

Seeking God's Glory

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We come to Matthew 6 for our text this morning as we have begun a consideration of the Lord's Prayer in verses 9 through 13, and I invite you to turn there with me. Matthew 6 verse 9 through verse 13 as we come to what is known as the Lord's Prayer. Jesus had just told his audience don't pray like the Pharisees, who were hypocrites, who pretended to be something that they were not, which is an enduring problem spiritually throughout all of the ages, men pretending to belong to God, pretending to love God, pretending to love Christ and his word, and then making a mockery of it by simply making a show of themselves before men. And he said, "Don't pray like Gentiles," in verse 7, "Gentiles just babble on. They think that they'll be heard for their many words, but that's not the kind of prayer that God answers. It's not the kind of prayer that God hears. He doesn't hear the prayers of sinners." And sometimes that's shocking for people to hear. God does not listen to the prayers of sinners unless it's a prayer of repentance. Sinners who spurn Christ, who are cold toward his saving work, are those who have no audience with God whatsoever and so it's just so urgent for us to humble ourselves before Christ and to come before him like a little child for salvation. And what Christ has done for us here in Matthew chapter 6, is he has given us a pattern and an outline for the way that the true children of God actually pray. It's not a self-centered kind of praying. It's not an earthbound manner of praying. It's not enlisting God to serve you so that your life is as easy as possible. Look, life is often difficult and life is often disappointing, and life often does not work out the way that we want it to or the way that we think in the days of our youth that it will work out, and so then what? Then what? Well, then perhaps maybe we come and humble ourselves to learn and see what God wanted for us all along. But we have the opportunity here today to orient our minds toward the way that Christ would have us orient our hearts and so through the instruction of the word of God today, we get instruction on the way that God would have our hearts to be and what our priorities and deepest affections would be, and we see that they are so transcendent and they are so different than what is cultivated in our culture and in the broader church. And so we come to Matthew 6, beginning in verse 9. Look at it there with me. Jesus says this.

9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Now, beloved, when Jesus says, "Pray then like this," and he uses that imperative, that command, he's saying, "This is how my disciples must pray. This is how those who have been born again, how they must pray." He is giving us specific instruction on the way that we are to think in our hearts and the way that we are to approach God, and the form of it gives the sense that this is the ongoing approach to prayer. This is the way that we are to develop and that is to become our life pattern. This is the goal that we set, that we pursue, and this becomes the formative aspects of the way that we think about life and the way that we think about our existence and that frames the way that we pray. This is meant to permanently change you, permanently change the way that you approach God, away from the self-centered model that we've inherited from our forefathers, and that which Christ gives to us as the ongoing approach to prayer. And let me say this, by way of encouragement, by way of helpful guidance based on the word of God. If this is new to you, well, praise the Lord that you're here and that you can start an inflection in a different direction. That's a great thing to do. If you're used to formula, rote, ritualistic prayers without any heart involvement to it, and this comes to you as something new, well, praise the Lord. The Lord is being gracious to you to show you what it is that he wants and for you to start moving in that direction. If you've known these things for a while and you kind of start and stumble and you know you're not as consistent in it as you would like to be, well praise the Lord that he's here to kind of refill your spiritual tank and give you what you need to go forward and to aim in an improved and in a renewed direction of the things that you've always known. And so Christ gives us this instruction to bless us, to direct us, to help us, and to cultivate in us the kind of intimate walk with God that we are saved for. We are saved for the glory of God and the title of today's message is "Seeking God's Glory," seeking God's glory, and you'll see why we frame it that way in just a moment.

Last time, we saw, as we considered the opening word, "Our Father in heaven," and we saw that Father is an indication of the spirit of trust with which we are to approach God. We are to believe that he is who he revealed himself to be, that God exists, that he is known as the God of the Bible. We know him through the way he has revealed himself. And Scripture says in Hebrews 11, verse 6, that if we are to approach God, we are to believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him, so that as we come to God, as we approach God, we are confident in his revelation of himself, and we are confident in his goodness, his goodness as a Father to receive us, to hear us, to love us, and to respond to us out of the wisdom and love that an earthly father would respond to the needs of his little children here on earth. Scripture makes that comparison in Matthew chapter 7. And so we've seen the love of God the Father. We've seen that as the first theme in prayer, and what a perfect time for us, as we come to the Lord's Table, to just be reminded that the love of God, the love of God the Father, was perfectly expressed in the sending of his Son to be the Savior of his people from their sins. And not a remote, distant God, but a God who took on human flesh walked on the dusty roads of modern-day Israel, suffered on a real wooden cross, bearing the sins and bearing the sins of his people and undergoing the wrath of God for each one of us that know him, and that this was done as an act of love of Christ for his people, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have

eternal life." And so we come to God with a sense of confidence, and we put aside our doubts and put aside our suspicions about him, and we take him at his word. We take him at his word that everyone who believes in Christ is fully reconciled, that the gates of heaven are fully open, that God wants us to pray, wants us to approach him, wants us to pour out our hearts before him, and that as we do that, he will bless and reward us as we go. Look there at the end of verse 6, Matthew chapter 6, just to remind you of this.

