

Your Protection

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 May 2018

Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0 : 00] Amen. I'm pleased to have a seat. Thank you so much to everyone who's participated so far in our service. My name is Graeme. I've got the privilege of being the pastor here of this church and it's a joy to welcome you here this morning, especially maybe if this is your first time with us. Fantastic to see you.

Love being Scottish is that when we see the sun, which is not frequent, our faces go pink. And I see a lot of pink faces this morning. I'm sporting one myself, which I take it means that we enjoyed our time in the sun yesterday, right?

And we enjoyed the main event yesterday. And what a day of football it was, I tell you. But here we are, Matthew chapter 6. This is where we're going to be this morning, finishing our little series in the Lord's Prayer.

So why don't you turn to Matthew chapter 6. We'll be honing in in verse 13 this morning, but we'll be taking in the whole prayer as well. So why don't you turn there and let's pray as we come to God's inspired word this morning.

Father, thank you that your word is a lamp unto our feet and it's a light unto our path.

[1 : 05] And so, Lord, as we turn there now, we ask that your spirit would come and he would challenge us and he would change us and he would mold us and he would make us more like your son, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Well, if like me, you love lookalikes, you will love this website that I found this week that tried to match animals with the people that they looked like.

So other than trying to describe this to you, let me just show you what it means. Okay, so here's a dog. Who does this dog look like? Vladimir Putin.

Now, I'm not volunteering. I'm not volunteering to be the one who tells him that he looks like a dog. How about this one? What about this cat? This is Cher.

How about, I can't remember what order I did here. What about this owl? Anybody in the owl? This is Owen Atkinson. How about, I think I've got two more.

[2 : 04] What about this dog? This is my favourite. Okay, what about this dog? This is John Travolta. What about, this is the last one. What about this cat? This is our friend Donald.

And who does this animal remind you of? So according to the Bible, this animal should remind us of you and it should remind me of me.

And here is the reason that I'm reminded at this point of the reason why I love the Bible. And why millions of others around the globe base their lives and build their lives on this book, God's Word. And it's because it tells us the truth about what God is like. It tells us the truth about what our world is like. And it tells us the truth about what we are like.

And I love that God, when he comes to pick an adjective to describe us, when he comes to pick an animal to describe us like, when he comes to pick a simile, what does he say?

[3 : 10] What are you like? You are like lions. No, he doesn't. He says, you're like sheep. You're like sheep. And we see that so clearly in these words today that Jesus tells his disciples to pray in the Lord's Prayer.

The disciples want Jesus to what? Teach them how to pray. Jesus replies, pray then like this. Start with God.

Your Father in heaven, revere his name. Long to see his name. Put in lights for the world to see. Seek his kingdom first.

Seek his glory, not your own. Long to see his kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. And having established that he is your heavenly father because of Christ, then ask him and know him to be that heavenly father to you.

The one, the heavenly father who will provide you with your daily bread. The heavenly father who will pardon, who has made a way for our sin to be pardoned in Jesus Christ.

[4 : 26] And finally, as the heavenly father who will protect you and who will lead you and who will guide you in your daily life. Here's where we are this morning.

Verse 13. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Now before we get into the application of this for our lives, it's going to be really helpful for us to clarify in our minds what this means and what this doesn't mean.

Because what it doesn't mean is that God is the author of temptation. James 1, you can check this out later. James 1 and verse 13 make that explicitly clear.

That there is no sin. There is no evil in God. Rather, he is perfectly holy. So none of us, when we fall foul to sin, can say, well, it was God that led me there.

The devil made me do that. No, no, no, no. Our sin that's in our hearts that we followed led us there. God is not the author of sin. But what these words do mean is that while Satan is on the prowl, we can trust that if we know this God as our Father through Christ, that he will always lead us, not always to comfy pastures, but to good pastures where he has purposes to accomplish for our good as his sheep and for his glory around the world.

[5 : 49] So here is a prayer that Jesus is inviting his disciples to pray that says, Father, I know that I wander. I know that I go astray. I need you to protect me.

