

Scripture Reference: Matt. 6:9a (series 2 of ___)

Date: July 8, 2012

Title: "Imitation is not Always the Sincerest Form of Flattery"

Focus: There is more to prayer than how it is done.

Intro:

1. There is a flaw with people. We take something meant to enrich life and make it a rule that restricts it.
2. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaching on prayer addresses this. Instead, it has now become the "pattern" to follow. His intent was to express what prayer could be, not limit its expression.

Body:

Prayer Has Always Been Integral to Israel's Relationship with YHWH

- It was a way by which they could love YHWH with "*all your heart*" (Deut. 6:5).
- It was part of both their communal and personal lives.

Prayers were rendered at least three times a day. – Public Prayers

Prayer was associated with certain events (Holy Days, Sacrifices, and Meals).

Some of their prayers were liturgical, copied from the OT and recited, much like responsive readings are done.

- Eventually prayer ended up being abused after the manner found in v. 5.

V. 5 "*They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men.*"

- What served purpose, came to be valued for its form.
- More attention came to be given to "doing it right," than to why one prays in the first place.

Jesus Commanded His Disciples to Pray

- Make no mistake, though abused, prayer was still essential to Israel's relationship with God.
- One does not need to pray to be religious. However, one cannot relate to God apart from prayer.
- The necessity of prayer is stressed by the importance Jesus placed on practicing prayer. It is a command, an imperative.

When He Said, "Pray like this," He Wasn't:

Telling them to Imitate the Actions of His Body.

The tone of His voice.

The position of His body.

The words He used.

Whether He prayed fast or slow.

- Focusing on externals is what had hollowed out prayer.

V. 7 "*When you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.*"

Nor to Imitate His Pattern of Praying.

- Prayer is more than words.

Jesus already said there was no benefit in words spoken without meaning.

Words said in prayer hold no meaning in themselves.

While there is nothing wrong with praying another person's prayer, prayer with meaning is expressed from the core of a person.

Sincere prayer expresses your heart.

- With this understanding, Jesus goes on to teach about the richness of prayer, as God desires it to be.

- In verses 9b-13, Jesus redefines prayer.

Closing:

1. Many have no idea about what prayer really means. For them, prayer is defined by what a person does.

2. With this approach, a person is soon frustrated because prayer is ineffectual. They and the situation remain unchanged.

3. Prayer is not measured in a situation's change or how *faithfully* a person engages in the practice. Instead, the value in prayer is experienced.