"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." This is a good God that we pray to. This is not a disinterested, far-off deity. This is a God who took such interest in us that Christ became flesh, God became a man, and laid down his life for all those who would believe in him.

Now listen, I'm not in a mood to play around here this morning. I never am in a pulpit, really. But just to go back to what I was saying a little bit earlier, you know, it's a generous, there is no way for me to know which of you are, who of you are truly in Christ and who's not. There's no way for me to know that, you know, in an ultimate, infallible, in an infallible way. And so it's incumbent upon me to press the truth upon you, to press the truth of a Redeemer upon you. As I said, you know, if 20% of you, if 80% of you are genuinely saved and 20% of you are not, the old 80/20 rule, if just using that as a guide to think that right now sitting in the audience looking at me are 40, 50, 60 people that if life ended today, would see not the face of Christ but the face of Satan and join him in sulfur and brimstone in the eternal lake of fire? To be this close? I mean, geographically speaking, to be this close to heaven, this close to the gospel, and to turn away and walk away and be eternally lost, that's an unthinkable tragedy. But there's so much in ministry I haven't figured out, and the longer I go, the more I realize how much I don't know. But I have not figured out how to get people to actually take the gospel seriously as if it was the most important thing that they've ever heard, and the most important thing that they could ever deal with, so much so that they're willing to give up their sins, to repent of them, so much so that they're actually willing to humble themselves and to cry out to Christ. I haven't figured that out. I'm grateful that there are people in our congregation that manifest that. I'm grateful for that, but I'm not talking about them right now. I'm talking about cold-hearted people who just put on a show for whatever reason and never actually do the heart work of seeking Christ while there's time. That breaks my heart. And I can't change that. You have to take responsibility, and you are responsible yourself before the Lord for what you hear. To be under the gospel is a great privilege, to respond to the gospel is something that you need the help of God to do, but to turn away from it and to harden your heart against the things that you hear from God's word is something that has great eternal consequences. And, you know, I would want, if it were in my power, I would make it 100% going with me to heaven. That's what I want. That's what I pray for. But, beloved, at some point, the responsibility falls on you. The responsibility falls on you. When you have heard the gospel, now the responsibility falls on you for how you respond to it and just having been in Christian circles or having associated loosely with Christian people without actually turning your own heart over to Christ and earnestly crying out to him for the forgiveness of your sins, that the failure to do that is on you. And so it's just urgent for us to take these things seriously and to not presume on God, to not presume things that may not be true, and we come to God's word and ask the

Spirit of God to open our hearts and to open our eyes and to open our ears so that we could truly hear, truly respond, and that there would be rejoicing in heaven by the angels over one sinner who repents.

So we come and we realize, this is the last thing that I want to say before I get to the text here, is that it is just so urgent for you to understand that there is no reluctance in God whatsoever for you to come to Christ. There is no hesitation on his part at all. The gospel message, the call to come to Christ, the free offer of free salvation by free grace in Christ alone goes out to everyone, and God earnestly makes that appeal for every one of you to come to Christ with the promise that if you do, you will be saved. He will receive you. Christ said, "The one who comes to me, I will never cast out." And so there is no unwillingness in God for any of you to be saved, and so the only explanation, if someone walks out of here not in Christ, is because you didn't think the gospel was important enough for your attention, or maybe you don't want to repent of sin, or maybe you want to be your own boss and you don't want to honor Christ as Lord. I don't know what's happening in your heart. But what I want you to understand is if you walk out of this room unsaved today, it is entirely upon you. It's not because God is unwilling, and it's not because the pastor withheld the gospel from you. Christ died for sinners, he was buried, he was raised on the third day, and everyone who repents and believes in him will be saved based on his promise. And whoever hears that, and walks away unsaved, it's on them and there will be a day of accounting for that.

