

## STUDY 1 – OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

### Matthew 6:5-15 & Romans 8:14-17

#### For Starters

- Why do we want others approval? What does it assume (about you and them)? What drives it?
  
- Can you think of ways we pretend to be godlier than we are?

★ **A bit of context:** The Sermon on the Mount is all about learning what it means to follow Jesus (i.e. the implications). It means slowly learning to become righteous, like him and his father (5:48). A righteousness that exceeds even that of the Pharisees (5:20), who were meticulous about their religious observance. That is, a righteousness that is not merely external and showy (hypocritical), but internal and genuine. A righteousness that is inspired by God's saving mercy (5:7, 43-44) and arises out of our childlike status and privilege. It is not a perfect righteousness otherwise we wouldn't need his mercy (5:7) and forgiveness (6:12). And yet, Jesus doesn't hold back. He calls us to build our house on the rock by taking his words seriously and so doing the will of the Father (7:21, 24).

One of the areas of righteousness we need to work at, is not doing Christian things to be seen by others. In 6:1 Jesus warns us, *"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."* He then gives 3 examples of when we might be tempted to show off like this (When giving v2-4, when praying v5-15, and when fasting v16-18). This is the immediate context to the Lord's prayer.

- Apart from giving, praying, and fasting, can you think of other examples of self-promotion through expressions of public piety?

#### Read Matthew 6:5-6

- In terms of prayer, how can other people influence how, why, and when we pray? In what situations might we be tempted to pray in order to impress others?
  
- Someone has neatly summed up the principle in v6 as, 'Secrecy safeguards sincerity'. Is Jesus discouraging public ministry/acts of service? In Matthew 5:16 Jesus says that people should see our good works, and yet here he seems to speak against it. How do we harmonise this tension?
  
- Are there other ways to guard our sincerity/authenticity when it comes to others seeing our good deeds?

#### Read Matthew 6:7-8

- Why should we not babble on in our prayers? Aren't longer prayers better than short prayers?
  
- If God knows what we need before we ask, why bother asking?

### Read Matthew 6:9

- What is the significance of addressing God as father?
- What are some common ideas about God that are ruled out because he is our 'heavenly father'?

### Read Romans 8:14-17

- *14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 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 we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*
- What does the Spirit do for us?
- As we wait for this glorious inheritance, what is the cost? Is it worth it?

★ The fact that Christians can pray as a child of the Father rather than address God like a slave addressing a master is evidence of the Spirit's witness and adoption. Adoption in the Greco-Roman world involved adopting a child who would become the legal heir to everything the adopting person owned, and so share any natural child's entitlement. This means everything God and his son Jesus owns (ie. All creation, and the whole the new creation) becomes ours to share, rule and enjoy in eternity. We are rich indeed! We can call the majestic ruler of eternity our 'Father', and he has graciously given us all things as an inheritance (a whole new creation Rom8:18-25, 32).

### Apply

- How does/should knowing he is our generous and wise father impact our prayerfulness?
- Give thanks for this enormous privilege!

## STUDY 2 – HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.

### Isaiah 6:1-8

#### For Starters

- What do you think it would be like to see God? Describe what you imagine you would see, think, and feel?

#### Read Isaiah 6:1-8

- Why does Isaiah freak out in v5?
- What is God's holiness, and why repeat it three times!
  - Exodus 15:11
  - Habakkuk 1:13
  - Revelation 4:8-9
- What is the solution for Isaiah's predicament?
- How do we balance God's fatherhood (approachable) with his holiness (unapproachable)?
- When we pray 'hallowed be your name' we are requesting 'may your name be hallowed'. What does this mean? How would you paraphrase it?

★ **Old Testament background.** Ezekiel 36-37 is probably in Jesus' mind here. To summarise, in the OT Israel profaned God's 'holy name' (Ezk36:19-20, Rom2:24). God removed Israel from the promised land and took them into Exile. It is at this point that he makes the promise of a coming new covenant age. He will bring his people back to the land, cleanse their hearts (Ezk36:25, Mt26:28), give them his spirit (36:26), and unite them under a new Davidic king (Ezk37:22, 24). The chief reason he does it is 'for the sake of his holy name' (Ezk36:21-22). Jesus is ushering in this new age where God's name would be honoured as holy in the lives of his spirit filled people, as they followed the newly appointed Davidic King (him). The new covenant is breaking in ... and in that context Jesus says, 'Hallowed by your name' (Ezk 36) and then 'Your kingdom come' (Ezk 37:22, 24).

## Read 1 Peter 1:13-16

- Why and how should we respond to God's holiness in our life? What does it look like for us to treat God as the holy one?
- How do we/can we make God's holiness known to those around us?
- How would our church be different if together (and individually) we hallowed God's name?

