

Jim's Notes
September 6, 2006
The Gospel According to St. Matthew 6:9-15

Matthew 6:9:

Tertullian (died A.D. 230)

Prayer begins with a demonstration of our belief in God and a blessed act of faith at the moment when we say, "Father, who art in heaven." For we are thereby both adoring God and demonstrating our faith, and this form of address is the result. It is written, "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12). (On Prayer 2.1)

Our Lord so frequently spoke to us of God as Father . . . Blessed are they who recognize their Father! Remember the reproach made against Israel, when the Spirit calls heaven and earth to witness, saying, "I have begotten sons and they have not known me" (Isaiah 1:2). In addressing him as Father we are also naming him God, so as to combine in a single term both filial love and power. Addressing the Father, the Son is also being addressed, for Christ said, "I and the Father are one." Nor is Mother Church passed over without mention, for the mother is recognized in the Son and the Father, as it is within the Church that we learn the meaning of the terms Father and Son. (On Prayer 2.2-6)

Origen (died A.D. 251)

According to the apostle, "I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father" (Galatians 4:1-2). But "when the time had fully come" (Galatians 4:4) consists in our Lord Jesus Christ coming among us, when those who desire it receive adoption as sons, as Paul says in these words: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15). (On Prayer 22.2)

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

Let the new people, therefore, who are called to an eternal inheritance freely employ the word of the New Testament and say, "Our Father who art in heaven," that is, the place where holiness and justice reign. For God is not contained spatially. The heavens may be in a sense "higher" created bodies of the world, even while remaining created, and so cannot exist apart from some spatial location. But do not think of this spatially, as if the birds are nearer to God than we. It is not written that "the Lord is closer to tall people" or "nearer to those who live on higher hills." For it is written, "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18), namely, close to those who are humble. (Sermon on the Mount 2.5.17)

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

This at once takes away hatred, quells pride, casts out envy and brings in the mother of all good things, charity. By inward prayer the inequality of human things is thwarted. It shows how nearly equal are the king and the poor person in all those matters that are

most indispensable and of greatest weight. Behind those closed doors before God, we are all equals. (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.4)

St. Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258)

We pray “Hallowed be thy name,” not that we wish that God may be made holy by our prayers but that his name may be hallowed in us. But by whom is God made holy, since he himself is incomparably holy? It is because he commands us, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16, Leviticus 20:7), that we ask and entreat that we who were sanctified in baptism may continue in that which we have begun to be. And this we pray for daily, for we have need of daily sanctification, that we who daily fall away may wash out our sins by continual sanctification. (Treatises, On the Lord’s Prayer 12)

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

The prayer to hallow God’s name corresponds with what Jesus has previously taught: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16), just as the seraphim too, giving glory, sang “Holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), So “hallowed” means “glorified.” In effect he is saying, “Enable us to live so purely that through us all may glorify you.” It points us again to mature self-control, that we may present to all a life so irreprehensible that everyone of those who observe may offer to the Lord the praise due to him for this. (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.4)

Matthew 6:10:

Origen (died A.D. 251)

The kingdom of God, according to the word of our Lord and Savior, “is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” (Luke 17:20-21) (for “the word is very near to us” (Deuteronomy 30:14), in our mouths and in our hearts). So one who prays for the coming of the kingdom of God rightly prays that the kingdom of God might be established in himself, that it might bear fruit and be perfected in himself. Every saint, being ruled by God as king and obedient to the spiritual laws of God, as it were, dwells within this kingdom as in a well-ordered city. The Father is present to such a one, and Christ reigns with the Father in the soul that is maturing. This is in accord with the promise that “we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23). (On Prayer 25.1)

St. Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258)

We ask that the kingdom of God may come to us, even as we also ask that his name may be sanctified in us. But when was it ever the case that God did not reign? Or when did that kingdom begin with him who both always has been and never ceases to be? We are here praying that our kingdom, which has been promised us by God, may come, the very kingdom acquired by the blood and passion of Christ. We pray that we who now are his subjects in the world may hereafter reign with Christ when he reigns. For this he himself promises when he says, “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). Christ himself, dearest beloved, is the kingdom of God, whom we day by day desire to come, whose advent we crave to be quickly manifested to us. For since he is himself the resurrection,

since in him we rise again, so also the kingdom of God may be understood to be himself, since in him we shall reign. (Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer 13.26)

