

4/14/24

On Earth as It Is in Heaven

Matthew 6:10

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Friends, it is a joy to share about the Lord's Prayer today. My name is Joe Greemore, and I serve as pastor of Worship. I invite us to turn our hearts once again to the words of Jesus as he teaches his followers how to pray. In *Matthew 6:10*, we hear "*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (KJV). That's our focus text today as we continue our series "Teach Us to Pray: A 6-week Exploration of the Lord's Prayer." We'll be looking at examples and expressions of life on earth as it is in heaven.

I don't know about you, but prayer has been a journey for me. In fact, working on this week's sermon has been a journey: I've learned about the Lord's Prayer in its original setting nearly 2,000 years ago and reflected on its meaning for my life today. As a child, I prayed the same prayer every night before bedtime, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. Guide me Jesus through the night and wake me with the morning light. Aaamen." As a parent, I listen now to how Jesus taught his followers to pray in the original language, Aramaic, and new daily discoveries stretches over a lifetime filled with twists and turns.

Just this past week, I was visiting with someone who was experiencing a difficult time with prayer. Prayer and challenge go hand in hand – when we are experiencing challenges, we pray, and by praying, we can persevere through those challenges.

The beauty of Jesus' prayer in the second part is that he invites us all to think about the promise of heavenly, eternal life. What does it look like to live on earth as we live in heaven? If we've never been there, how do we know? In fact, the Lord's Prayer answers more than one such question about basic needs. It can be separated into 7 distinct parts that all relate to basic human needs and the human condition. Let's take a look at those parts. As we look at them, I'll be using a more literal translation from Aramaic, which is related to the Hebrew language, the original language of the Old Testament.

1. Acknowledging Our Need for an Eternal, Loving Parent
'*Our Father in heaven...*'
2. Acknowledging Our Need for God's Holy Presence
'*...may your name be kept holy.*'
3. Acknowledging God's Primacy and Priorities
'*Let your Kingdom come. Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*'
4. Acknowledging Our Need God Who Provides
'*Give us today our daily bread.*'

5. Acknowledging Our Need for Forgiveness
'Forgive us...as we forgive...'
6. Acknowledging Our Need for Deliverance
'Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one'
7. Acknowledging Our Need to Honor God
'For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.'

It's helpful for us to understand that, as we pray the Lord's prayer, we are expressing fundamental human needs, voicing our dependence on God and our need for healthy, holy community.

Biblical Examples of Life on Earth As It Is in Heaven:

- The Garden of Eden (Pentateuch: Genesis 2) ...a picture of life on earth as it is in heaven.
- God's Home Among the People of Israel: Tabernacle and Temple (History: Exodus 26, 1 Kings 6) ...both temporary and semi-permanent reflections of the worship of God almighty.
- A House of Prayer for All People (Prophets: Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11) ...the prophets invite us to think of our prayer to God as something for all peoples, nations, and tongues.
- The Life and Ministry of Our Lord Jesus (Gospels: Jesus' Nativity, Growing Years, Ministry, Death, and Resurrection) ...Jesus came to live on earth to show us the way to heaven and how to live there. His life on earth was a reflection of God's love as it is in heaven.
- The Birth of the Church (Acts 2) ...that's where we enter the picture. As the church, we are to live on earth as life is in heaven.
- The Promise of Heaven on Earth (Apocalyptic Literature: Revelation 21:4) ...the consummation of all things speaks again to the promise of new life on earth as it is in heaven with the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem.

The scriptures paint us beautiful reminders not only of the possibilities of how this could look, but the reality. Another way we can look around and see this truth at work is through International Ministries.

Three-fold International Ministries Ministry Priorities:

Inviting People to Be Disciples of Jesus Christ

EVANGELISM: IM shares the gospel of Jesus Christ in respectful and creative ways.

DISCIPLESHIP: IM nurtures both individuals and communities as they grow in their knowledge of and commitment to Christ.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: IM trains church leaders in both formal and nontraditional settings.

