

THE JOURNEY

The Lord's Prayer | Forgive us Our Debts

Our Father

- What did it mean for Jesus to call God, Father?
- What does it mean for you to call God, Father?

Thy Kingdom Come

- The Kingdom of God is the central message of the ministry and life of Jesus.
- What does the Kingdom of God mean to you?

Your Will Be Done

- The Father's will for Jesus was to usher in the Kingdom of God on earth.
- What does the Father's will mean to you?

Give Us This Day

- Give us today our daily bread, means both physical and spiritual food.
- Jesus said, "I am the bread of life," what does this mean for you?

Forgive Us Our Sins

- The forgiveness of sin is a means of freeing us from bondage of sin, and tying us to the King and his message.

Deliver Us From Evil

- The final Exodus is that the King will return and we will be completely free and delivered from evil.



Matthew 6:9-13

*"Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day 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 evil."*

Introduction

As we approach the end of 2014, beginning the New Year of 2015, we end and begin by praying through the Lord's Prayer. This has been a sermon series based on each line of the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is basically a summary of Jesus' mission from His Father here on earth. Jesus not only taught us to pray His mission, but more importantly He commissioned us to participate in His mission in the





The Lord's Prayer: An invitation to share in the divine life of Christ.

The Lord's Prayer according to N. T. Wright is; "Seen with Christian hindsight – more specifically, with trinitarian perspective – the Lord's Prayer becomes an invitation to share in the divine life itself. It becomes one of the high roads into the central mystery of Christian salvation and Christian existence: that the baptized and believing Christian is (1) incorporated into the inner life of the triune God *and* (2) intended not just to believe that this is the case, but actually to experience it" (N. T. Wright, *The Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm of Christian Prayer*).

Kingdom of God here on earth.

In this part of the prayer, Jesus taught us to pray "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." What did Jesus mean by this line of the Lord's prayer? and, How can we live out this part of the Lord's prayer?

I. Setting the Scene

One of the most shocking images in the New Testament is the seen in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, of the Father running to embrace his son (Luke 15:12-32). It is not a shocking image to us, but it is in the cultural context of Jesus' times. It would be the equivalent of let's say, a key political leader, in our city, addressing Hong Kong citizens in a live televise appearance, wearing his swimming suit, a speedo. That's how shocking that image was to the audience of Jesus when he told them of the Father running to embrace his son.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son sets the background for what Jesus meant when he taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." And only when we understand why the Father is running will we really understand this part of the Lord's prayer.

So what was Jesus getting at, not only with that story, the Running Father, but with the work He was doing, which the story was explaining? And how can we turn that story, and the reality to which it points, into prayer, as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us?



I have mentioned in my previous sermons, that the context of the Lord's prayer, is at the time when Jesus was announcing God's Kingdom, God's Rule, here on earth. God, through Jesus Christ, was at last liberating Israel from her slavery and thus redeeming the world. Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel all speak about a time when God will once again enter our world through His Servant, Jesus the Christ, to liberate Israel and the world from the enemy of mankind. Jesus is now on the scene, First Century, but His fellow Israelites did not recognize Him as God's Son, nor believed in His message, nor the His ministry.

However, the question Jesus wanted His fellow Israelites to ask is; Why are they still in captivity in their own homeland? Their oppression and exile, according to all the prophets, had come about because of their sin against the Almighty God. So, if Israel was to be set free from oppression and exile, that event of liberation would be, quite simply, the Forgiveness of their Sins.

II. Forgive Us Our Debts; What does it mean?

What did Jesus mean when He taught His disciples to pray, forgive us our debts for the First Century Jews? There are two key perspectives of the Kingdom of God found in this line of the Lord's prayer.

First is the political and social perspective within Jesus' time? In the First Century Middle Eastern context, debts referred to taxes that the Jews owe to Rome. In fact Rome taxed the entire known world under its rule. These taxes were used to support the Emperor's life style, and to maintain the rule of the Roman army over the known world.

Jesus was born during a time when Caesar Augustus decreed for all the known world to be registered (Luke 2:1). This is why Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem where Jesus was born. This registration, or census, by Caesar Augustus means taxes, and often was a cause of riots in Jesus' time. Census and taxes were a sign of who ruled and controlled the known world.