And so, as we come to the Lord's Table today, and the Lord says don't take these elements in an unworthy way, we do so under the glories of the gospel, under the glories of redeeming grace, with great gratitude to God for his kindness, mercy, patience, and love to sinners, we do all of that but we've taken a moment to step aside, to, as it were, put our arms around the unrepentant and say, "Dear friend, dear friend, it's time to wake up. It's time for you to come, to step out of the world, to reject the world, to turn away from your love of self and to come to Christ, because the consequences are eternal if you don't." And not everybody lives to be 70 or 80 years old, and if you're rejecting Christ now, my friend, there is absolutely no reason to think that you'll be more receptive to him when you've lived more years in sin, more years in hardness of heart. The clay gets harder under the sun. It doesn't get softer. And so I plead with you, take to heart these words from God's word here today. Come to Christ while there's time. Don't bear throughout all of eternity the weight of responsibility of having heard and hardened your heart. That would be the greatest tragedy of them all.

And so Matthew 6, verse 9, what we're going to see, having seen the goodness and love of God the Father, seeing that he's a God that keeps his promises, seeing that he's exceedingly great beyond our comprehension, and seeing that God is the author of our salvation, and that he is the Creator of heaven and earth, that he answers to no one, he is above all, God-blessed forever, then it starts to make sense the way that Jesus structures this prayer and we see in our first point here this morning, we see this, we see the priority of God's glory in prayer. The priority of God's glory in prayer. A contemplation of the nature of God, God the Father, and his love and his goodness and his faithfulness, a contemplation of that should so fill the believing heart with an appreciation of who God

is that we want to express that back to him in prayer. A contemplation of his nature moves us to seek his glory in prayer. Look at verse 9, which will be where we focus our primary attention in the remaining time here this morning. Jesus says, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." As we've addressed God as our Father, and now we start to make requests of him, the requests that we make are not self-centered ones. They are God-centered requests that we make. We come to prayer with a desire to advance – watch this, my dear beloved friends, watch this – we come to God in prayer with the expressed intent and desire to advance his purposes and his glory by what we say in prayer. Our desire is to advance the glory of the God who has loved us and given himself up for us, to advance the glory of the God who is in heaven above all things. His glory, let's put it just this way, that we come with a sense that there is a weight of honor to be given to God as the opening expression of our heart to him as a pattern over time in prayer.

We desire the glory of God. The beginning of prayer, the beginning of true prayer, beloved, is concern for the glory of God. Let me say that again because I think this is rather radical: the beginning of prayer, true prayer, is concern for the glory of God. And when I say the beginning of prayer, I don't simply mean every single time we go to prayer. I mean the entire way that we think about prayer, the entire disposition, the ongoing approach of which we think about prayer is not, well, how do we get what we want out of prayer, but the beginning thing is that as I pray, the consuming desire, the consuming matter that I want to pursue is the glory of God and I want that because he has saved me. I want that because he is good and he is infinitely better than I am. I want that because he is eternal and I am passing dust. I am a mist in the wind. I am a vapor in the wind in this life. And so why would I make an audience with God about me when there are so much better things to talk about before God. "God, you're the better thing to talk about here. Your interests, your glory are far more important than mine."

And so we are concerned with the honor of God, the glory of God as we pray, that's the sense of, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Now, so we're praying for the glory of God, praying to glorify God, and I want to make a distinction here that I didn't understand early in my Christian life. Now that I understand it, I think it's an important point to make as we consider the glory of God. God, in his essence, is perfect. He is completely glorious, and there is nothing that man can do to take away from the glory of his essence, and there is nothing that we can do to add to the glory of his essence, as if by praying, "God, hallowed be your name," as if we could make his glory better than it already is by the nature of our praying. That's not the case. We don't make God better by praying in this way. God has his own perfect glory. God is unaffected by what men do in the sense that he is not subject to involuntary reactions when men sin against him or anything like that. God has his own perfect glory that is intrinsic to his being and that never changes. That has always been the way that God is, perfect in glory. It's never added to, it's never taken away from. And so when we pray, "Father, hallowed be your name," understand this, we are not adding to the glory of the essence of God because how could we do something that would improve him who is perfect and who is eternal?

