

Intro:

Last time on prayer we talked about something I called, “The First and Hardest Lesson on Prayer” – pray for your enemies. That message came from the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount.

The next teaching on prayer chronologically speaking is from chapter 6 of Matthew, also part of the Sermon on the Mount. That teaching is found in the Lord’s Prayer. Next after that is from the same sermon, in Mt 7, where the Lord teaches ‘ask, seek, knock’.

Since we covered these teachings in Luke 11, I think we need to move on to the next chronological reference to prayer in the Lord’s ministry.

We find that in Mt 11.25-26, where we find *The First Recorded Prayer of Jesus*.

I have entitled the message, however, “*Thanksgiving for Revelation to Infants*”.

Our series is going to take a turn I didn’t expect when I began it. I was thinking that we would be mostly *instruction* for us *about* prayer.

I realize instead that when we look at the Lord’s prayers, we will be getting a special insight into what our Lord thinks. The prayer we will look at today is interesting to us because it shows us the delight the Lord takes in his saints.

I think it is providential that we come to this passage today, given that today is Easter Sunday and we are contemplating what the Lord did for us in making us his children. I think that this prayer reveals that nothing delights the Lord more than seeing the light of the gospel “come on” for new babies in Christ.

Read Mt 11.25-26

Proposition: The Lord’s thanksgiving reveals His delight in the spiritual insight of the least of his saints.

I. Context: a voice of judgement (20-24)

A. John’s disciples and John’s question: are you the one? (2-19)

1. The setting of this chapter is actually shortly after the Sermon on the Mount (only two recorded events intervene, but some time)
 - a. The Lord healed the centurion’s servant immediately after the Sermon
 - b. Next he raised the son of the widow of Nain from the dead
2. John is in prison, but sends some disciples to the Lord because he is having some misgivings – the Lord reassures him by the signs (4-5)

3. Jesus then challenges the crowd by John's testimony (7-19)
 - a. Why did you not believe him?
 - b. Why do you not believe me?
- B. Jesus cries out judgement over the unbelief in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (20-24)
 1. Note this: these are Galilean cities, strongly denounced (20)
 - a. The Galilean cities were in the region most favorably disposed to him
 - b. Yet the majority were indifferent, in spite of mighty miracles
 - c. The people were not in active opposition, they just would not repent
 2. The Lord's statements indicate that if he had performed the same miracles in Tyre and Sidon, or even Sodom, the people of those cities would have repented long ago
 - a. Consider what happened when Jonah preached judgement in Nineveh: repentance in sackcloth and ashes, humbling themselves before God
 - b. Tyre and Sidon were frequently denounced for Baal worship in OT [Phoenician cities]
 - c. Sodom was of course the wicked city destroyed by fire from heaven
 - d. Consider the crimes of the Lord's contemporary cities: "You did not repent"

"These towns had rejected Jesus and His ministry by their indifference. The citizens followed Him and appreciated His healing ministry, but they did not respond to His message."¹

Failure to repent is the fruit of human pride – I want my way, I don't need to repent, I'm not a sinner, I'm not wrong.

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003). Mt 11:23.

II. Content: a prayer of thanksgiving (25-27)

A. Thanksgiving for hidden truth

1. The word 'hidden' is from _____ – from which we get 'crypt' and 'encrypt'

In computers, when programs or computer files are 'encrypted' they are hidden from prying eyes. Only someone with the proper 'key' can see them.

Several things were hidden until the apostolic age:

- a. The mystery of the church
- b. The dual comings of Messiah
- c. The nature of Messiah – God-man
- d. The saving character of Messiah's work – actually permanently saving men from their sins

Some of these things are 'hidden' in plain sight: in other words, the meaning of who Jesus was and what his mission was is something plainly stated, but largely refused.

