

Matthew 6:9-13

The World Upside-down:

How Should We Pray During This Time?

The Summit Church, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

What a crazy time we're living in right now. I honestly don't have another word for it.

As much as I miss gathering alongside you every weekend, I've found great comfort in knowing we're all singing, praying, and opening God's Word together.

One of my greatest discoveries during this quarantine has been realizing why **dogs get so excited to go on walks now**. Just getting outside seems like such a privilege.

Little things you don't think about, you know...like haircuts. I've seen a lot of folks who are just realizing what a privilege it is to get a **regular haircut**. It's going to be great seeing all of you who try to cut your own come back to church in a few weeks looking like the *Tiger King* because of your self-inflicted haircut.

- (Listen, if it hasn't been *that* show, surely you've been on some other **Netflix binge!** In fact, if you've binge-watched something during this stay-at-home period, just put a little "hand raise" in the comments. And don't be lying now...you know your iPhone told you this week your usage was up like 80%. Just own it!! saw someone last Sunday who said, "***I finished Netflix this weekend.***")

Probably not supposed to admit this, but one of my favorite Netflix shows is *Stranger Things*. This is gonna sound nerdy for a moment, but in the show there's an **alternate reality** with portals to our current world; they call it "the upside-down." (*I have a point here shortly, so hang with me...*)

- They call it "the upside-down" because so many things look *similar* to the normal world...but the **rules** are different, and there's an **ominous, dark** tone. You're just waiting on something bad to happen.

The point is this: **the time we are in right now feels like we're suddenly living in "the upside-down."** In *some* ways, it's the world we're used to. But in *so many* ways, our current circumstances are a **distorted, grim, dark, alternate reality** to the world we know and love.

For us, as individuals, we often **feel so small and insignificant** when faced with something this **large** and **perplexing** and **disconcerting**.

- This pandemic has challenged so much of what we thought was certain in life. If it's revealed anything thus far it's our **false sense of control**.

So what are we supposed to do? We're going to be in **Matthew 6** today, and as you turn there, I want to ask you this question: *In the midst of a global crisis, how can we as individuals possibly make a difference?*

There's **no playbook** for how the church is to respond to something like this...but **the early church didn't have a playbook either**. So it got me thinking a few weeks ago, *what did the early church do when they didn't have a playbook for "how to do church?"* That led me to the Book of Acts. And even just reading the opening chapters, here's what I found in Acts 1, 2, and 4¹--summed up in this one verse: Acts 1:14 (CSB), "They all were continually united in prayer..."

¹ Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:23-24

*In the midst of a global crisis, how can we--who feel so **small** and **insignificant**--possibly make a difference? We can call out to our Father in heaven in prayer.*

It's as a **friend of mine** says: "Even if we are literally stuck in our beds, **we can always pray**. . . Church will not look how we expect for a long time. . . But even in these strange times—where we may alternate between periods of boredom and moments of panic—God has something for us: **We are not useless, even if all we do is pray.**"²

- As believers, prayer should be our first response, not last resort.

Most of us have never been stepped into a moment like the one we are currently experiencing. But while this situation is new, the church's calling has not changed. **Be it peacetime or pandemic, the people of God are called to pray.**

(Now I know some of you are like, "Didn't you just preach on prayer like a month ago?" First off, thanks for remembering! Second, last time I talked about **how prayer can move the heart of God**. This week I want to talk about **how prayer can move our hearts and help align us with the peace and joy found in God alone**. So consider this "Prayer 2.0 from Pastor Curtis.")

So that's the question: *How can we pray during a time like this?* Which puts us in good company, because the disciples asked Jesus this exact question--*Lord, teach us to pray*--and so he did just that in Matthew 6 in what we famously know as "The Lord's Prayer." Let's look at it together.

WALKTHROUGH

Matthew 6:9-13,

Pray then like this: *(pray it out loud with me!)*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

² [Lessons From My Last Lockdown](#), March 17, 2020.

¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread,

¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Based on the Lord's Prayer, I want to give you **Five Quarantine Resolutions** to help guide you during this time.

These **five resolutions** I'm about to give you, maybe you'll **write these down**; put them on your **chalkboard** or **cutesy letter boards**; hang them on your **fridge**; put them **inside your Bible**; write it in **lipstick on the bathroom mirror**; put them on your **coffee machine**; make them your **phone wallpaper**...whatever you need to do to stay resolved in your faith during the weeks to come. Here we go:

(v9) Our Father in heaven:

1. Resolved, to spend time daily with my Father.

(the underline is for the kids sermon notes!)

Possibly the most important thing you can do during this time is to make sure you are spending time with God each and every day. It's what I call my "quiet time" first thing in the morning.

When Jesus teaches us to pray, the opening words are "Our Father..."

- Jesus is teaching us to pray to our Father. Not to God in general...but to *our Father*.