I need you to lead me. I need you to guide me where it is good for me to go. And what a comfort for me to know that while I do that, that that is something you tell me in your word that you specialize in.

Remember this prayer in its context comes off the back of Matthew chapter 6. Sorry, this prayer in Matthew chapter 6 comes hot off the heels of Jesus' battle with Satan in the wilderness in chapter 4.

Because Jesus knows that if he has an enemy, that he was fighting in the wilderness, then his people too have an enemy, one who is crafty and one who is on the hunt to devour them. And so Jesus doesn't want his disciples just to know that they are sheep.

He wants them to pray like they are sheep, knowing their ability to wander. And sheep who are utterly dependent on the leading and the protection of their shepherd, their father.

[6 : 58] So all I want to do this morning in the time that we have remaining is to come up with, help us look through three confessions of a sheep. As we think about what this prayer means for our life, I think underneath, underpinning this verse 13, is three confessions of a sheep.

Now, Paul suggested last week at the end of each point we said amen. Would it be appropriate to get us to say bah? I don't think so. But here are three confessions of the sheep that I think are going to be so helpful for us as we pray this prayer in our Christian lives.

Here's confession number one. I don't know the way. I don't know the way. A little girl, Chloe's favourite phrase at the minute is, I can do it.

I can do it, mummy. I can do it, daddy. Getting dressed in the morning, oh no, I can do it. Going to the toilet on her own, I can do it. She can do it. She got there. The other night we're having chicken together for dinner.

She's got a big piece of chicken. And I say to her, Chloe, you're going to need to cut up that bit of chicken. And she nods at me. We're in agreement over that. I say, can you help? Can you let daddy help you cut it up?

[8 : 04] No, no, no, no. I can do it. So I watch her trying to cut up this bit of chicken. She gets her fork. She's pounding this bit of chicken. Pounding this bit of chicken. She realises in her head that this pounding isn't going to work.

And so she tries to force the fork down on the chicken, trying to get it to submit. Cut into pieces. Again, she stops. She realises it's not working. She's thinking it through. In her head, I can see her. She's analysing how that went. And it didn't go well. Quick review in her head. She goes for the pounding again. Chloe, what are you doing? She stops again.

Eventually, she turns to me. She says, daddy, will you help me? Will you help me? To see what Jesus is doing here, teaching his disciples what it means to follow after him.

That asking for their father's help is to be part of their very core of their lives as disciples. It's a prayer that's not to be sporadic in their lives. It's a prayer that's to be consistent in their lives.

[9 : 03] It's a prayer that's to develop into a very impulse of their lives. Dad, I need help. Father in heaven, I need your help. And I don't know about you, but I know that to be true in my own life. I know my own heart.

I know it wanders all over the place. It chases the wrong stuff. It values the wrong things. It dwells on the wrong thoughts. How often do I find myself asking myself, how did I get here?

How often is it because I never stop to ask my heavenly father to help me today? Because I don't know the way. Let me ask you, how often do you stop and do you pray and say, Father, I don't know the way?

Here is Jesus inviting his people to come to their heavenly father. And when we come to our father asking him to help us and protect us and to lead us, his reply is not, leave it with me.

I'll see what I can do. It's not, it's a big ask, Graham, but I'll give it my best shot. No, surely his answer is, my child, would you take my hand? And would you know the forgiveness that is yours through my son who took your sin on himself at the cross so that you can go free?

[10 : 13] Would you know that in your life? Find refuge in me and take my hand and trust in my eternal and my sovereign and my good care and protection of you for your good and for my glory.

The words of that great old hymn, guide me, O thou great redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak, but you are mighty.

Hold me with thy powerful hand. See, underneath this prayer, confession number one, I don't know the way. Confession number two, I haven't got the answers.

Matthew chapter four, if you want to flick back there, when Jesus is in the wilderness doing battle with Satan. He arms himself, not with weapons, but you see how he's arming himself with the word of God.

Consider his responses to the devil's questions. Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That's the devil's question, tempting away.