God is already holy. He cannot become more holy by what his people pray. So when we say, Father, there was a chorus back in the day, "Father, glorify your name in all the earth," what are we doing? What are we praying? What we're doing is this, we are ascribing glory to God. We are responding to him by recognizing his glory and declaring it in his presence in prayer. We declare his glory among men. We don't make him more glorious than he is. It's already a perfect glory. And what we're doing in prayer is we're saying, "Father, from your word, from your revelation, both in the skies and in the Scripture and in the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, I see something of how great and glorious you are, and in response to that, I acknowledge it, I bow before it, I worship you, I ascribe glory to you." We don't add to his worth by our meager passing prayers, but we do, in prayer, we recognize something of what he is due. "I see your glory in the canvas of the skies above me. Father, seeing that, hallowed be your name. Glory to you. I see your glory in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I see in this remembrance of the bread and the cup that Christ suffered for my sins. That's glorious. Father, I give glory to you. I ascribe glory to you. I read in the pages of Scripture of the perfections of your attributes, the perfections of your sovereignty and your omniscience and your omnipresence, your love and your grace and your mercy, and I just see all of these perfections and the way that you work all things after the counsel of your will, and to those who love you, you work all things together for good. And I see the infinite mind of God and the infinite purpose of God and I see that your purposes are always good to your people. And Father, I can't add anything to that but from my heart, I can humbly say I understand a bit by the grace of your Spirit, and I worship you and I ascribe glory to you as a result of it."

It's very important to see that difference. We're not making God better when we pray. We're recognizing it and honoring him when we pray this way. Jesus said in verse 9, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name." Now that word hallowed, I want to say a couple of things about what the word means and about the form of the command. To hallow something means to sanctify, to set it apart, to consider it as holy. And so the instruments in the temple, when they were dedicated, they were considered to be holy, not because they were morally perfect, not the instruments or the candlesticks or anything like that in the temple, it's not that there was any moral quality to them, they were set apart to be used for the glory of God. And now Jesus is saying, "Father, hallowed be your name," - watch this, watch this – the weight of that prayer is this, "Father, I set apart your name in my heart as something separate and distinct from everything else in the universe. You are set apart. You are holy. Yes, you are morally perfect, but I set you apart. In my heart, I set you apart as the only supreme and final priority of my deepest affections."

One writer said this, "We pray for God's name to be hallowed because we strongly desire that he receive surpassing praise in our own lives, the church, and the world." "Father, in my life be glorified because I recognize your worth and the only possible legitimate purpose of my existence on this globe, my Father, is that your name would receive reflected glory somehow through me, through my heart, through my words, through my actions. Father, I want it to reflect well on you. I strongly desire that. In the church, Lord, I pray that in the church, not just our local church, but that included, Lord, in the believing people of God, I pray that your name would be exalted and glorified and revered and honored by those who claim the name of Christ. For too long, Father, I've

lived in my 10, 20, 30, 40 years as a Christian, for too long, I've seen people be so indifferent. I've seen people gather together for worship and just be so cold-hearted and so worldly-minded and so indifferent to the preaching of the gospel, even in the name of gathering together. Father, I see that your name is not honored and glorified by that. I pray that you would work by your Spirit to transform it and make it something different so that others would see you as distinct and lofty, not simply an extension of their self-glorifying earthly morality by coming to a church on a Sunday. Father, I long to see it real and vibrant amongst your people beginning in my own heart," you say. "And Father, in this world, O God, I look at this world that you created, that you in your common grace are so good to, and I see the vile way that they reject your glory, they reject the gospel, they revel in Satan and sin and self and lies and deception. And I see all of that, Father, and I see a world that was created and that should exist for your glory doing the exact opposite, Father, hallowed be your name. I pray that you would work in this wicked mess of a world and do something to bring glory to your name and to redeem it for your own honor."

That's the sense of it. This prayer, "hallowed be your name," beloved, it is an assault against our own mediocre hearts. It is an assault against the existing order of the world. It is a plea for God to work by his Spirit in the hearts of his people so that the church would grow and flourish in praise of his holy majestic name. That's what we're praying here. God's name is a summary of everything about him, the fullness, the expression of his character, the name being a shorthand reference for all that God is. And beloved, you know, look, I know this isn't how you naturally pray. I get that, because it's not how I naturally pray either. That's why we need this instruction. That's why we need God's word to transform our minds and our hearts so that we're thinking rightly about these things. When you step back from it, it should be obvious that the glory of God is far more important, infinitely more important than anything that's happening in our earthly life. The fact that he's a Father and cares for us and welcomes our prayers, invites us to do that and to pray about those things, but not as the sole end, not as the chief objective of prayer, "God, make my life better. God, save the people that I want to be saved and, you know, do it quicker rather than later." You know, and even in prayers that can have a good aspect viewed from one perspective, if the heart of the prayer is bypassing God and his glory, then something is totally out of whack because we should be so fascinated, so enthralled with the goodness and greatness and grace of God that we want to come to him and tell him how good and how great he is as a response of worship to what he's revealed himself to be.