Second, is the Kingdom of God perspective. Debts means the sins of the nation of Israel. In Daniel 9, Daniel repents on behalf of the nation of Israel. Daniel prays the following;

- v.5 "we (the nation of Israel) have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules."
- v.6 "We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land."
- v.8 "To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you."
- v.11 "All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him."
- v.12 "He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem."

But, what sins did the Israelites commit before God? First, the sin of Idolatry - they worshiped sacred pillars, wooden images, burned incense on the high places. Second, the sin of pagan practices - II

Kings 17:7; The Israelites “caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger.” Thirdly, The rejection of God’s law and covenant. Instead of following God’s law, they walked in the statues of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before them.

This is where the parable of the Prodigal son comes in. This is the younger son, in the parable, Israel. They got rid of the one that loved them through their sins, God the Father, and turned to idols and other pagan practices instead. The Father, simply gave them over to their desires and said, 'Let your will be done and not mine.' Then, God caused the Babylonians, the Persian, Greece, and Rome to completely dismantle the nation of Israel to pits (Daniel 7). These empires rule over Israel as a punishment because of their sins against God.

Thus, in the Book of Daniel chapter 9 the angel Gabriel informed Daniel that it will take 490 years before God will forgive their sins. Jesus came to earth right at the end of 490 years announcing the Kingdom of God is here. Here then is the Father, incarnated through the Son, running to his prodigal son, Israel, to embrace him and to forgive him, and to set him free, and to restore him once and for all.

So, the announcement by Jesus, “forgive us our debt” meant that the 490 years is over. God has now turned His face toward Jerusalem, and forgives their sins. The announcement of the forgiveness of the debt of Israel meant that the year of Jubilee is at hand, and this is great act of liberation of God, the Father, toward the nation of Israel and to the world. This was a time of liberation and freedom. A time where the national debt of Israel is forgiven. But Jesus takes it even further, and says, because God has forgiven your debt, now you must forgive the debts of those who are ruling over you.

Sadly, majority of the Jews of Jesus’ time did not receive Jesus as the Joshua of the final Exodus. In fact, they would question Jesus’ authority, and even challenge him saying; “Who do you think you are?” “Who gave you the power to forgive man’s sins?”

Yet, the failure to forgive one another wasn’t a matter of failing to live up to a new bit of moral teaching. It was cutting off the branch you were sitting on. The only reason for being Kingdom-people, for being Jesus’ people, was that the forgiveness of sins was happening; so if you didn’t live forgiveness, you were denying the very basis of your own new existence.

Application

How about us? How should we apply this line of the Lord’s Prayer to our lives? Let me offer three Biblical principles.

First, forgive us our debts begins at a national level. What are sins that our society is committing that are against God’s righteous laws.

- How are we treating the poor in our city?
- Are we turning a blind eye on prostitution?
- How about the idolatry of worshiping the god of mammon?
- Are there any laws that stand against God’s moral laws within our City?

If there are sins within our City, then we are to pray, Lord forgive the debt, name the debt before the Lord, of our City of Hong Kong. Pray for the City of Hong Kong like how Daniel Prayed for the nation of Israel in Daniel chapter 9.

Second, forgive us our debts apply to how we are living our lives according to the Kingdom of God. Every single one of us, based our lives according to a particular narrative. The values that we process and live out basically highlights the narrative that we based our lives on. Jesus lived according to the narrative of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God narrative is about the worship of the one true God, living according to ways of God, and serving God within the context of His Kingdom.

The question then for us today, are we living our lives according to narrative of the Kingdom of God, revealed in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit? If the answer is no, then we need to pray, forgive us our debt, oh Lord and guide me to understanding your Kingdom so that I can live my life accordingly.

Third and last, is to seek forgiveness of our sins, with the heart of learning how to forgive those who have sin against us. For our own sins, we need to pray; "Forgive us our debts, (pause and then name your sin before the Lord). Once you name your sin(s) before the Lord, trust Him for His forgiveness. In regards to forgiving those who have sin against us, simply pray; "As we also have forgiven our debtors" (pause and then name the one who we need to forgive).

Finally, pray then as our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, taught us to 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 this day 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 evil.

For thy is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen!