

## Sermon on the Mount: Transformative Prayer – Matthew 6:1-18

Sunday 1 November 2020

### Before You Begin

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us to engage meaningfully with God's word and invite us into a sense of worship, despite being unable to meet face-to-face. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you.

A table of contents has been added to give you a sense of what will follow and allow you to move more easily through the worship elements.

#### *Prepare*

Have your Bible close by and some food and drink prepared for communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

#### *Get into a 'Sacred' Space*

Be intentional. Sit somewhere. Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image) or you might play some reflective music. Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

#### *Consider your environment*

What will work for you in the space you have? If you have others in your house (housemates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.



### What's Inside

*On a computer, you can click these links*

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## Call to Worship

*Dave Moody*

Hi. Dave Moody here. Hope you are well. Great to chat with you today.

We are engaging in week 3 of our series on the Sermon on the Mount.

How amazing are these words from Jesus?

Words for all of us.

Words that bring life, hope, guidance.

Words full of grace and truth.

We picture the scene. Jesus on a hill. People gathered, sitting, standing, lounging, who knows, on different areas of that hill.

People from diverse backgrounds.

Unique people with unique goals and dreams.

People with varying views of themselves and of those around themselves.

People living in large communities or people living alone.

Some hopeful, some disillusioned, but all sons or daughters, all needing to hear the message that they are loved by their Heavenly Father, that they are valued, that they are treasured by the One and only, awesome God.

So, moving from that setting, to our setting, right here and now.

There are people like that right here, living on different areas of our local hill, Croydon Hills. People who really need to hear these wise words of Jesus.

Our prayer for the people on this hill and the hills around where you live, is that they hear the words of life of Jesus like those 2,000 years ago.

So, let's hear a few of these powerful words in today's reading from Matt 6:1-18. Reminding us that God values who we are on the inside. He values our character and calls us to model our character on His character, our attitudes on His attitudes, our actions on His actions.

But before we hear this reading. Let's worship through song.

### Song: O Praise The Name (Anástasis)

I cast my mind to Calvary  
Where Jesus bled and died for me  
I see His wounds His hands His feet  
My Saviour on that cursed tree

His body bound and drenched in tears  
They laid Him down in Joseph's tomb  
The entrance sealed by heavy stone  
Messiah still and all alone

O praise the Name of the Lord our God  
O praise His Name forevermore  
For endless days we will sing Your praise  
Oh Lord oh Lord our God

Then on the third at break of dawn  
The Son of heaven rose again  
O trampled death where is your sting  
The angels roar for Christ the King

He shall return in robes of white  
The blazing sun shall pierce the night  
And I will rise among the saints  
My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face

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## Bible Reading: Matthew 6:1-18 (NIV)

*If you are with others perhaps take turns to read different sections*

“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.

“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

“This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.'

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

"When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

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## Praying in Our Local Hill

*Dave Moody*

So, what do we learn from Matthew chapter 6? Jesus is really encouraging us that an important part of our prayer is nurturing that special intimate relationship that we have with our Heavenly Father, where God can speak into a character and guide us and encourage us on the journey of life.

So, as I wander through the streets of Croydon Hills, I am impacted by the potential we have to be praying for our neighbours, praying for the people around us. Don't get me wrong, I don't do this all the time but how special is it to take the opportunity to wander the streets just praying for people in their homes – over here, over there, over there.

I don't know about you, but I'm a numbers guy. I enjoy numbers and interestingly outside of every home there is actually a little box with a number on it. It's called a letterbox which seems like such a quaint idea in this digital world. Those numbers are a trigger for me for prayer because we've got a bible that is just full numbers – numerical inspirations for prayer.

And so, I'll wander past number 23 and I think of an absolutely incredible psalm – Psalm 23. Let's pray for these people:

*"Dear Lord, I pray that You would help these people in this home understand that You can be their Shepherd, the One who guides them, encourages them and provides purpose and safety for them. I pray that if they are sensing that they are tracking through the valley of the shadow of death, I pray*

*that you would encourage them, help them to know that You are near them, that You comfort them, that You are right beside them. Amen."*

Wandering a little further, I get to number 4 and recall a cool scripture found in Philippians chapter 4.

*"Dear Lord, I pray for these people in this home. If they are anxious or concerned I pray that they know that they can have a relationship with You where they can present their requests to You by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, and I pray that Your peace which transcends all understanding would guide their hearts and their minds in Christ Jesus. Amen."*

So that was number 4. Now for number 6. I am reminded of John chapter 14 verse 6.

