

## ***Bookends of the Gospels: Matthew 6 and John 17***

### ***Two prayers of Jesus: pray like this***

#### *Matthews bookend*

Often, people do things that Jesus did. Jesus washes feet so we wash feet. Jesus says pray in his name so we add *in Jesus name* to prayers. There are people who get crucified to symbolize their walk with God. Did they die like Jesus did too? This prayer in Matthew is an example and a template. It's not the only words we can pray.

If you read Matthew 6 it's all about what we give to God. We are to give alms to God? Alms means giving to the needy. I love it when church leaders call giving to the church alms. That is just not true. The church is needy but they are not the poor. The church does not represent the poor either. Does the money in a church for a pastor's retreat go to the poor? No, it goes to the retreat. So, giving alms to a church is tricky. Money in a church helps the poor and the church. It is not alms.

The other side of this is what is hidden and what is not. Jesus leads up to this prayer by teaching about giving and praying in secret. Give alms to the poor when nobody is looking or knows. Pray in private when nobody knows. It mentions several times that those who give and pray in public are given their reward in full. What is that? It means the feelings they get in pride is all they receive. Then we have this prayer of Jesus. A prayer that people have used over the centuries to judge others in public. Somehow, we have got this prayer all wrong. Just like giving to the poor and looking holy in public.

#### **What's it all mean?**

Jesus gives us a good template to pray. We should thank God, respect heaven, and then ask for our needs. The point is not in the order or the exact words. It's the intent. If we think of praising God first then we are focused on God and not ourselves. If we respect heaven, holiness, and what the church stands for, then we are kingdom focused and not self-focused. Its not about what part of prayer comes first but where our mind is first: on God or our needs.

This prayer is kingdom focused. Our needs can be asked for but the needs of God should come first in our hearts. That is why the first sections of this chapter fit so well. Why give to the poor? To look compassionate? Why pray long prayers in church? To look holy? Jesus is pleading for us to look upon God for guidance. To give alms for the right reasons. To pray for the right reasons. Jesus then goes on and talks about treasure we forge on earth. He mentions not worrying. Why?

It's all about focus. God provides. We build credit with God by right motives. Basically, in whatever we do, do it for God's glory and not ours. Those are the treasures forged on earth. That brings me to John 17. We will get into this prayer next week. In the meantime, (read John 17's prayer) see that this prayer is God centered from the other side. Not our point of view but Jesus point of view. Jesus is God. God the Father is asked by Jesus to focus on the saved. In a way this prayer is God's response to the Matthew 6 prayer. We pray to God and he answers prayer. Jesus now asks God to answer our needs. These two prayers are great gospel bookends.