**STUDY 3 – YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS  
IT IS IN HEAVEN.  
Matthew 25:31-46.**

**For Starters**

- If you were to rewrite the Lord's prayer to reflect our North Shore cultural values ... how would it go?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What is the hardest line for you to pray in the Lord's prayer? Why?

Let's focus in on the theme of kingdom. There is a past, present, and future aspect to God's Kingdom ...

PAST: The Kingdom came in Jesus life, death, resurrection and ascension.

- Mt3:2, 4:17, 10:7
- Mt5:3, 10
- Mt4:23, 9:35
- Mt12:28
- Mt26:62-66
- Mt28:18

★ Many of Jesus titles also communicate his kingly nature. **Son of God** is the name given to the promised eternal Davidic king (son of David) to come (2Sam7:12-14, Ps2:7). **Christ** (Greek) and **Messiah** (Hebrew) both mean 'anointed one', and it refers to Israel's King who was anointed with oil, and the holy spirit to rule (1Sam16:3, 12-13). **Son of Man** also has royal ruling connotations, especially in Daniel. The kingdom of God which will replace all earthly kingdoms (Dan2:24), is given to the 'Son of Man' in Daniel 7:13-14. He is the one who rules the world forever. So, when Jesus disciples pray for God's kingdom to come, in the first place they are praying for God's promised ruler (the Son of God, Christ/Messiah, Son of Man) to complete his mission and come to his throne.

PRESENT: The kingdom comes as new believers bow the knee to King Jesus, and his rule extends into the life of his people.

- When was Jesus declared/crowned as King?
  - Romans 1:1-4
  
  
  - Matthew 28:18 (Cf. Dan7:13-14)
  
  
  - Ephesians 1:19-21
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What response ought the whole world give to him? Do we?

- Romans 1:5, 15:17-18, 16:25-27
- Matthew 28:20
  
- What is the point of the heaven/earth contrast with reference to God's kingly will being done? ('Your will be done, *on earth as it is in heaven*')
  
- What is the critical difference between those who get into the kingdom and those who don't?
  - Mt7:21
  - Mt7:24, 26
  
- So, what are the implications for us as we pray 'Your kingdom come, your will be done'?

FUTURE: The kingdom will fully come when Jesus returns to finally destroy all opposition to his rule and bring in a new creation for his people.

- Clearly the fullness of the Kingdom experience will be in the future (E.g. Matthew 8:11, 13:43, 25:34)

### Read Matthew 25:31-46

★ While the bible teaches in many places that we should love our disadvantaged neighbours by providing for their various needs, I'm not convinced this is the context for Jesus teaching here. Verse 40 makes it clear that here Jesus is talking about Christians (his 'brothers and sisters'), rather than people in general. Also, in verse 45 he calls them 'the least of these' or 'little ones', which is what he calls his disciples in Matthew 10:42, 11:25, 18:6, 10, 14.

If this is right, then how we treat fellow believers is an expression of how we treat Jesus (*what you did for the least of these you did for me*). Jesus so identifies with his people that how we treat one another translates into how we treat Jesus. To care for a brother or sister in Christ is to care about Jesus and his concerns. To add to this is the high probability that Jesus has Christian missionaries in view here, for there is a strong connection to Matthew 10. In chapter 10 Jesus is instructing his disciples before he sends them out to proclaim the kingdom and demonstrate its power in healings. In that context he also talks about food, drink, clothing, and imprisonment. At the end of his instructions he says, <sup>40</sup> "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup> Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. <sup>42</sup> And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward." (Mt10:40-42). Those who welcome his representative witnesses and provide for them, will be blessed, for in doing so they welcomed Jesus and the Father. As the world hates on Jesus' representative followers who are sharing the kingdom, may we not be counted among them, but be generously supportive. Jesus is so aligned with

his people that as you love them you love Jesus and his agenda. On the last day, genuine Christians will be known as those who supported Jesus global disciple making purposes and expressed it by welcoming and providing for fellow Christians in this.

- How should we spend our remaining days? What really matters in the end?

**STUDY 4 – GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD.**  
**Luke 12:22-34 (& Mt 6:25-34)**

- When do we acutely sense our need for God? And why don't we more often?
  
- "The person who dies with the most toys wins" Discuss.

**Read Luke 12:22-34**

- [NB: You'll find the parallel passage in Mt 6:25-34. We'll jump between them once or twice so have that passage open also]
  
- What are your initial impressions?
  
- Notice the immediate context giving rise to both passages (Mt6:21, 24, and Lk12:15, 21). How does this help you to see Jesus over-arching concern? What's his big point?
  