Proclaiming God's Reign of Justice, Peace and Abundant Life

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES: IM serves immigrants and refugees, building upon the celebrated immigrant and refugee ministries of American Baptist congregations, regions, national organizations and partners in order to develop similar ministries on a global level.

PEACE AND JUSTICE: IM works with the Body of Christ around the world to embody God's love in situations of discord, suffering and conflict.

ABOLISHING TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND GLOBAL SLAVERY: IM provides exemplary services to survivors of trafficking in persons and all forms of modern-day slavery.

EDUCATION: IM promotes the liberating power of education through ministries that range from basic literacy through graduate study.

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: IM transforms lives in the name of Jesus Christ by empowering people and communities through economic development.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS: IM engages in curative, preventive and educational ministries around the world that promote holistic health and wellness.

Equipping the Body of Christ to Engage in God's Mission

PROMOTION OF MISSION FROM EVERYWHERE TO EVERYONE*: IM assists the efforts of churches and partners around the world as they engage in cross-cultural ministry and send their own missionaries. (* IM is grateful to friend, colleague and theologian Samuel Escobar for coining this phrase. See his book *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (©2003, InterVarsity Press).

SHORT-TERM MISSION ENGAGEMENT: IM promotes and provides opportunities for individuals, churches, American Baptist regions and educational institutions to engage in life-changing cross-cultural ministry experiences.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS: IM inspires youth and young adults to grow as disciples of Jesus.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING: IM contributes to the strength and vitality of partners around the world and in the U.S. and Puerto Rico helping to

develop increased capacity to do their ministries.
(internationalministries.org/ministry-priorities/)

These three-fold priorities provide a wonderful picture of God's kingdom work and can be summed up in the one phrase, "On Earth As It Is in Heaven" which is IM's mission vision. What a vision! When you look it in in action, does it remind you of anyone? When we partner with IM and other organizations, we support life on earth as it is in heaven.

Ministry Together at Brewster Baptist Church (our core ministries, a shared ministry of talents and teams):

- Building and Grounds
- Missions and Outreach
- Deacons
- Finance
- Ministry to Children, Parents, and Families
- Student Ministry
- Spiritual Formation and Adult Discipleship
- Worship
- Connecting
- Community Life and Fellowship

As we participate in, pray for, and support these ministries, we support life and work on earth as a reflection of God's divine kingdom priorities.

Finally, Jesus reminded us that kingdom living is possible when he shared the words in Luke 17, "The Kingdom of God is within you!"

Let's treasure those words that point our eyes, hearts, and lives toward heaven, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Responsive Prayer

*May your peace that passes understanding, your joy that is new each morning,
and your unconditional love be on earth...[as it is in heaven, throughout]
May your almighty power and all-consuming glory be present on earth...
May your grace and mercy be freely shared on earth...
May all Your creation, from the smallest seed to the largest galaxy be seen with
awe for your splendor on earth...
May your name be worshiped on earth...
May your way, life, and truth be present on earth...
Lord, may your will be done on earth...
In your hallowed name we pray; Amen.*

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1) Jesus came to earth with an embodied ministry that took place in a region still hotly contested and that can still be visited today in the Holy Land. How can you pray for peace in the Middle East and in our world?
- 2) The scriptures tell the story of God's interactions (who is in heaven) with people in earth. Which resonates with you?
- 3) International Ministries (internationalministries.org) provides a great overview of three primary Ministry focus areas (called priorities) that seek sustain life "on earth as it is in Heaven." Here's a list:
 - Inviting People to Be Disciples of Jesus Christ
 - Proclaiming God's Reign of Justice, Peace and Abundant Life
 - Equipping the Body of Christ to Engage in God's Mission

Which can you do?

- 4) What picture does the scripture paint of life on earth possibly being as it is in heaven?
- 5) What is one thing you can do to make life on earth more like God's heavenly realm?
- 6) What did Jesus say about where the kingdom of God is?