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

The expression "thy kingdom come" is not to be thought of as if God were not now reigning. But some might get the strange impression that "come" implies "for the first time upon the earth" --- as if to imply that God were not even now really reigning upon earth! Or that God had not always reigned upon the earth from the foundation of the world! "Come," therefore, is to be understood in the sense of "manifested to humanity." Just as light that is present is absent to the blind or to those who shut their eyes, so the kingdom of God, though it never departs from the earth, yet is absent to those who know nothing about it. To none, however, will ignorance of God's kingdom be permitted when his Only-begotten comes from heaven. Then he will be recognizable not only by the intellect but visibly as the Man of the Lord to judge the living and the dead. (Sermon on the Mount 2.6.20)

Tertullian (died A.D. 230)

When we pray "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we do not imply that anyone could prevent the fulfillment of God's will or that he needs our prayer to accomplish his will. Rather, we pray that his will be done in all. Think of heaven and earth as a picture of our very selves, spirit and flesh. The sense of the petition is the same, namely, that in us (as spirit and flesh, as heaven and earth combined) the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Now, what does God will more than that we ourselves walk according to his ways? We ask therefore that he supply us with the energy of his own will and the capacity to do it, that we may be saved, both in heaven and on earth. The sum of his will is the salvation of those whom he has adopted. (On Prayer 4.1-2)

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

We pray that God's will may be accomplished in sinners also, even as it is accomplished in the saints and the just. This can be taken in two ways. First, we are to pray even for our enemies. For what else shall we call those in spite of whose will the Christian and Catholic name still spreads? According to this understanding the petition, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is intended to convey the following meaning: As the righteous do your will, let sinners do it also, so they may be converted. Second, the interpretation may be taken in the sense that "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is to be understood as a petition for the final rendering of his just due to every person. This will be done at the last judgment, when the lambs will be separated from the goats (see Matthew 25:32). (Sermon on the Mount 2.6.22)

Matthew 6:11:

Origen (died A.D. 251)

Since some understand from this that we are commanded to pray for material bread, it will be well to refute their error here and to establish the truth about the *epiousios* (*supersubstantial*) bread. We must ask them how it could be that he who commanded us to ask for great and heavenly favors should command us to intercede with the Father for what is small and of the earth, as if he had forgotten, so they would have it, what he had taught. For the bread that is given to our flesh is neither heavenly, nor is the request for it a great request. We, on our part, following the Master himself who teaches us about

the bread, shall treat the matter explicitly. In the Gospel according to John he says to those who had come to Capernaum seeking for him: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves" (John 6:26). One who has eaten of the bread blessed by Jesus and is filled with it tries all the more to understand the Son of God more perfectly and hastens to him. Hence his admirable command: "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you" (John 6:27) . . . The "true bread" is that which nourishes the true humanity, the person created after the image of God. (On Prayer 27.2)

St. Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258)

"Daily bread" may be understood both spiritually and simply, because both meanings help us to understand salvation. For Christ is the bread of life; and this bread is not the bread of all, but it is our bread. And as we say "our Father," because he is the father of those who understand and believe, so too we say "our bread," because Christ is the bread of us who touch his body. Now we ask that this bread be given to us today, lest we who are in Christ and receive his Eucharist daily as the food of salvation should be separated from Christ's body through some grave offense that prohibits us from receiving the heavenly bread. For according to his words: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:51). (Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer 18)

Matthew 6:12:

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

This prayer for forgiveness belongs to believers. For the uninitiated could not call God Father. We discover forgiveness within the nurturing pedagogy of the Church. If then the prayer belongs to believers and they pray, entreating that sins may be forgiven them, it is clear that even after baptism the profit of repentance is not taken away. If he had not meant to signify this, why would he have instructed us to pray for forgiveness? He asks us to bring our sins to remembrance and ask for forgiveness, and he teaches us how to obtain remission. He makes the way uncomplicated. By this rule of supplication it is clear that it is possible even after the font of baptism that our offenses may still be washed away. He thereby persuades us to be modest, commands us to forgive others, sets us free from vengeful obsessions, promises pardon, and holds before us good hopes and a high view of the unspeakable mercy of God. (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.5)

