**Prayer**

***5****“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.****6****But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

***7****“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.****8****Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.****9****Pray then like this:*

*“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.****10****Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,   
    on earth as it is in heaven.****11****Give us this day our daily bread,****12****and forgive us our debts,  
    as we also have forgiven our debtors.****13****And lead us not into temptation,  
    but deliver us from evil.*

***14****For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,****15****but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:5-15)*

God has called us to learn to pray well. Greetings in the Lord, dear brothers and sisters, as we talk about prayer today. Prayer itself is a huge topic of discussion. We can put a whole sermon series together on prayer or on its importance. Today, however, we’re going to talk about it generally as it is presented in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus gives special importance to prayer, primarily through the time He spends alone praying, as well as through His teachings on the topic. We also, will talk today about the truths that Jesus stresses. In a word, we’re talking about prayer but through Jesus’ viewpoint. Again, God has called us to learn to pray well. Let’s see what Jesus’ viewpoint is on this, and what we can learn from it.

Both the way we pray and the subjects about which we pray show the state of our spiritual life. Jesus’ teachings show us all the weaknesses that the Jewish people dealt with in their spiritual lives back then. It is very clear from what He says that there were problems with pride, showing off, and spiritual ignorance among the people. This was why he was warning his audience about ostentation while praying. Neither being long-winded in prayer nor being noticed by others were pleasing to God when praying. Neither was it right to try to manipulate God like the pagans did their idols, nor was it right to try to get His attention by using multiple of His names, as the pagans did to their false idols.

After the above, we read the Lord’s Prayer, known to us as the “Hayr Mer” in (classical) Armenian. Jesus wanted to see simplicity in prayer. He wanted to see a sense of collectiveness – a strong feeling of intimacy with the Heavenly Father. He wanted to see a desire to see God’s kingdom come (which was already happening with Jesus arriving on the scene, but which would happen again, and finally, on another day). He wanted to see a readiness to forgive the sinner – a clear request for immediate human needs, which were much simpler than what most people thought they were. He also wanted an awareness to develop within his hearers that only God could save them or keep them far from trials or testing.

In other words, Jesus was expecting that people would approach God with humble, simple and clean hearts. Important writers on prayer have said various things…

One of them said, “He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day.” Another said, "...Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons -- but they are helpless against our prayers." And a third one said, “What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use--men of prayer, men mighty in prayer.”

Prayer, in its form and substance, shows the state of our hearts before God. For us, when we pray too little or too long and ostentatiously, we show the immaturity of our faith. At the other hand, when our prayers are done humbly and in a heartfelt manner, especially if done secretly, how vital they become in the growth of our relationship with God!

Jesus is not saying to pray the Lord’s Prayer ten times a day, but rather to pray it with understanding; to pray with words that reflect its approach. Jesus is teaching us to be simple in prayer, to be humble and meek in our spiritual walk. Yes, when it is called for, prayer should be done out loud. Let it start with a praise of God – let is start with an acknowledgment of God as our collective Father. Let it be simple and without a thousand repetitions. Let it contain an invitation for God to arrive among us, for Him to forgive us our sins and to give us our needs. Especially, let prayer be connected to our spiritual journey, for example, to being ready to forgive the one who sins against us.

Therefore, when you pray, you need to speak to God – so, do not show off in front of others[[1]](#footnote-1). If you are a person of prayer, then, be a forgiving person – be an understanding person – empathizing with the plight of others – and let your trust and dependence be on the Lord’s coming, His intervention into your life.

Both the way we pray and the subjects about which we pray show the state of our spiritual life. God has called us to learn to pray well. The Lord bless you all. Amen.

1. Showing off that you know how to pray or that you are praying now… [↑](#footnote-ref-1)