*"Lord I pray for these people in this home, that You would reveal yourself as The Way, the Truth and The Life. Jesus help them understand that Your way is the best way and that You bring life. Father God would You reveal Yourself to them, may Your truth be known to them. In Your precious Name. Amen."*

Alright, so I'm walking past number 40 now. What a cool number! I am reminded of Isaiah chapter 40, where scripture says, *"do you not know, have you not heard, that the Lord is the Everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth."*

*"Well, Lord God, I pray for these people, this family in this home, that You would be revealed in a special way to them. May they know that You are the Creator of the ends of the earth, that You have created them, special and unique. I pray that You help them know that they can have hope in You and that You will renew their strength. Amen."*

Song: With All I Am

Into Your hands I commit again  
All I am for You Lord  
You hold my world in the palm of Your hand  
And I am Yours forever

Jesus I believe in You  
Jesus I belong to You  
You're the reason that I live  
The reason that I sing  
With all I am

I'll walk with You wherever You go  
Through tears and joy I'll trust in You  
And I will live in all of Your ways  
And Your promises forever

I will worship I will worship You (5X)

With all I am  
I will worship I will worship You  
I will worship I will worship You

CCLI Song # 4257734  
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## Message

*Penny Martin*

I remember in 2015 being on a hill in the Mission District in San Francisco and Dr. Daniel Kirk my Fuller Theological Seminary *New Testament* professor teaching us from the Sermon on the Mount. It was an enlightening and transforming moment to be studying the Bible in such a context. The view and the history of that particular park, *Mission Dolores Park* (right), where we sat – once a centre for drug dealing, riddled with litter, homelessness and undocumented peoples was now a place of joy and beauty and a hub of community activity – a little glimpse of the transforming power of the Kingdom of God, that we were reading about in Matthew.



Today I am sitting up on the top of Mount Dandenong. I can see ... expanse (instead of lockdown).

I wonder whether or not Jesus taught this prayer from the top of a mountain – because of the perspective that being ‘up high’ brings ... Words like heaven and earth feel different up here. Words like kingdom and bread and forgiveness take on a different breadth when we can see cities, and towns, houses and farms all laid out before us ...

So, we come to this prayer ... with the following interesting and key elements:

1. **Address** God’s rightful place as the holy Father (parent)
2. **Worship** and praise God for who He is and all that He has done
3. **Acknowledge** that it is God’s will and plans that are in control and not our own
4. **Ask** God for the things that we need
5. **Confess** our brokenness and repent
6. **Request** protection and help in overcoming sin

What one prays for expresses something profound about what one believes and also has the power to shape what one believes. This most well-known and beloved ‘Lord’s Prayer’ is memorised and recited the world over and is as powerful to teach us today as it ever was when Jesus taught his followers to humbly pray in this way.

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*The first transformative reminder present in the Lord's Prayer is simply this: You and I are loved by God and empowered to love others likewise.*

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This prayer is framed not as the final word on prayer meant to be executed correctly, instead in Luke's gospel Jesus situated the prayer in the context of friends and parents who give good gifts (Luke 11:5-13) and similarly in Matthew Jesus prefaces this prayer with the reminder that God "knows what you need before you ask" (6:8) – it is framed by the goodwill of God who wants good things for the ones he loves.

### **Let's Pray Together ...**

#### **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."**

Parent God, you are powerful, holy and beyond my frail words to describe you. You are not only our Father in heaven, you are our Father in hospital, in penthouse apartments, in back-alleys, alone with people struggling with addiction, in the halls of government. Every day you invite us to stretch out our hearts to embrace the whole of humanity. You ask us to look up, to see with your eyes the beauty of creation – the sun that warms everyone, the rain that falls on everyone. Transform our imperfect eyes, and help us to see, to really see, from this mountain-top, despite these trying times. God in heaven open the eyes of our hearts and see you everywhere.

#### **"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."**

I pray with deep longing and gnawing frustration for your Kingdom to come. We need more than just a glimpse too God, it's a mess here! We need wise Kingdom leaders, and systems that are just and, please oh God of compassion, we need Kingdom love to take deep root in all of us – for healing and wholeness for justice and hope to grow here on this pandemic-stricken earth. Author of life, you give us the design for your new Kingdom in the words and living image of your Son Jesus – shatter our narrow defaults that would lock your kingdom inside four walls of a building. As COVID-19 has pressed us back into our neighbourhoods continue to give us grace toward other-centeredness for the sake of living out the pattern of your kin-dom.