2. The hidden truths were hidden from the 'wise and prudent' [NAS 'wise and intelligent']
 - a. Ironic statement – these are they who thought themselves wise and intelligent
 - b. Hidden by design: this is why Jesus often spoke in parables (Mt 13.11)
 - c. Hidden by judicial decree: God will not heal the proud who insist they don't need him
 - 1) Isa 29.14
 - 2) 1 Cor 1.19

Who is the proud person to whom the things of God are hidden?

- Surely wicked blasphemers, violent criminals and the like
- But that doesn't describe Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum for the most part

Those to whom the Lord is hidden are those who are indifferent: they hear a truth from God and will not act on it.

- That's your interpretation
- I don't see it that way
- It doesn't apply to me

Why is the Lord thankful for God's plan? Because it confirms the Lord's judgement against those who reject his word

But note that God's truth is not hidden to all...

B. Thanksgiving for open hearts

1. God's truth is revealed truth

Matthew 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

2. God's truth is revealed to babies [those with the least wisdom, strength, discernment, and guile]

How will God destroy the wisdom of the wise? By choosing the weakest to glorify him (1 Co 1.19, 24-27)

- a. Those who have humbled themselves to the truth of God's word
- b. Those who have submitted themselves to Jesus Christ
- c. Yielding – repentance

Please notice the way I am describing the weak, the foolish, the babes: they have done something to themselves and have received the truth.

- I will prove this in a moment. But note this!

It is the fact that babies believe in Jesus that brings out this shout of thanksgiving prayer.

He has been meditating on the doom of the proud, the unbelieving. And he does rejoice in that part of God's plan, but especially that instead of the wise, God gave him the babies – the foolish and weak.

This is thanksgiving for open hearts...

C. Thanksgiving for the Father's plan (26)

1. Two words are key in understanding the Lord's thanksgiving in this verse:
 - a. "Yes"
 - b. "Seemed good" or "well-pleasing" NAS
2. First, 'well-pleasing'
 - a. The plan Jesus described above is said to be God's good pleasure
 - b. This speaks of God's satisfaction with both process and result
3. Second, 'Yes'
 - a. Simple agreement
 - b. Jesus, in his thanksgiving, rejoices in simple agreement with the Father's plan of relating men to himself by this divide over what is hidden and revealed

D. Thanksgiving for intimate fellowship (27)

1. It is not clear if the prayer ends in v. 27 or v. 28
2. What is clear is that the matter of hidden things vs. revealed things is connected with the intimate relation between Father and Son
 - a. Authority belongs to the Son by the decree of the Father
 - b. The depth of the relationship between Father and Son reveal that this is more than a human relationship
 - 1) The Father knows the Son
 - 2) The Son knows the Father
 - 3) This mutual knowledge is exclusive: no one else is included [save the Spirit]
 - 4) The Son reveals only what he chooses to reveal [the hidden things]

Now what we have seen so far in this prayer is something the Lord delights over. We see that he delights in God's plan that brings judgement on the wise and revelation to the babies.

I have said that the revelation is available to those who 'make themselves' babies by yielding, submitting, humbling themselves before the teaching of the Son.

- How do I know that? Look at the next verses...

III. Command: an invitation to submission (28-30)

- A. Come! weary ones, burdened ones (28)
- B. Submit! take my yoke (29)
- C. Rest! rest in him (30)

How do I know this is what the Lord is saying?
Read Mt 18.1-6: become a little child if you want any part of the kingdom!

Conclusion:

The world is full of proud wise ones who know how to solve life's problems by their own strength.

- Experts at business
- Beautiful people whose good looks and physical abilities make them secure for life
- Strong-willed self-made men
- Group power – accountability groups overcome addictions [they really do ... so do they need the true God? What do they need first?]

One last passage, another invitation: Isa 55.1-2

Isaiah 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Do you wrestle against God's truth? Or do you yield to God's truth?

The Lord thanks the Father for his plan to deal with either reaction, but which reaction do you think brings the Lord the most joy?