

# Meditations of the Heart - Reflections on the Scriptures

*Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

Pastor Matt Cadora

January 6, 2010

This past Sunday we began a five-week look at what is known as the Lord's Prayer, which is found in the New Testament twice - in similar, but slightly different versions in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4. By the way, this prayer is never actually referred to in the Scriptures as "the Lord's Prayer". It is true that, in both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, our Bibles do usually preface the prayer in question with the sub-heading worded "The Lord's Prayer", but such sub-headings are almost always an addition placed there by the publisher/printer of the Bible and, with occasional exceptions in the Psalms, were never a part of the original texts of the Scriptures.

Hence, it has been suggested (and not inappropriately so, I might add) by one commentator that we ought better to refer to "the Lord's Prayer" as "the Disciples' Prayer" since the Lord gave it to the disciples for their help in prayer. However, with a nod to both tradition and familiarity, I will refer henceforth to this prayer in terms of Who gave it (the Lord) rather than in terms of who received it (the disciples and, indirectly,... us).

That said, there are many nuances of the Lord's Prayer that I will try to cover this month, but our approach can never exhaust the riches of this prayer. Our focus this past Sunday, for example, was on what is known as the first request of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." As much as I spoke about the prayer in terms of a general introduction with a focus on the identity of the Father and our subsequent approach to Him, I scarcely touched upon the 'acknowledgment of place' aspect of the prayer - "Our Father in heaven".

What this acknowledgment is touching upon is what is termed - *stay with me because I'm going to insert a big theological word here* - the transcendence of God. To say that God is transcendent is to say that God is uniquely other than everything in creation, that God (being the Creator) is distinct from everything created. Because we are familiar with God as a relational Being (and the Gospel surely proclaims God to us in that way), many Christians unfortunately have a lesser grasp on the transcendence of God than the people to whom Jesus was directly teaching about prayer.

New Testament scholar D.A. Carson explains the contrast of their times versus our times: "*The Jews of Jesus' day were inclined, on the whole, to conceive of God as so exalted that personal relationships with Him could scarcely be imagined. He was so transcendent that the richness of His personality was frequently lost to view. By contrast, much modern evangelicalism tends to portray Him as exclusively personal and warm. Somehow, His sovereignty and exalted transcendence disappear. If you enter American churches you will hear enthusiastic singing of some such ditty (I can scarcely grace it with 'chorus') as "He's a great big wonderful God." Regrettably, I never fail to think of a great big wonderful teddy bear. Such 'choruses' are not quite heretical, not quite blasphemous. I sometimes wish they were, for then they could really be condemned for specific evil. They are something much worse than isolated blasphemy and heresy. They constitute part of a pattern of irreverence, shallow theology and experience-dominated religious criteria, which has eviscerated a terribly high proportion of evangelical strength in the Western world...*"

---

<sup>1</sup> Many of the Psalms contain an introductory verse. In the Hebrew Old Testament, this is considered to be verse 1. In most English Bibles, however, that opening verse of the Psalm is put forth as the introduction or heading with the result that verse 1 of the English Bible is what the Hebrew Bible would list as verse 2.

Considering Carson's critique of American evangelicalism's perspective on God's majesty, I can't help but think of the odd scene in the movie Talladega Nights when Will Ferrell's character 'Ricky Bobby' prays with his family, giving thanks before dinner, and keeps referring to the "Lord Baby Jesus". When his wife protests, Ricky Bobby insists that he prefers praying to the baby Jesus rather than the grown up Jesus. As I watched this scene, I found the dialogue both fascinating and discomfoting. Discomfoting because of the dialogue's sheer irreverence. Fascinating (in a discomfoting way) because I wonder how often we, in similar but slightly well-intentioned fashion, have thoughtlessly prayed to God without really acknowledging or focusing on WHO we are praying to – and what little confidence in God we come away with when we approach Him in such a frivolous manner.

Carson continues: *"When Jesus taught his disciples to pray in this fashion, he was addressing men who were already convinced of the awesomeness of God's transcendence, the grandeur of God's exaltation. When they first timidly prayed, 'Our Father in heaven,' no doubt they deeply felt the tremendous privilege of approaching this marvelous God in so personal and intimate a fashion. But today, those who have lost sight of God's transcendence [have lost a real sense of] the sheer privilege of addressing Him as Father."*<sup>2</sup>

When we approach God in prayer, we must do so with a humble and hushed recognition of WHO we are coming before, not in a means of diminishing the intimacy we have with God, but rather because we intimately know something of the character, trustworthiness and grandeur of WHO we are approaching and, because of that, we have utmost confidence in why we might bring our petitions to the Lord.

**Ecclesiastes 5:1-3 "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. 2 Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few."**

---

<sup>2</sup> Carson, D.A., *The Sermon on the Mount – An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998, pp. 63-64.