Now, another aspect, a little bit of grammar here for you, and it's important for us not to despise grammar because grammars are the rules by which language works and language is the means by which God communicates to our minds so that we can understand. In this form, "hallowed be your name," it's a form that conveys a sense of urgency, a sense of high priority. Arthur Pink says this, and before I read the quote, let me just say that there's an urgency to it in that it transcends everything else in importance. "Father, hallowed be your name." Mr. Pink said this several decades ago, "This petition, 'hallowed be your name,' this petition must take the precedence, for the glory of God's great name is the ultimate end of all things. Every other request must not only be subordinated to this

one, but be in harmony with and in pursuance of it. We cannot pray rightly unless the honor of God be dominant in our hearts." We can't pray rightly unless the glory of God is dominant in our hearts.

Now beloved, when you hear these things and when you think through them, you step back and you can't help but see your misplaced priorities, your spiritual dullness, and the indifference of men to that which is most prominent and prevalent in the matter of prayer. "God, my heart is not naturally like this. I live in a world that rejects and despises this. And Father, the thing that is the greatest thing in the universe, your glory, the thing that Christ says should be the first priority in prayer, is something that is just so sadly missing inside me and all around me." And so when you pray then, when you come and pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name," what you're praying is this, the essence of it is this, with love for God the Father, with love for the blessed, ineffable Trinity, in response to his revelation in the skies, in the Scripture, and in the Savior, with a love for all of that, the heart of your prayer can be boiled down to this, "Lord, when I look in my heart and I look around me and I see people unconcerned for your glory, Lord, this isn't right. This is not right. You should have the greatest glory, the greatest priority in my heart, the greatest priority in the hearts of all men, and Lord, it's obviously not like that. The most urgent thing, God, is that men should esteem you rightly, and so I ask you to do a work in me, in the world, in the church, so that you will be properly glorified by the subjects over whom you reign. Men should honor you, Lord. I should honor you better than I do. And yet it's not like that. And so, Lord, there is a gap between the perfection of your intrinsic glory and the way that glory is ascribed to you. Lord, I want you to bridge that gap and bring us all more toward you, more toward your glory as the supreme passing priority and reason that I come to you here just now."

What does praying to the glory of God look like? How do you express this in simple terms? What does it look like when a heart is starting to be conditioned to the glory of God and the simplicity of the way that you can pray in response to that? Let me just give you some simple examples. These are words that a three-year-old can pray. "Father, you are good. I trust you. I ascribe glory to you by trusting you. Father, you are wise. Give me wisdom. Father, you are great. I worship you. Father, help me glorify you in what I'm facing today." Things like that, that recognize the character of God and pray in response to it and bend your heart toward his. Rather than praying right off the bat, "God, change my circumstances," what if we said, "God, I trust you. And God, if there is a way that your name can be glorified in these adverse circumstances that I'm facing, I pray first that you would accomplish that glorious purpose, even if it means that my desire for gratification has to be delayed; more important, far better that you would be glorified in my life than for me to be comfortable in my life."

Beloved, that basic idea, the simplicity of this, opens up a whole different world of praying. This is an introduction into a new realm for many people because suddenly, as you're praying – watch this. I know I say that a lot. It's because I feel the urgency of every moment in this pulpit speaking as a dying man to dying men, I feel the urgency of the moment. Why is this so important for us to grasp, "Father, hallowed be your name"? Because a Christian, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, should be pursuing a theme

greater than himself, greater than herself. "God, the theme of your glory is greater than the theme of what I want, and so I put you first. I honor you as the primary reason that I am here before you."