Now I know the idea of God as Father can conjure up all sorts of emotions for people, and I want to be sensitive to that. But here's how this idea of "father" has played out in my household, at least:

- While my girls are young, even *their* lives have been disrupted by the coronavirus. They're out of **school**, out of **routine**, out of **seeing their friends**, and mom and dad are home all day with them.
- They're a **bit confused** and all they know is "**There's a big germ that we have to stay away from.**"

- But as I--their Dad--have been in the house with them I've tried to let them know **how happy I am to be with them**. I've told them repeatedly (almost annoyingly so) **how much I love them**. I've tried to help them understand that we don't know how long this will last, but one thing is certain: **Daddy's presence with them**. Even though there's a lot they *can't* count on, **Daddy's presence is always 100% reliable**.

The Psalmist intimately knew God as this kind of loving Father, which is why he could say, *"O God...in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by."*³

In a time filled with **storms, fear, anxiety, pain**, and **questions**...let's be people who are **resolved to spend time with God our Father**, the one who **controls the wind and the waves**, the one who is **peace personified**, the one who is **solid ground** when all other ground is sinking sand.

- There's so much that is uncertain right now, but one thing is certain: **Our Father's presence is with us**.
- There's a lot we can't count on right now, but **God our Father's presence is 100% reliable**.
- **Isaiah 26:3**, *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*

So let's resolve to spend time *daily* and keep our mind stayed on him who gives us perfect peace.

(v9) Hallowed be your name.

2. Resolved, to seek God's glory above all else.

Now the first thing Jesus tells us to ask God to do, is to **ask God that he would cause his name to be hallowed**...for his name to "be made holy and set apart."

³ Psalm 57:1

Let that sink in. The **first** thing...the **head** of the list...the one **above** all others...the most **central**, most **supreme**, most **all-encompassing**, **all-influencing**, **all-controlling** concern in our prayer should be to ask God to make his name #1 in people's hearts.

- I think Jesus tells us this because he knows that doing this forces us to think about more than just ourselves...which is what we are all prone to do.
- Praying for God's glory above all else means you are forced to stop and think about what **God's purposes may be in all of this**...now just how it **personally affects you**.

John Piper points out that this phrase—"hallowed be your name"—is a plea that **God would display the greatness of God**. That God would **make much of God**. That God would overcome **blindness to seeing God**. That God would overcome **indifference to God**. That God would remove obstacles to **knowing** and **admiring** and **loving** and **trusting** and **treasuring** and **obeying** God.⁴

One of the easiest ways to seek God's glory above all else is by **adding "so that" to all our prayer requests**. Adding "so that" ensures what we are praying for is the advancement of **God's glory and kingdom above all else**. So we pray like this:

- God, stop this disease, *so that* people will see your power.
- Lord, keep us safe, *so that* we can take the gospel to the ends of the earth to places like China and the Middle East who are all experienced this deadly virus w/o the hope of the gospel.
- Father, please provide for my family during this time, *so that* we can tell of how you have been Jehovah Jireh in our lives.
- Father God, provide for the poor during this season *so that* they would know you are near to the broken.

Resolve this week to seek God's glory above all else--**Father, hallowed be your name**.

⁴ John Piper, *Pray Like This: 'Hallowed Be Your Name'*, December 30, 2007.

(v10) *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven:*

3. Resolved, to see my community healed like heaven.

One of the things we have to balance **as the hands and feet of Jesus during this time** is how to obey our authorities and orders from the state, while simultaneously loving our neighbor and helping those most in need; it's a delicate balance of wisdom as a believer.

I'm reminded in this prayer, though, that Jesus doesn't say, "*Your kingdom come, your will be done... as long as it doesn't place me at any personal risk.*"

One way we can ALL love our **neighbors** and **communities** well is by praying for them...by just asking them how they're doing and how you can be praying for them.

In fact, look at **2 Chronicles 7:14**. God says, *If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

Church, this is our greatest calling right now: to be people who **humble ourselves**--recognizing we don't have all the solutions to a virus--but also proclaiming that we do have **the ultimate solution** to humanity's greatest disease of sin...and **his name is Jesus**.

- And in Jesus's name and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we now have the opportunity to stand in the gap for our **community**, our **neighbors**, our **healthcare workers**, our **government officials**...we stand in the gap and beg God to make his kingdom come on earth and in our community as in heaven.

If ever there were a time for us to rise up and pray bold prayers of faith, Summit, this is it. Our answer--Jesus--is a Savior who **weeps** with those who are weeping...a Savior who **entered into our pain** to experience with us...a Savior who **sympathizes with us** in every

way...but he's also a Savior who is one day coming back to wipe away every tear from every eye.

So we now, as the people of God, are a rare breed of people who can simultaneously **rejoice in the hope** found in Christ, **while we are also patient in tribulation**, because we know our God has ultimately defeated **sin** and **death** and **disease** and **sadness**⁵...

- And in the meantime between **rejoicing in hope** and **patience in tribulation**, we'll be **constant in prayer**...resolved, to see our community healed like heaven.

