

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2024 Lent 1 “The Lord’s Prayer”

Psalm 25 Matthew 6:5-15

Let us pray:

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, my Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. God of grace enable us to hear your word for us today and that your Spirit will move amongst us and guide us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

GOD: We are here. We are listening. We are moving. Let us continue.

Prayer is intentional talking to God through Jesus and surrounded by the Spirit. The intent of our words is the reason or purpose of what we are saying to God as Christ and Spirit are present. The words we say make a difference when we say them as individuals and as a church family sharing our thoughts and concerns with the assurance that God is listening. During this Lenten season as we anticipate Holy Week with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his death on the cross, our theme is “Prayers from the Heart”. Prayers which we often say repeat and know from heart or because of experience with them as we share in special moments in church. Today’s focus is what we know as The Lord’s Prayer or by Roman Catholic friends the “Our Father”.

This prayer is found in both Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6:9–13 and are recorded as part of the Sermon on the Mount which encompasses many teachings about living. The sermon begins with the Beatitudes “Blessed are they who..’ salt and light, law and prophets and different concerns which were important topics that needed to be clarified as being worthwhile to everyday living. Other concerns raised by Jesus included discussion of divorce, sharing oaths, and giving alms.

Jesus then raises the concern about prayer. Not being like hypocrites who stand and pray in the synagogues or at street corners only to be seen by others. Here, Jesus then states go into your room, shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Jesus then says that you are not to heap empty phrases with a lot of words because your Father knows what you need before you ask.

Then Jesus says, ‘pray then in this way.’ Which really includes seven distinct sections.

1) vs.9 Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name

-give praise and glory to God, HE alone is God and parent of us all. Hallowed or holy is Gods name; remember Yahweh in Jewish tradition is not spoken aloud.

2) vs. 10 Thy Kingdom come. Three words yearning for God to reign now and be established on earth. There are signs of God's kingdom – in kindness of friends, love of neighbours, compassion for poor; in the wind, the rain and the sun God's here in creation and the world He created is ever evolving.

3) vs 10 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

God is fully in charge in heaven; but here on earth we have been given the gift of thinking, feeling and wonder. WE have also been given free will. Yet when we share these words we might remember the words of Jesus he shared in the Garden of Gethsemane as he struggled with what his purpose was in coming to Earth and to actually fulfill the plan through his death. Yet when Jesus says, on earth as it is in heaven, he knows God's will is done.

4) vs11 Give us this day our daily bread

In this petition we are praying for every person to be fed. That is, we are asking that God will provide the basic needs of each person physically. While we say this we also remember Jesus who shared wine and bread at the Table and there was enough for all and maybe a little for tomorrow—our daily bread.

We are also asking to fill each person spiritually as the spirit seeks to enter each one in order to share from one to another.

5) v12 Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Trespasses, sins, wrongs, all are to be forgiven if we share these in prayer. We are a forgiven people whom God has instructed to forgive others. You forgive me, I forgive them—we want God's kingdom to come.

6) v13 Lead us not into temptation. After Jesus was baptized, he was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the evil one/ devil/ Satan. He fasted 40 days and nights and was starving. This was when the tempter came and tested him. The tempter/ devil said to him, IF you are the son of God, turn those stone into loaves of bread. But Jesus responded, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Secondly the devil took him up to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying, if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you. They will bear you up and you will not be harmed." Jesus answered, "Don't put the Lord your God to the test."

The third temptation was when the devil took him to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. The devil said that he would give all of it to Jesus if he bowed down and worshiped him. Jesus responded, “Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.” And sent the devil away.

With these 3 temptations: turning stones into bread, bowing to Satan, and putting God to the test Jesus was tested. These same temptations are what we face daily: bread, power and worldly recognition. We know that we are weak, and vulnerable but we must realize that we can follow Jesus knowing God is looking out for us. We need to just listen for those inner voices to say, ‘Not that, not this but that—Listen!

7) v13 But deliver us from evil. Evil exists all around us and some of the ways it exists are tempting.—wealth, status, success, but at what cost? When one considers God’s own goodness, it is free. How might we consider this in a different way? Evil or reverse it and live!

This is what the Gospels of Luke and Matthew state but there are more words when we say or sing this prayer.

8) For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen

These words are not in the text of the Gospels, but were added later by church leaders summarizing the work of the apostles (in what is known as the Didache) and is a ‘doxology’ or praise offered to God as a whole. It is known that the translators of the 1611 King James Bible assumed that a Greek manuscript they possessed was ancient and so they adopted the phrase into the prayer. These were taken from David’s prayer to God in 1 Chronicles 29 where David says similar words:

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. (1 Chron. 29:11)

Jesus gave us this prayer to teach the importance of having the right perspective and motives behind praying. He emphasized the need for a life of prayer, not if you pray, but said “when you pray.” Praying is essential- because it is how Christians talk to God, hear from God, and spend time in His presence. Jesus modeled what a prayer life includes. Prayer was vital to his life and wants the same for all who follow him.

When we might think we are unable to do what is needed, Jesus calls us to prayer. It is essential and is a prayer of the heart which is significant to guiding our thoughts. The 7 distinct sections and concluding praise teach us what to include.

As we grow as Christians, we will realize the importance of prayer and what this means to God. God loves His children and simply desires that we come to Him,

Paul writes in Philippians 4:6-7: Don't be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

The Lord's Prayer unites all who believe and follow Jesus. These words have been uttered in languages around the world for generations. The concern today is that it is being forgotten or not taught. IT is this pray that brings us together as the body of Christ. And will hold us guide us and lead us. Through it we are taught how to pray and the importance of prayer.

Let us pray:

God hear our prayer like the generations before us we praise you for this prayer of Jesus. May it become truly a prayer of our hearts. Hear us o God as offer this prayer in the SILENCE of our hearts.. Our FATHER>>. Amen.