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

It is certainly a bargain to be reckoned with when we say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We can be sure that we have violated that rule if we do not forgive those who ask our pardon, since we too want to be forgiven by our most generous Father with respect to those who seek pardon from us. Now, as to that commandment by which we are ordered to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44), we are not ordered to pray for those who seek forgiveness. For such persons are not enemies. In no way, however, can someone really say that he is praying for a person he does not know. Therefore it must be said that we should forgive all sins committed

against us if we want the Father to forgive what we have committed. (Sermon on the Mount 2.8.29)

Matthew 6:13:

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

Jesus here calls the devil “the wicked one,” commanding us to wage against him a war that knows no truce. Yet he is not evil by nature, for evil is not something derived from any nature as created but is what has been added to nature by choice. The devil is the prototypically evil one, because of the excess of his evil choices and because he who in no respect was injured by us wages against us an implacable war. Thus we do not pray “deliver us from the wicked ones” in the plural but “from the wicked one.” (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.6)

St. Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258)

After all those things, in the prayer’s summation there occurs a little clause concluding all our petitions and prayer in succinct fashion. For at the very last we state “but deliver us from evil,” understanding the phrase to mean all adversities that the enemy undertakes against us in this world. There can be strong and faithful protection against these adversities if God delivers us, if, as we pray and implore, he furnishes us his aid. Moreover, when we say “deliver us from evil,” nothing remains for which we should ask still further. When once we seek God’s protection against evil, having obtained this, we stand secure and safe against all the works of the devil and of the world. For what fear, indeed, is there with regard to the world for one who has God as protector in the world? (Treatises, On the Lord’s Prayer 27)

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

In this life we are both receiving and granting forgiveness of sins, and this is the second of those four petitions. But in eternity there will be no forgiving of sins, because there will be no sins to be forgiven. Temptations make this life troublesome, but there will be no temptations after the fulfillment of the promise, “In the covert of thy presence thou hidest them” (Psalm 31:20). Of course, the evil from which we wish to be delivered is an evil that is present with us in this life, and it is during this life that we wish to be delivered from it. For through God’s justice we have by our own faults made this life mortal, and through the mercy of God we are being delivered from that mortality. (Sermon on the Mount 2.10.36-37)

Matthew 6:14-15:

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

Nothing makes us so like God as our readiness to forgive the wicked and wrongdoer. For it is God who has made “his sun rise on the evil and on the good” (Matthew 5:45).

For this same reason again in everyone of the clauses Jesus commands us to make our prayers together in one voice, saying, “our Father,” and “thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,” and “give us the bread, and forgive us our debts,” and “lead us not into temptation,” and “deliver us.” So everywhere he is teaching us to use this plural word that we may not retain so much as a vestige of resentment against our neighbor.

How great a reproof then must they deserve, who, after all this, still do not forgive and even ask God's vengeance on their enemies. In doing so they diametrically transgress this command. Meanwhile Christ is seeking in every way possible to hinder our conflicts with one another. For since love is the root of all that is good, by removing from all quarters whatever mars it he brings us together and cements us to each other. For there is not one, not a single one, whether father or mother or friend, who loves us as much as the God who created us. (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.7)

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

And certainly we should not heedlessly neglect to call attention to the fact that of all the pronouncements in which the Lord has ordered us to pray, he has deliberately attached a very special commendation to the pronouncement that deals with the forgiving of sins. In this pronouncement he wished us to be merciful because that is the only prescribed means of avoiding miseries. Indeed, in no other petition do we pray in such a manner as to make a kind of covenant, with the Lord, for we say, "Forgive us as we also forgive." If we default in this covenant, the whole petition is fruitless, for he says, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). (Sermon on the Mount 2.11.39)

Matthew 6:9-13:

Pray then like this:

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy 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.

Luke 11: 2-4:

And he said to them, "When you pray, say:
"Father, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread;
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us;
and lead us not into temptation."

The Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) 8:2-3 (written between A.D. 65 – 80, or even as early as A.D. 48)

Neither pray as the hypocrites,
but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, pray thus:

Our Father, which art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done,
as in heaven, so also on earth;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debt,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one;
for thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever.

Three times in the day pray so.