So, just this past week, beloved, just over the past 168 hours, let me ask you a question: did you pray in any meaningful way? And if you did, was the glory of God uppermost in your heart as you did? Was concern for God's glory animating you as you spoke to your heavenly Father? Martyn Lloyd-Jones said in a brief quote here, he said, "It is when we look at it in that way that we see how utterly valueless much of our praying must be." How could our praying be right in the throne room of heaven if we're at the center of what we're expressing. Almost makes you want to kick off your shoes because you're realizing that you're on holy ground, right? Almost makes you want to just bow down and say, "Father, I am sorry. This is right, and I have been wrong. Father," let me back up, tangent here, okay? I've been reading a Puritan writer who, just in the past day or two, was making a distinction between great sins and what we consider to be great sins and little sins, and his point is that even little sins will send you to hell, and that little sins condition you for greater sins. So, you know, we think that we're okay because we haven't committed a great sin. You know, we haven't committed a murder. You know, for many of us, we haven't committed adultery or done other things that are grossly scandalous in the eyes of men. And the challenge in the Christian church is for dear people just like you to think, to have an idea in your mind that because I haven't done that, I'm relatively okay, that I'm relatively righteous, and you may find it somewhat difficult to think that you have any sins to confess at all, because you're outwardly moral. Your life isn't a scandal against God in the eyes of men. I know that's how I thought before I was a Christian. But dear friends, forget about that moralistic, man-centered stuff and compare yourself to the word of God and the command of Christ and the nature of true prayer. Jesus says, speaking basic things to his disciples about prayer, "Pray like this, Father in heaven, hallowed be your name," that this is the supreme priority in your fundamental approach to God and then to recognize that the truth be told, that's hardly even a thought that crosses my mind when I pray. All of a sudden, you realize that the little sins, so-called, that men don't see are actually great sins in the presence of God because you're not giving him the glory that he deserves, and all of a sudden, you don't want to boast about your outward purity or you know, your moral quality of life, the fact that you're a good, hardworking, honest man and boast in that. Let's cast dung on that in light of the things that we're considering here and question whether we are people supremely concerned for the glory of God so much that it animates the way that we pray; no wonder the great doctor would say when we look at it that way, we see how utterly valueless much of our praying must be.

And so, beloved, what this does is it brings us to a spirit of repentance. It brings us to a spirit of renouncing self, of bowing before God. and saying, "Lord, I've fallen short in the most fundamental way before you. Be merciful to me, the sinner. I don't care that I'm not like other people, Father. What I care about is that I'm not like what you call me to be and that breaks my heart, my Savior." I'm going to leave out, for the sake of giving us good time for the Lord's Table, the other things that I had in mind to say here in my notes. But beloved, I don't want you to walk away thinking I've overstated the case here. I don't

want you to think, well, this is just, you know, he got on a riff again today and didn't even finish his notes. Beloved, Scripture tells us plainly that the purpose of life is to bring God glory in every aspect of it, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Well, praying is to be to the glory of God, with the glory of God as its aim, as its goal. Spiritual growth is for the glory of God. Scripture says, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, to him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. And the glory of God is going to be the theme of the end of the ages, as you read in Revelation 19. Beloved, this is not a side matter. This is not an optional election for advanced Christians. This is fundamental to what it means to walk with Christ, to be a Christian. Without this, someone can pull me aside after the service and explain to me how someone could be a Christian without this. God's glory is ultimately the only thing that matters in all of creation and what Jesus teaches us in this prayer is to carry that fundamental principle into the way that we pray and to develop a consistency between the reality of the glory of God, the preeminence of the glory of God, and then the practice of prayer in light of the glory of God. That's what he calls us to. That's what true prayer is.

Some things about the way that we practice prayer, what we've been taught about prayer could not possibly be true. Right prayer could not possibly be a ritualistic repetition of the same words. It could not possibly be a matter of time schedules and lists. That's not possible. You could meet the schedule, you could read through the list without any heart concern for the glory of God. If you're just mindlessly repeating the same words over and over again, there's nothing to glorify God in that. Right prayer could not be what false teachers our day tell us. Prayer is not something by which you make a positive confession to bring things into existence by what you say with your mouth and just say, "I'll be," you know, all that is saying, "I'll be my own God. I'll self-create by my own spoken word. And I'll be a reflection of what God did in Genesis 1." Number one, no one can do that. That's not the purpose of prayer. If there's anything that happens, it's demonic because it's so contrary to the truth of things. You know, we just need to come back to the glory of God and start there. What is true prayer? True prayer is an expression of a believing heart that desires the glory of God above all else. True prayer is an expression of a believing heart that desires the glory of God above all else. Everything is subordinate to that. Everything that we pray is in pursuant of that final principle.

As we come to the Table, God's glory is best revealed in Jesus Christ and in his cross. It's there that we see the holiness of God and the mercy of God meeting together for his glory. It is here that we see deity and humanity meeting together to serve divine love, to the purpose of divine glory. Beloved, with your heads bowed, this Table reminds us of the transcendent purpose of God. Jesus Christ died to eternally save a people from their sins. If you have truly received Christ, we invite you to receive these elements and partake of them. If you're not a Christian, if you have unconfessed sin that you're not willing to repent of, you need to let these elements pass because they're not for people who prefer sin over the glory of God.

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