[11 : 21] Worship the Lord your God and serve him only. Again, battling that one away. You see how Jesus went into battle, arming himself with scripture? Or more precisely, if you want to put it like this, Jesus is defending himself with Deuteronomy.

This is what he's doing. Now the implication is that Jesus in his full humanity has been devoting himself to learning God's word, meditating God's word, loving God's word.

Of course you see it in the big old picture. This is exactly what God said his king, the true king of Israel, was to do. Not to have God's word, not to have his statutes, not to have his law sitting on the bedside table or up on the shelf, but to have it stored and written on his heart.

You read the events of the kings of Israel. Some of them did it poorly, some of them did it partially. Jesus is the only one who did it perfectly. And when it comes to Jesus' battle in the wilderness, in partnership with the spirit that has fallen on him at his baptism, Jesus draws on those scriptures. During battle. Implication that he has sponged up scripture so that when it comes to him being squeezed, scripture pours out.

[12 : 30] Because he knew that the best counter to the evil one's lies is God's truth. Again, Adam and Eve in the garden, tempted, failed to obey. Israel in the desert, tempted, failed to obey.

Jesus in the wilderness, fully obeys. And so the challenge that comes to us as his people this morning is to ask ourselves whether the devotion, whether the hunger, whether the understanding, whether the high view of the sufficiency of God's word for our lives, is that something that we share?

To see how God in his grace has given us his word to arm us against the schemes of the evil one. How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord.

Is laid for your faith in his excellent word. What more can he say? Than to you he has said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled.

I met a friend recently who was telling me a story about a man he knows up in Aberdeen. And this man is an elder in his local church, but in his day-to-day job he holds a really high up management position in one of the UK's leading corporate companies.

[13 : 44] And because so many people need to know where he is and what he's doing, his calendar, his diary, is open for anyone to see. And from eight to half eight every single morning for all to see, he's blocked out under the title, Word and Prayer.

Word and Prayer. Word and Prayer. Word and Prayer. Word and Prayer. Every single day of the week. This is what he's doing. It's a wonderful example of what everyday faithfulness,

non-glamorous, everyday faithfulness to Jesus looks like.

The man with a lot of decisions to make, most likely involving a lot of money, managing a lot of people, I'm sure under an enormous amount of pressure. And there he is saying, eight to eight thirty every morning.

Word and Prayer. Word and Prayer. A man confessing with his lips and his schedule, I am a sheep. Lord, Heavenly Father, I need you to lead me.

I need you to guide me, because I haven't got the answers. Confession number two of a sheep, I haven't got the answers. Here's confession number three. I can't do it alone. I can't do it alone.

[14:59] You notice as you read this Lord's Prayer through, don't you, that the language is inescapably corporate. Jesus could have easily said, my, used the personal pronoun, all the way through, but this is something that the disciples are to pray together.

And you see how Jesus draws their gaze to the importance of praying this prayer together in community. That the principles of this prayer aren't just for a select few of them.

Actually, the principles of this prayer are for all of them. Because Jesus knows that the spiritual battle that his people will soon find themselves in will be so hard. That the suffering that will come on them, because they stand for Jesus, because they deny selves, deny the world, take up their cross and follow him, it's going to be so hard that the world are going to hate them for it.

And the temptation to give up is going to be so incredibly great that they cannot afford to be without one another. It's funny, as you read the letter to the Hebrews, the author, who I think you can understand, is a pastor who loves his people.

The thing worrying him in his mind, the thing keeping him up at night, is the thought that these people that he's writing to are going to give up. They're going to say, do you know what? Following Jesus is too hard. I'm going back to my safe way of life.

[16:14] One of the reasons that they find themselves in that position as you read it through is because they have just simply stopped meeting together. They have stopped meeting to study together. They've stopped meeting to sing together.

They've stopped meeting to pray together. And whereas before, meeting together was thought to be indispensable, now in their minds, it's drifted to a matter of indifference. And so you see how we need one another in this spiritual battle.

See how God in his grace has provided us with one another to walk through this Christian life with.

