

Real Christianity: The Sermon on the Mount

#24: The high God and the nigh God

Matthew 6:9

My last message on the Sermon on the Mount introduced the Lord's Prayer. Today we will further study the first phrase of the prayer:

"Our Father Who is in Heaven" (Matt 6:9)

My primary point today is that: We need both the high God and the nigh God in our Christian life and prayer life.

God is not just our Dad. He is our Dad in Heaven. What does that tell us? Our Father is both personal and powerful. He is both the helping God and the holy God. He is both close, and higher above us in every way, than we can even imagine. He is not just our Dad. He is also the Creator and Ruler of the Universe. As theologians use to put it, He is both the high God and the nigh God. The word nigh is an old word for near.

We must always hold the high God and nigh God together. When we focus only on the high God, we lose sight of His grace. When we focus only on the nigh God, we lose sight of His glory. And churches and Christians regularly make this mistake.

A) The nigh God

(cf. John 14:9-10). *"There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved"* (John 13:23 NASB).

That's being pretty close to God. And John intentionally gave us that picture to tell us how close, how humble, how approachable our God is. He is the nigh God.

A.1) Fearing God is the enemy of loving God

Unfortunately, many are taught today that God's children are supposed to fear God. The false teaching that God intends the fear of Him to keep His children in line. I could give you many examples in mainstream Christianity that claim fearing God is biblical and spiritually healthy. It's neither. If anyone claims that fearing God is a part of the Christian life, then they need to explain 1 John 4:18 *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."* (1 John 4:18)

The Apostle John tells us what all Christians should already know. You cannot love someone you are afraid of! Fear drives out love. If you fear God you will not love Him.

Are you living under OT law instead of NT grace?

In the OT God did not have unconditional love for His people. God told them He would bless them if they obeyed, or curse them if they disobeyed (cf. Deut ch. 28). And the threat of His anger made God's people live in fear of Him.

A good way to tell if you are living under OT law or NT grace is if you struggle with being afraid of God. God's OT people were motivated by the fear of punishment. They were not generally indwelt with God's Spirit and only had the sinful nature which *"is hostile toward God"* (Rom 8:7). They needed fear to help them obey God. But the New Covenant is different. (cf. Rom 8:15)

Any NT verse that is speaking of the Christian's relationship with God, and uses the word fear is wrong. (cf. 2 Cor 7:1).

A.2) The nigh God helps us with our sin

Knowing how near, how compassionate, how gracious God is, enables us to experience our forgiveness. The truth is, God is saddened by our sin. But if anything, He draws closer to us when we sin. Do you know why? Because we are hurting when we sin.

A.3) The Nigh God helps us with the World's sin

Jesus empathizes with how hard it is for godly people to live in an ungodly place (Luke 9:37-43)

B) The High God

The High God was met on Mt. Sinai. (Exod 19:10-12, 16-18)

B.1) The High God helps us with our sin

"We all, who . . . contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor 3:18 NIV). The awe you experience from meditating on God's glory purifies your life. (cf. Isa 6:1-3 NLT)

B.2) The High God will help us with the World's sin

The moral decline of America is ultimately God's fault. Why is He allowing it? To test His people.

Discussion ?'s

- 1) Some churches focus on the high God or nigh God. What about the church or parents you grew up with?
- 2) What is the result of focusing on just one or the others?
- 3) How does the nigh God help us respond to our sin?
- 4) How does the nigh God help us respond to the World's sin?
- 5) Why is it unbiblical for a Christian to fear God?
- 6) How does the high God help us overcome sin?
- 7) How does the high God help us respond to the World's sin?
- 8) What was most meaningful to you about the Sunday message?