- How can chasing after material things dull our spiritual fervour and even effectively replace God? Have you noticed how this is at play in your own life?
  
- What reasons does Jesus give to help us accept his challenge?
  - Lk 12:15, 23
  - 12:27-28
  - 12:25-26
  - 12:30
  - 12:33
  
- How does this help our understanding of asking for daily bread?
  
- How does what Jesus says here help us to be generous with what God has given us? (12:32-34)
  
- Read Proverbs 30:7-9. What is the central concern of this pronouncement? How might it relate to our request for daily bread in the context of Matthew 6:33 & Lk12:31?
  
- Can we afford to put God and his purposes ahead of our material concerns? How do we learn to be content with such an attitude/lifestyle? Read the following verses to help fuel your thoughts ... And share how you are challenged and comforted.

- Philippians 4:12-13
  - Hebrews 13:5
  - 1 Timothy 6:6-11
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- Is it wrong to be relatively wealthy and comfortable? Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19 and list the instructions. Are any particularly challenging for you?

### **Apply**

- How can our pursuit of abundance distract us from seeking first God's kingdom and his righteousness? What can we do about it?
- How can we grow in acknowledging our dependency, our sense of contentment, and our generosity?
- Pray that God would keep us from the self-deception and arrogance of self-sufficiency and greed. That we would daily acknowledge our need for him, not just to provide things, but to fill us with a sense of security in him and a generous love for others.

## STUDY 5 – THANKSGIVING & VISION SUNDAY

This week we'll pause from our Lord's Prayer series to reflect on what the Lord is doing and might do through our Church ...

Our Vision: 'Growing disciples of Jesus Christ through outreach, belonging, and maturity'

### Reflect

- If you attended the thanksgiving dinner, what were your impressions?
  
- Whether you attended it or not, what are you thankful for as you look back over the last year of ministry at St Andrews?
  
- If you attended one of our Vision Day gatherings, did anything inspire you?
  
- What part could you play in our churches vision? In what way could you serve in the coming year?

### Pray

- For God's vision to be our vision. For his kingdom to come and will be done in and through and around our church.
- Pray for each member to serve faithful in their capacity.
- Pray for an increase in evangelistic conviction and action.
- Pray for a growth in welcoming culture and practice.
- Pray for a maturing in our Christlike convictions and character.
- Pray for our mission & aid partners to faithfully serve God in difficult circumstances and that God may be pleased to bring fruit from their efforts.
- Pray for other things related to our vision and its implementation ...

**STUDY 6 – AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN  
OUR DEBTORS.  
Matthew 18:21-35**

**For Starters**

- When is forgiveness relatively easy and when is it hard? What process do you have to go through? (Share if comfortable).

**Read Matthew 6:11-15**

- What is the relationship between God forgiving us, and us forgiving others?
  - Matthew 5:44-48
  - Ephesians 4:32
  - Colossians 3:12-13

**Read Matthew 18:21-35**

- What is Jesus basic point?
- When we struggle to forgive someone what might this parable encourage us to do?
- Do you think it is possible to fully forgive without the perpetrator properly repenting?

**★ Is God's forgiveness of us conditional upon our forgiveness of others? (6:14-15, 18:35).**

An unwillingness to forgive may be a sign that we haven't understood the extravagance of God's love for us in the gospel. 'We love because he first loved us' (1Jn4:19). The bible is clear that we are not saved by good works (including forgiving others), Eph2:8-9. But we are saved for good works (Eph2:10). And so good works are evidence of salvation. They are the effect, not the cause. The fruit, not the root. The one who won't forgive others doesn't receive God's forgiveness probably because they have not grasped the gospel and perhaps are not genuinely Christian. Having said that, this is different to a Christian who is willing to progress in forgiving others but finds it very difficult because of the intensity of the sin committed against them. There is a difference between stubbornly refusing to pass on God's mercy and struggling to do so due to past trauma.

- "Forgiveness is an ongoing choice more than a feeling that everything is ok"  
Discuss.

- How do we relate forgiveness and justice? Does forgiving someone mean we should ignore their sin and its personal/moral/legal implications?
- Let's flip the coin from forgiving to apologising. Why is it hard to apologise/say sorry? (This prayer 'forgive us our sins' is an admission of guilt). What is required?
- How can we work at all this? How can we learn to deal with our grudges and allow God's mercy to influence our attitudes? What might be some helpful steps to go through when seeking to apologise and/or forgive?