There's a famous story told about Charles Spurgeon. He was sitting one evening by his fire in his study and one of his students came into his office and sat down in the armchair next to him.

And the student asked Charles Spurgeon, he said, in my Christian life, do I really need my fellow Christians to walk alongside me? What value, what importance is the church?

And Spurgeon didn't say a word. The two of them sat there in awkward silence for a while before Spurgeon picked up the tongs that were at the side of the fire and he reached in and he lifted out one of the burning pieces of coal and he just left it on the hearth.

[17:25] And the two of them sat there for a while and they watched this piece of coal go from burning hot to lukewarm to almost all but out. Spurgeon did.

He took the tongs again, took that piece of coal and he put it back into the fire. And the two of them watched as the thing heated up again as it was around the other coals. And the student remarked afterwards that that is the best sermon I ever saw Charles Spurgeon preach.

Why do we need one another? Because if we drift, if we drift, then we're going to go out.

Confession, I can't do it alone.

Do you see how God and his wisdom has given us each other to live out this Christian life with. And in particular, when it comes to God's design to lead us from temptation, to guide us and keep us from evil.

Do you see the role that other brothers and sisters play in that? Those who will commit to lovingly pointing out when you are going off. Those who can graciously help keep us on track.

[18:25] Those who can pull us up when we fall down. And those who will commit themselves to asking difficult questions of our lives. Keeping us accountable. Not because they enjoy it, but because they love us.

I wonder if this morning, if some of us, the Holy Spirit is challenging us that we are withdrawing from the center. And actually what we need to do is move from the periphery back to the core.

We need one another. We can't do this alone. Is that you? Then I'd love to speak to you after the service. Love to pray with you to see how we can make that happen. Anyone who you've seen up the front this morning, anyone that you came with to pray that this would be true in your own life. I don't know the way. I don't have the answers. And confession number three of a sheep, I can't do it alone. And just as we finish up our time together, let me just give you one encouragement and two thoughts and then we're done.

Does that sound okay? As we're thinking about this whole topic of prayer, the things that have been on my mind this week, I just want to give you one encouragement and two things to think about. Here's the encouragement. What struck me most as we've journeyed through this topic of prayer, and I had never really thought about this before and I encourage you to think about it now, what has struck me most is just how committed God is to our prayer lives.

[19 : 49] Think about it. How all three persons of the Godhead, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, they're all intimately involved in our prayer lives.

And we see them all in the context of this prayer. God our Father is the one who provides our daily bread. Jesus the Son is the one who has made a way for you and I to be forgiven.

And the Holy Spirit is the one that the Father and the Son have sent to live inside our hearts to help us say no to sin, no to self, and yes to Christ and the things of our Father's kingdom.

Do you see how just committed God is to this prayer, to the prayer lives of His people? But this one God doesn't just help answer our prayers.

Do you see how this God helps us pray? The Father is the one, in the context there, who sees and knows. The Father is the one who invites us through His Word to pray to Him.

[20 : 54] This is the kind of God that we're dealing with here. We have His Word. The Father is intimately involved in our prayer lives. The Son who taught His disciples how to pray is the one through whom we have access to the Father and the one who is at the right hand, ascended, risen, interceding for His people.

He's there. That's what He's doing. That's what He ever lives to do. Intercede for His people and the Spirit that God has given us, living in us, guiding our souls, giving us those groaning words that we see in Romans 8 that we need as we pray.

To see how committed this three-in-one glorious God is to the prayer lives of His people. Now that's not just something to study in a textbook, friends. That is something to stop and think about next time you find yourself praying.

Whether yourself, on your own, or with other people. This is a magnificent and a glorious thing that's going on here. This is mind-blowing. That God has pulled out literally all the stops to make our prayer lives a possibility.

How incredible is our God that this is the grace that He shows us? And so the question is in two thoughts. How are we doing at making the most of this glorious opportunity that we have?

[22 : 09] Here's two thoughts for you. One, two things to think through. Firstly, how is this going to change your prayer life? There's a famous story told of golfer Jack Nicklaus that at the beginning of every golf season he used to go to his caddy, his coach, and he just used to say, most successful golfer arguably ever to have lived and played the game, he used to go to his coach and say, would you teach me again the basics?