#### **"Give us this day our daily bread."**

Can I only ask for what I need today? I ask for only that – as hard and uncomfortable as that is. Teach me to honour life by resisting selfishness. Give me courage to refuse to be a hoarder of food and of so many of earth's precious resources. Give us all the daily discipline to not allow our wants to take priority over our needs and the needs of others. From this hill-top today as I look over farms and factories, I lift up all those invisible women and men who set out to work, toiling daily so that I can have fresh fruit and vegetables. Strengthen my resolve to ask only for today – so that anything else I have might be used to be daily bread for another.

#### **"Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."**

Thank you for loving me. I confess and acknowledge and mourn my sinfulness against others, against myself, against your creation. Forgive me when I hate what you love. I want to make peace

today. As the Psalmist wrote so long ago, *“Create in me a clean heart, O gracious God, and put a new and right spirit within me”* (Ps 51:10). We ask your Spirit to guide us, to help us name and confess our brokenness and to repent. Grant us the grace to also forgive and love ourselves, to revel in our true sense of identity in you – loving God. From this place help us to grant forgiveness to those who hurt and betray us especially when it is hard to pinpoint who or what our real enemy is in this pandemic.

**“Lead us not into temptation; deliver us from evil.”**

Save us from ourselves, transforming God as we can so easily be ignorant about where our careless boots tread and the imprints we leave. Help us be confronted by our collusion in benefitting from systems and cultures that cause harm to the powerless and voiceless. As we press on our way to more convenience and more comfort, God deliver us from evil. Deliver us from self-righteousness, deliver us from superficiality, deliver us from a total lack of imagination about what you are up to in our lives and communities, deliver us from complacency. Do I even want to be delivered? Oh God – have mercy on me, deliver me from myself. I look with faith to Jesus your Son who withstood the temptations in the wilderness, and ultimately triumphed over evil.

**“For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.”**

When each day has felt so long during this time, and we toss and turn in restless and uncertain sleep, we acknowledge that you only are our hope and salvation – the final victory is yours Eternal God.

Thank you for the words of Jesus, the everyday assurance of your love, your redeeming Kingdom work, the promise of good news ...

In the name of the One who taught us this prayer, Jesus the Christ.  
Amen.

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*“THE ESSENCE OF PRAYER IS THE LOVE OF GOD NOT OUR ABILITY TO PRAY.  
May the knowledge of that love move you to create new and inspired ways to  
express, examine and share that love.”*

*(Justin Mc Roberts, “Forty Days of Practice”)*

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## Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What is the ‘mountain-top’ perspective that you need to be transformed by today?
2. What are some ways that you will embody the transforming love of God this week?



## Communion

*Have some food and drink prepared for this time*

If you're able, join us at 11am Sunday through Zoom to share in communion together at [rngwd.com/communion](https://rngwd.com/communion) or via Facebook live [rngwd.com/fbv](https://rngwd.com/fbv).

If you are unable to join us, then please use the following reflection to take communion in your own way today and after, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

One of the things that we can be actively doing to embrace the idea of spiritual formation is to press into spiritual practices. Communion is a dedicated practice that we do week to week – to set aside time to pause and remember Jesus' death on a cross and the loving sacrifice that he made for each of us. As we pause for a few minutes and take simple food and drink – we remember Jesus meeting with his followers:

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*Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying,  
"Take, eat, this is my body".*

*Then he took the cup gave thanks and offered it to them,  
and they all drank from it.*

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Please share in your version of communion.

Communion is usually a time of being *in* community, breaking bread together as a symbolic remembering of Jesus' last supper with his disciples and followers. If we are not in our normal community it might feel strange to do this alone, as a couple or with only a small group of people.

Intentionally consider who you are communing with:

- Think of the people in close proximity to you e.g. neighbours. Give thanks for them.
- Consider and visually bring to mind friends in our church community who would normally be sitting close by at this time. Give thanks for them.
- Consider the community of the Trinity – God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit – a divine community into which you are embraced today as a beloved child of God.

## Connect cards online

Click this link or enter it into your web browser [rngwd.com/connect](https://rngwd.com/connect)

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you.

Thank you!