

# Meeting With Christ

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Practical and Exegetical Studies on the Words of Jesus Christ

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Based on sermons of Pasteur Eric Chang

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## THE BEATITUDES AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

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### Matthew 5:1-12

After studying the Beatitudes one by one, we looked at them together to see whether they form some kind of unified whole. This led us to see the connection between the Beatitudes and the fruit of the Spirit. Today, we will consider another kind of relationship, and it is the connection between the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer.

We mentioned at the conclusion of our last lesson that the Beatitudes should be for the Christian an object of prayer. We pray to God that He helps us to become the kind of person described in the Beatitudes: poor in spirit, able to mourn for sins, meek, hungry for righteousness... We know that by ourselves, we cannot be like that. And so, we are asking God that He would give us the grace and the power to become a man and a woman characterized by these spiritual qualities.

### Connecting the Beatitudes with the Lord's Prayer

When we say that there is a connection between the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, what do we mean? At first glance, there doesn't seem to be any kind of relationship between these two passages of the Bible. Well, let's look at some of these connections and you will have an idea of what we are talking about.

In the middle of the Lord's Prayer, we find the request, *Give us this day our daily bread*. Who would say such a prayer but those who hunger and thirst for righteousness? These are the people who hunger for the bread of life. That is where we find righteousness, in the bread of life. Do you begin to see the link between the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes, between asking for the daily bread and hungering and thirsting for righteousness?

Or take the last two items of the Lord's Prayer, *Do not lead us into temptation* and *Deliver us from evil*. And what are the last two Beatitudes? The last two concern the persecution that one suffers for righteousness, which is where the temptation comes. The last Beatitude says, 'They say all kinds of evil.' In the Lord's Prayer, we have, 'Deliver us from evil.' Again, presented in this way, the connection seems to be staring at us.

### Our Father

Now, let's look at these connections one by one, and let's examine them closely. The first item says, *Our Father in heaven*. Do you see the connection with being 'poor in spirit'? If I give you another verse from the words of the Lord Jesus, I am sure that the connection will click right away in your mind. Look at Matthew 18:3. What does it say?

*Matthew 18:3. Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Unless you become like what? Like children. Now, what is the first Beatitude? *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* For whom is the kingdom of heaven? We just read in Matthew 18 the statement that unless you change and become like little children, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. For of such are the kingdom of heaven. Of what? Of little children. The kingdom of heaven is for the little children. Therefore, you can see that the poor in spirit are the little children, in the spiritual sense.

What do we mean by ‘spiritual children?’ We mean that, unless you become like a child, i.e., someone who is totally dependant upon God as a child is dependant upon his father, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Do you see the connection now? In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus asks us to call God ‘Our Father’ because we are His children. In the Beatitudes, Jesus says that it is the poor in spirit, the people who have become like little children, who will inherit the kingdom of God. In this world, the children have no status. They possess nothing. They depend totally upon their parents. They are poor in the sense that though they may be heirs, as Paul says in Galatians, the heirs of all things, they are no better off than slaves so long as they are children. *Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all* (Galatians 4.1).

The children are like the slaves in the sense that they have no status. They have nothing and they cannot own anything. The parents look after them and provide them with everything that they need. And the Lord Jesus says to His disciples in Matthew 18 that unless you humble yourself and become like a child who can say in poverty of spirit, ‘My Father, I depend totally on You. I am nothing and I have nothing. I am simply your child. Please, have regard for me,’ unless you have this kind of attitude, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now the connection between the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer becomes so clear! ‘Our Father in heaven.’ Nobody can genuinely say ‘Our Father’ except the person who is truly poor in spirit, who has become a child spiritually. Because that is where we stand in relation to God. We are like children, depending completely on God, our Father, for our spiritual life. So, until we realize our true spiritual condition, until we are poor in spirit before God, then and only then can we say, ‘Our Father who is in heaven.’ There you can see the connection.