Teach me again how to play. Teach me again how to play. Teach me the rhythm. Doing it again every single season he used to come back and say that to his coach. Remind me of the rhythm. Remind me of the basics. Friends, for some of us, would it not be a wonderful idea to spend the next little period of our own private prayer lives to focus it and pray these words in this prayer? With the attitude of teach me again Lord Jesus.

Teach me how to pray. Teach me the basics. Let me, help me find the rhythm of this prayer. Maybe even an idea of something to paraphrase it, to write it out in your own words as you seek to meditate it as you go through it.

How is this study that we've been in over the last few weeks going to affect and impact your prayer life and my prayer life? And secondly, how is it going to affect our prayer life as a church?

[23 : 31] I've been reminded that not only of the importance of us meeting together to pray, but I've been reminded of how much the evil one hates it when we gather together to pray. Do you ever wonder why you find it an effort to come out on a Sunday morning?

I tell you, the Sunday morning is the most difficult for the week for us as a family and that's no coincidence. Wednesday nights before I come to the prayer meeting, it is a spiritual battle to get out here, but you know what?

I'm glad every single time I come because it is good for my soul to meet with brothers and sisters to pray. Don't underestimate and don't overestimate, but don't underestimate the spiritual battle that we are in for even just turning up to things.

You know, I loved it last Wednesday. We put out 25 chairs for our prayer meeting thinking I was being a little bit optimistic and it soon became very clear that we need to put out more because more and more people came.

I tell you what, that is the most encouraging thing for me as I see us as a church committing ourselves to prayer. Can I encourage you to put that Wednesday evening, the first one of the month, in the diary, friends?

[24 : 32] Make every effort to come to that prayer meeting, not out of a sense of duty, but only a sense of duty, but from a heart that recognizes and wants to declare individually and together that God, we need you.

We are sheep and you are our shepherd and we need you. Friends, how important it is and how special it is and how encouraging it is when brothers and sisters dwell in unity and come together under no other reason than we want to seek God in prayer.

So as we close, who does this remind you of? Reminds me of me and it should remind you of you because our God loves us enough that he tells us that you are sheep.

You are sheep and what incredible news for sheep that the one telling his disciples how to pray in Matthew 6 is the one who has come to be and calls himself the great shepherd of his sheep, the great protector, the great provider, the great lover and the leader of his sheep.

Friends, we will never graduate from being sheep. You're not going to see me in a few weeks time standing at the door waving you goodbye, goodbye to the pen because he's graduated to super sheep. Do you remember what it was like when he was a sheep?

[25 : 48] Oh, he was a great sheep but now he's gone. None of us are graduating from being sheep. None of us move on from this, these three confessions of being a sheep but here is Jesus and it's to him we look as we finish this morning and finish this little series is the one who says I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. Now friends, I'm just going to put the words of the Lord's Prayer, we've already prayed it this morning, just the words of the Lord's Prayer on the screen as we close and in a minute we're just going to have a moment of quiet reflection but as I was praying about this this morning, maybe you're here today and you think I don't know Jesus is my shepherd.

I've been here over the last few weeks you've been talking about this stuff but I don't know him. Can I encourage you that this morning could be the morning when you say Jesus I need you. Father in heaven I am sorry for my sin I need your son to forgive me of it would you come by your spirit and make me new.

Friends, if that's you this morning then do you know what let's say these words together. As you say them make that your prayer Jesus would you be the great shepherd and king and saviour of my life. So let's have just a moment of quiet and then we'll pray these words together as we close. Amen. So let's pray together.

[27 : 19] 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.

So Father I ask that by your grace that today would be a day and maybe even for some of us the first day when we can turn to you and know you and call you our heavenly Father.

Thank you so much for your great grace that you show us day after day after day. Help us to know and embrace the fact that we are sheep and in Jesus Christ we have an all sufficient and a great saviour.

In his name we pray. Amen.