(v11) *Give us this day our daily bread:*

4. Resolved, to believe today I have everything I need for today.

For many of us, this is the first time in our lives when we have been forced to take life literally one day at a time. Not because we're choosing to, but because **it's all we can handle**. We can't plan for the future because we don't know what new **restrictions** or **changes** will happen. We're literally living day to day.

But if you're like me, living day to day is in no way **liberating**...in fact, it's very **frustrating**. I like the control of having a plan. I like knowing what to expect tomorrow and next week. I'm a **planner**, a **budgeter**, an **enneagram achiever**.

- So I'm being forced to reconcile with the fact that (outside of salvation) Jesus never **promises a plan** or **offers a clear path**. He tells us to ask God to **give us this day our daily bread**. He tells us to *ask God for what you need today, and believe God will meet you there*. To be resolved to believe that today I have everything I need *for today*.
- That's it. God gives **strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow**. And with Jesus, I can truly say, "*That's enough.*"

⁵ Rom. 12:12

- With Jesus, I *truly can be still, and know that he is God*. God who is in **control**. God who is **sovereign**. God who is Jeohvah Jireh, my **Provider**.

I told you earlier this whole thing has shattered any illusion I had of control in my life. But I've also learned it's better to **live in the light of truth** than in a **comfortable lie**. And the truth is this: when it's out of my control I become desperate...a good kind of desperate...a "God, I need you desperately right *now*," kind of desperate.

- I'm desperate for God to move *today*. I'm desperate for God to comfort *today*...for God to guide *today*...for God to provide *today*.
- But Praise God that he specializes in caring for the **desperate** and **needy**, amen?

I know how easy it is to focus on everything that's seemingly going wrong, but can we take a moment together as a church and thank God for the ways he has provided for us? Right now...right where you are...can each of you fill in this blank with something?

PRAYER PROMPT:

Father, thank you for providing for me today by _____.

(v13) Deliver us from evil:

5. Resolved, to fight against the schemes of the evil one.

Satan often does some of his greatest work when he can get us in **isolation**. Right now there is a great target on your back, Christian. Our enemy is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. He seeks to devour by:

- ...making us stingy instead of generous.
- ...making us view others as threats rather than people worthy of love and compassion who are made in the image of God.
- ...making us believe the lie that we're all alone in our fear and anxiety and depression.

The only way to combat the schemes of the evil one is by **meeting his schemes with Scripture**. This goes all the way back to resolve #1--to spend time daily with your Heavenly Father. Open the Bible. Read his promises. Don't just be on the *defense* here, be on the *offense*.

- Remember: we don't fight *for* victory, we fight *from* victory.
- Anybody been on a **Disney+** kick with their kids? Don't try to fight the evil one acting like **Simba when he went against the Hyenas**. Don't fight like Simba when all you have to do is call on your Daddy, Mufasa! Satan may be a **prowling lion**, but we have a more **powerful lion--the Lion of Judah!**
- God, deliver us from evil, for *yours* is the kingdom, power, glory forever and ever. Therefore, we are resolved to fight against the schemes of the evil one...and we do it **TOGETHER...**

CONCLUSION

...you know, I've had the Lord's Prayer memorized for years, but going through it this time I noticed something for the first time...see how **everything is plural?**

- *Our Father in heaven...Give us this day 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 evil.*
- Church, it's a reminder we're not alone. It's a reminder that even if we are **physically separated, spiritually** we can **remain together**. We are still one church in many locations (many *many* locations!)
- In this season I'm reminded how A.W. Tozer said, "*Worshipers never leave church...we carry our sanctuary with us wherever we go.*"⁶

Our sanctuary, the Holy Spirit, lives inside of us. And it's his presence which enables us to have prayer-infused confidence, compassion, and selflessness when we talk about the coronavirus. Why? Because the

⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19-20

HS reminds us of our Savior who put on flesh and stepped into our sickness, sin, and death.

- Our Savior, Jesus, who healed the sick and cared for the hurting.
- Our Savior, Jesus, who shed his *own* blood in order for us to be healed.

And now we who are found in Jesus can proclaim to others that **he is the resurrection and the life**. That, because of Jesus, we have the hope that though we die, yet shall we live...for everyone who lives and believes in him shall never truly die. We possess hope not just for this life, but for the life to come.

So let these resolutions drive you deeper into that good news this week. Be...

1. Resolved, to spend time daily with my Father.
2. Resolved, to seek God's glory above all else.
3. Resolved, to see earth healed like heaven.
4. Resolved, to believe *today* I have everything I need *for today*.
5. Resolved, to fight against the schemes of the evil one.

I know, if we're being **honest**, right now it *feels* like the evil one is winning...

- But even when we don't see it, God's working...
- Even when we don't feel it, God's working...
- For *his*--not Satan's, not diseases, not death--*his* is the **kingdom** and the **power** and the **glory** forever and ever.
Amen.

