

Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer



Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial." (Luke 11:1-4)

For many Christians, the Lord's Prayer is our first and last prayer.

It's the first prayer we memorize as little children, preparing for bed at night.
It's the prayer we always say in church, every time we come.
And it's often the last prayer we will remember on our deathbed.

(I have been with people in the hospital, in nursing homes, in their own homes as they lay dying – someone who has had a stroke, someone who hasn't been able to speak for weeks – and yet they will open their lips and join the people around their bed as they begin to say the Lord's Prayer.)

Throughout our lives, the Lord's Prayer connects us to the heart of Jesus' teaching:

Jesus' prayer answers our questions: Who is God? and What is God's kingdom like?

In this prayer Jesus gives us a picture of God as the motherly father, whose kingdom is a home, a place of love and belonging for all. God's Home is not just for our blood family – or our own people – God's Home has room, and makes a place, for the whole world.

And what does Jesus tell us to pray for in this prayer? We just sung this hymn:

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you... (Matt 6:33)
Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find,
knock and the door shall be added unto you... (Luke 11:9f)*

Jesus tells us to ask for what we need. What concerns do we bring with us to church this morning?

Our health, our loved ones' health; our children's troubles, the needs of our communities, of our nation, of our world – whatever troubles us, Jesus tells us that we can bring it to God. He also tells us that when we begin to pray for anyone, for anything, we should look first for God's kingdom, God's Home, and then everything else will fall into place – we will know how to pray.

And thus Jesus' prayer becomes a guideline for our own prayers....

The Lord's Prayer in Time of War *

Our Father, who art in heaven,

Help us remember that God is slow to anger, and of great mercy, lover of all peoples of the earth...

What kind of God is Jesus' God?

God is our Motherly Father, whose Home is a place for all people.

Hallowed be thy Name.

Remind us that "all the nations are as nothing before thee," their governments but a shadow of passing age...

Who is really in charge of the world? Who sets the rules for this Home?

At the end of time, God will be here, and God's Home will remain.

Thy kingdom come on earth,

Grant to thy children throughout the world, and especially to the leaders of the nations, the gift of prayerful thought and thoughtful prayer; that following the example of our Lord, we may discern what is right, and do it...

In all times, even times of great stress, God's Spirit can help us see what we need to pray for, see what we need to do. God looks at the world, God looks at us, with eyes of love. Yes, God sees us as we are now, with all our faults and imperfections – but God also sees us as we are meant to be, the people we are meant to become. And so we ask God to help us see under the surface of things, with God's eyes of love.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Help us to protect and to provide for all who are hungry and homeless, especially those who are deprived of food and shelter, family and friends, by the tragedy of war...

What would this world look like, if God's will were followed here?

We need to see this world with God's eyes, so we can bring our world closer to God's world.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us for neglecting to "seek peace and pursue it," and finding ourselves in each new crisis, more ready to make war than to make peace. "We have not loved thee with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves"...

What do we *really* need today and every day? We need the Holy Spirit, and as Jesus tells us,

God will give us the Spirit when we ask.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Let us not seek revenge, but reconciliation; let us not delight in victory, but in justice; let us not give ourselves up to pride, but to prayer...

What is necessary for God's rule of love to prevail?

Forgiveness and reconciliation are always the path to justice and peace.

Lead us not into temptation.

Be present to all thy children ravaged by war: be present to those who are killing and to those who are being killed; be present to the loved ones of those who are killing and to the loved ones of those who are being killed...

Help us remember everyone... not just ourselves, *our* loved ones, *our* needs.

Deliver us from evil.

Subdue our selfish desires to possess and to dominate, and forbid us arrogance in victory...

**Protect us from our own egos, our desires, our fears,
and protect us from others' egos, their desires, their fears.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

**We surrender ourselves to you.
We come home to you, our God, our Motherly Father,
because you always make room for us,
and we long to live in your Home forever.**

Amen.

**adapted from a prayer by Wendy Lyons (inspired by Matthew 6: 9-13, Luke 11: 2-4)*