right next to a normal size plane. It weighs, watch this, 1.2 million pounds. I'm just not getting on that. Okay? How does that get in the air? Right? How in the world does that get in the air? It can carry 81,000 gallons of fuel. It can fly a capacity of 8,000 miles. It costs \$445 million. Its maximum capacity is 868 passengers. 868 passengers. Everything has a limit except the throne room of God. Except the throne room of God. To talk to him.

Listen. Think about this. The earth. Right, that plane weighs 1.2 million pounds. The earth, the earth which is a foot stool to God. I get home at night, sometimes I'm tired, I put my foot up on a foot stool. God, with this metaphorical language is saying ... He's trying to show the enormity of who he is when he says, "The earth is my foot stool." Right? And the earth weighs ... You ready? The earth weighs 1,000 ... Not no 1,000. Nope. I'm so overwhelmed at all the zeros. I can't even say it. I'm not going to attempt to say it. I'm going to hurt myself. Right? Let's go with 13, 17, and 22 zeros. 13 to 17 to 22 zeros. Right? And scientists have figured out how to weigh it, because you can't put that on a scale right? It would break it.

God says, "It's my foot stool." God says, "It's my foot stool." The enormity of God. He has capacity to handle all you have. Hebrews one says it like this. "The son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." His word. At his word he upholds the galaxies. This is who we pray to. This is our Father in heaven.

Listen. Listen as we close let me just say this. Could it be? Could it be that God would move among us in such a way to stir us to be so dependent on him that whether it's success or suffering we would cling to him. See, the temptation there is suffering tends ... people would abandon. Why God? And they abandon him instead of running to him. In success, you think you've got it all covered and so you have nothing to do with God. And would it be that in our comforts or rather or chaoses, either one, would bring our praises and we would pray for perspective during the time of comfort knowing that it won't always be like this. We're all headed to a box in one sense. Right? Would it be that God would be so kind that even in the chaos of life that we would cry out to him. We would bring all of our pleads and our praises to God in prayer.

Listen. Listen. I know it's Christmas time. It's New Years. You're like let's do a New Year's sermon. Right? Listen. Let's cling to God. Let's lean into God. Let's depend on him. Let's cry out to him and God ... Listen. Listen. God forbid, God forbid this year that the only way this place would be full on one of the five prayer nights, five this year, 365 days, five, at night. God forbid that it take two planes to fly into a building for it to be full. 20 years Providence here, one prayer night was standing room only. One prayer night was standing room only. That morning two planes hit two towers in New York. One hit the Pentagon. One crashed in a field. It was packed. God forbid it take that to move us to pray when we have full access to God.

Oh, on that night, you and I ... Could you imagine? All together, standing room only, some on their face, some on their knee crying out to the living God. Our prayers mix in with the angels singing, "Holy. Holy. Holy is God." Our prayers making it to the throne room of God because of our great high priest. Could you imagine that night all of us clinging, leaning, praying to God without two planes?

Oh, may it be so. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God may it be so. May it be so. May you bring a great awakening. Oh, may he do it. Us on our face in this place. Let's pray.

Father, you are a good, good Father. You are so kind. Your kindness has led us to repent, to trust you. God, I ask that you would stir our hearts. Help us, God, be a people cling to you. Help us to see the privilege we have to even talk to you. Thank you, God, for granting us access. By not crushing us, but crushing your son instead. Raising him victoriously from the grave. Thank you that he's gone before us, our great high priest. The veils been torn. We can talk to you. God, may this year be full, may it be full of praises and prayers and pleadings to you. As we walk with you. We get this good news to the ends of the earth. See your son's face sooner than later. We pray in Jesus name, amen.



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