The Beatitudes are found in many places in Paul’s teaching. They were very much in Paul’s thinking. In fact, his doctrine of salvation has a lot to do with this matter of poverty of spirit. That we cannot earn our salvation anymore than a child can earn his living. That we cannot save ourselves through the keeping of the law and through our own efforts. That we are like children who are completely dependent upon God. That it is the Spirit of God, Paul says in Romans 8:15, who is sent into our hearts and who enables us in our poverty of spirit to cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul speaks about having suffered the loss of all things. He counted them as rubbish. If you have suffered the loss of all things, well, that means that you are poor. There is the poverty in spirit. He regarded all these things as though they are worth nothing that he may have Christ. You see how the Beatitudes can be found in Paul’s teaching.

### ***Hallowed by Your name***

Let’s look at the second connection. The second item is *Hallowed be Your name*, or ‘Holy be Your name.’ The emphasis is on making God’s name holy. That the perfection and the purity of Your name be exalted and glorified in all the earth. Who would have such a desire but the pure in heart? It is the pure in heart who seeks to hallow God’s name, to glorify God’s name by revealing, both in his

own life and in the life of others, the holiness of God's character. So it is easy to see how *Blessed are the pure in heart* and *Hallowed be Your name* are internally connected.

### ***Your kingdom come***

The next item of the Lord's Prayer is *Your kingdom come*. Here again, it is not difficult to see that this item corresponds to those who mourn. The people who desire God's kingdom to come are those who mourn because of sin. If we don't grieve about sin, I don't see how we can say from our hearts, *Your kingdom come*. Because it simply shows that we are satisfied with the spiritual condition of our world. Sin does not disturb us enough to react to it and to do something about it.

The Christian who is concerned about righteousness and holiness is very anxious that God's kingdom should come. Sin bothers him intensely and he looks forward to God's salvation, to the coming of God's kingdom. He longs with earnest expectation that the Lord Jesus should come again. In 1 Corinthians 16:22, we find this Aramaic word *Maranatha*, which means 'O Lord, come!' This word expresses precisely Paul's longing for the coming of God's kingdom. He says in that verse, *If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha*. He who does not love Jesus will not keep His commandments and will not grieve about sin. And Paul says, *Maranatha*. 'O Lord, come.' Come to exercise Your righteous sentence on this sinful world.

If we go into the OT, we can find the same theme. In Psalm 80:4-5 for example, the psalmist speaks of tears, of mourning over sin in the context of God's anger at His people. *O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure*. And in v. 2, he says, *Stir up Your strength, and come and save us!* Come to us, O God. Save us. Let your salvation come.

In Psalm 6:6-7, we see the same thing. We read about the mourning over sin, the grief that a contrite heart experiences when God is displeased. *I am weary with my groaning; all night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears. My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows old because of all my enemies*. And in v. 4, the psalmist says, *Return, O Lord, deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!* Turn back and deliver us. Come back to us and save us. We find here this longing for God to come. The coming of the kingdom is of course God's own coming. It is Jesus' coming. These examples illustrate this connection between the mourning over sin and the longing that God should come and save us.

### ***Your will be done on earth***

Let's talk about the next item. *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Who would pray like that but the meek? Notice this. The meek shall inherit what? The earth. Your will be done where? On earth. That is very interesting. In both cases, we have the word 'earth.' The meek are those who desire God's will to be done on earth. 'Let your will be done perfectly on earth as it is done in heaven.' The proud don't talk like that. They are more concerned about their own will, about their own desires. But not the meek. 'Not my will, O Lord, but Your will be done.' That is the language of the meek.

### ***Give us our daily bread***

The next item of the Lord's Prayer is this. *Give us this day our daily bread*. If you understand the meaning of that verse, you will see right away the connection with the verse in the Beatitudes about hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

As we will see when we will study the Lord's Prayer, we should not think of the 'daily bread' simply as the literal physical bread. That would be a mistake. The bread that the Lord Jesus is talking

about is not physical. It is first and foremost a spiritual bread, a bread that comes from heaven. Jesus says in John 6, *Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him* (John 6:27). He also says in the same chapter, *I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst* (John 6:35). When we hear this verse, immediately we think of the Beatitudes, about hungering and thirsting for righteousness. The connection is quite obvious.

### ***Forgive us our debts***

Let's talk about the request for forgiveness. *Forgive us our debts*. It is the merciful who long for that forgiveness and who have their sins forgiven. In the Lord's teaching, mercy and forgiveness of sins are parallel in meaning. Jesus makes it explicit in Matthew 18:32-33, in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. This is what we read.