**Safe ministry resources**

<https://safeministry.org.au/domestic-family-abuse/>

Anglicare Counselling: 1300 651 728

1800 RESPECT National Helpline: 1800 737 732

NSW DV Hotline: 1800 656 463

**STUDY 7 – AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US  
FROM THE EVIL ONE.**

**John 17:6-19**

**For Starters**

- Why are we so easily tempted by things that are bad for us? Why do we take the bait even when we know of the negative consequences?
  
- Do you think it is silly to believe in the devil? Why/why not?

**Read John 17:11-15**

- Jesus prays for his disciples protection. In what sense? Protection for/from what?

★ The word translated 'temptation' can also be rendered as 'test' or 'trial'. If this is the intended sense then it still means the same basic thing, for during trials/tests we are often tempted to sin. In that case, the sense of the verse would be, 'Lead us not into testing where we would succumb to evil'. Here is my catch all paraphrase: *"In the time of testing and temptation help us to follow your lead rather than succumb to the evil one."* The point seems to be that we don't take the devils bait and sin against God (like Adam & Eve). Jesus has previously been tested/tempted in the wilderness (Mt4:1-11) and awaits his greatest hour of trial beginning in Gethsemane (Mt26:36-46). During that episode he says to the disciples 'Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.' (Mt26:41). He then practices what he preaches. By being alert to the temptation of the hour and dependent upon God in prayer, he is enabled to choose God's way (*not my will but yours* v39) and is delivered from sinning. As disciples learning to be authentically righteous (Mt 5:6) like God (Mt5:48), and not the Pharisees (5:20), this is something to pray and aim for!

**Read James 1:13-15**

- Map out the steps of temptation. How does it work? Who is responsible? What is the result?

**Read Titus 2:11-12**

- How does God's grace motivate us to pursue godliness and fight sin?
  
- 1 John 3:8 says, 'The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work' How? Fill out the following table to see what the Devils main weapons are and how Jesus defeats him!

Devils weapon	Jesus' counterattack
John 8:44	John 14:6, Eph6:14
Heb 2:14-15	Heb 2:14, 17, 1Cor15:55
Rev 12:10	Rev 12:11, Rom5:1-2
Other?	

- In the time of testing/temptation what should we think and do according to God's word?
  - James 4:7-10
  - 1 Peter 5:6-9
  - 1 Corinthians 10:13
  - Ephesians 6:10-11, 13
  
- Do you have any experience or examples of these dynamics at play in your life that you'd be willing to share?

★ The good news is those trusting in Jesus, stand protected in his victory over evil (Col2:14-15 He has disarmed the evil powers). And so, when we pray 'deliver us from evil/the evil one' we taste that deliverance now through his saving work applied to us by his spirit.

### Apply

- Even though we seek to fight temptation and sin by God's grace and spirit, we will sin. How are we delivered from feelings of defeat, guilt, and inadequacy?
  - Hebrews 4:14-16
  
- Rejoice in God's mercy to us in Christ, that for those in Christ there is no condemnation (Rom8:1), but forgiveness, and sure hope.

**Study 8 – FOR THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY ARE  
YOURS, NOW AND FOREVER.**

**Revelation 4-5**

**For Starters**

- Think of everything in your life. Apart from God what would you describe as glorious, and why?

★ You might notice that this verse is not in some modern translations. Personally, I support this decision. The reason why is because the earliest discovered manuscripts don't contain it. Some well-meaning scribe probably added it in thinking it was a nice flourish to end the prayer on. And so, it found its way into some manuscripts and ended up in the original King James Version (1611). However, since the KJV we have discovered even earlier Greek manuscripts which don't have it. And so, we go with what they contain. By the way, it is a theologically harmless addition because it is true! And so because it's biblical we thought we'd explore the theme ...

**Read Revelation 4:6-11**

- How do the various creatures/elders respond to God in both word and action?
  
- What is the relationship between God as creator and him being worthy to receive all glory, honour, and power? (v11)

**Read Revelation 5:1-4**

- What is the problem?

★ The scroll signifies God's plans and purposes for history especially in terms of salvation and judgment. No one in all creation appears entitled to open it and bring the plan to fruition ... and so, John despairs that no final justice and salvation will be delivered.

**Read Revelation 5:5-6**

- What does the elder announce and what does John see? How can both images represent the same person? What do both images tell us about Jesus?

**Read Revelation 5:7-14**

- Why is the lamb able to open the scroll? And why is he exalted so highly?

- Who or what competes to be at the centre of your reality. How does it show?
  
- Finish the thought: 'If all praise, wealth, wisdom, honour, glory, and power rightly belong to God and the lamb (5:12-13), then we must ... '
  - What is one thing you should commit to doing in response to our glorious God?
  
- Share what you've learned about prayer (the Lord's prayer) over the past term. What's your take away conviction and action?