*Matthew 18:32. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I **forgave** you all that debt because you entreated me.*

*33 'Should you not also have had **mercy** on your fellow slave, even as I had **mercy** on you?'*

In v. 33, the Lord Jesus speaks about having mercy. In v. 32, He speaks about forgiving. Mercy and forgiveness, these are two parallel terms in the teaching of Jesus. What does it mean to be merciful? It is to forgive sins. And why do we forgive sins? Because we ourselves have been forgiven by God. In fact, we can make the same analogy with peacemaking.

*Blessed are the peacemakers*. The person who desires peace and who makes peace readily forgives an offense against him. He does not bear a grudge against anyone. How can you be a genuine peacemaker if, in your heart, you refuse to forgive and you hold another person's sin against him? The attitude of the peacemaker is to seek a reconciliation. He freely forgives because he knows that he has been forgiven by God. He puts in practice the words of Paul in Colossians 3:13. *Just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive*. So we find that there is a close link between the merciful and the peacemaker in relation to forgiveness.

### ***Do not lead us into temptation***

Let's come to the last two items of the Lord's Prayer. *Do not lead us into temptation*. When do we face temptation the most? It is when we are being persecuted for the faith, when we experience the trials of the Christian life. As you may know, the words 'trial' and 'temptation' are the same word in Greek. We find this word in the Parable of the Sower where Jesus explains that there are people whose faith is a temporary one. They fall away in time of temptation, of testing (Luke 8:13). In this passage, there is no distinction between being tempted and being tested.

Even though we don't look for trouble, we know that it is just a matter of time before persecution comes. That is the cost of living for righteousness. And we are asking God that by His grace, He will sustain us spiritually and protect us from falling into temptation when we encounter these trials.

### ***Deliver us from evil***

The last connection is so obvious that it hardly requires any explanation. What does the last Beatitude say? *Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of **evil** against you falsely for My sake*. 'All kinds of evil.' As Christians, we should not be surprised when people say all manner of evil against us. And we pray to God, *Deliver us from evil*, from the evil of temptations. 'O God, deliver us from the evil actions of wicked men. Rescue us from all evil.' The parallel is so plain and so clear.

So the relationship between the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer can be summarized in the following table.

THE BEATITUDES		THE LORD'S PRAYER
Poor in spirit	◀ ▶	Our Father
Those who mourn	◀ ▶	Your kingdom come
Meek	◀ ▶	Your will be done on earth
Those who hunger for righteousness	◀ ▶	Give us our daily bread
Merciful	◀ ▶	Forgive us our debts
Pure in heart	◀ ▶	Hallowed be Your name
Peacemaker	◀ ▶	Forgive us our debts
Persecuted for righteousness	◀ ▶	Lead us not into temptation
All kinds of evil against you	◀ ▶	Deliver us from evil

### **The Beatitudes and prayer**

The Lord Jesus, in His supreme wisdom, has done something wonderful here. I wonder if you noticed it as we looked at the connection between the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, item by item. Jesus has taken the Beatitudes, right here at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, and He has turned them into a subject for prayer. He turned them in such a way that it draws out the internal essence of the Beatitudes.

Do you know what you are doing when you pray the Lord's Prayer? When you say, 'Our Father,' you are praying, 'Lord, make me to be poor in spirit.' Because you realize that you cannot rightfully call God, 'Our Father,' without being poor in spirit. That you cannot pray the Lord's Prayer without an attitude of poverty of spirit.

And then, you realize that you need to be pure in heart in order to be able to say sincerely, 'Hallowed be Your name.' Because if your heart is impure, how can you say, 'Holy be Your name?' That would be hypocritical. It is like a robber who says that people should not steal. And you can say the same thing about every item of the Lord's Prayer.

Every time you pray the Lord's Prayer, you have prayed for the spiritual qualities mentioned in the Beatitudes. We enter into the spirit of the Lord's Prayer when we understand its connection with the Beatitudes. That is why I said that Jesus has taken the Beatitudes and turned them into a subject for prayer in what we call the Lord's Prayer. Let us learn to do the same thing, to make the Beatitudes something to pray about, just as the Lord taught us to do in the Lord's Prayer.