

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:5-15 by Patty Friesen (Feb.9/20)

Tuesday mornings are my sermon writing mornings at home and if I finish early I can go watch curling at the Granite! So at 6:30 a.m. Patrick and I eat breakfast and play a game or two of Scrabble, then I wander over to my coffee table to light candles and pray the morning prayers using the Anabaptist Prayer Book. Then I tuck in to look at lectionary scriptures and commentaries and write Sunday's sermon. I can't write sermons without the prayer book or the candles or the silence. Prayer is theology - what we think about God is how we pray to God. Karl Barth rightly affirmed, the first and last act of theology is prayer. The sermon writing itself is prayer: struggling to discern the meaning of God's self-disclosure in scripture. And that's why I pray before I write sermons and why I go to Centering Prayer Sunday mornings here at 9:15 before I preach - to try to hear God's voice in the midst of my chaotic thoughts.

People can tell what we believe, not so much by what we say in church but by the assumptions on which we habitually act. The Lord's Prayer today - situated exactly in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount dissolves the lines between prayer and action. The Lord's Prayer is an expression of faith, not only in what it says, but in what it assumes. There is an assumption that the disciples of Jesus are true to themselves when they pray and that they will pray. The text is not a command to pray but an assumption that we already pray. The assumption is that human beings are not self-sufficient, but creatures dependent on the Creator. It is not a sign of weakness to pray, but a sign of genuine humanity. Prayer is not merely for emergencies, but is thankful praise, that acknowledges our true dependence on God. (Interpreters, p. 206)

Our Father who is in Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Prayer is a conversation, a dialogue that binds our hearts to God as **our** Creator. This is a communal Our Father – not a personal “My Father or My Mother or My Creator.” We do not pray to an aloof God who is far out there in the universe but a loving God who is as near to us as our own heartbeat. At the same time we don’t own God – God’s name and ways are higher than our own. Adoration and praise of who God is where we begin and end each of our prayers. We pray with both the familial nearness and the otherness of God. How do we address God in our prayers at home or does this vary for us depending on the kind of prayer we are praying?

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven. God is active and alive on earth as in heaven and when we pray we connect God’s kingdom and God’s will on earth. That’s a big responsibility for us when we pray – we are always mindful of what God is doing on earth. We need to always remember the world and the darkness and the storms of the world when we pray.

Trio Songs: Storm Coming, After Dark

The next part of the Lord’s Prayer is three requests. 1. **Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread.** This is what we call petition prayers, where we ask God for something specifically. We rely on God physically and spiritually for our life. It is a communal petition: Give us this day our daily bread– not give me this day my daily bread. If I have daily bread, others should have daily bread as well.

2. Request: **Forgive us our Trespasses as We Forgive Those who Trespass Against Us.** In the intimacy of this prayer to our Parent Creator we will be reminded of our relationship to other people. It is not merely a vertical relationship but a horizontal

one as well – beginning with our own self-awareness of how we hurt others. Our personal confession leads to our intercession and praying for others who have hurt us. This is the hardest part of the Sermon on the Mount – forgiving our enemies and praying for them. Why does Jesus ask this difficult task of us? Not to change our enemies – but to change us and make us more into the people Jesus wants us to be.

Third Request: **Lead Us Not Into Temptation But Deliver Us From Evil.** One part of the Lord's prayer flows into the other parts. If we do not do the hard work of forgiveness and praying for our enemies, we will be led into vengeance and wrongdoing. It is the human way. Only when we move from person reflection and confession to intercession for others will we be kept safe on the Jesus path of the beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. We pray for both our personal concerns as well as our care for the world.

Trio: Light of a Clear Blue Morning, The Blues

The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer ends where we started with the praise and adoration of our God whose kingdom, power and glory reign supreme forever. **For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, Forever and Ever, Amen.** We end where we started with the praise and adoration of our God whose kingdom, power and glory reign supreme forever and ever. The prayer for God's kingdom reminds us humbly that we are a human blip on the screen of history but we each still play an important communal role in praying, with One Voice petitioning and interceding for God's activity on earth. Pope John Paul used to pray at the end of his day: Well, it's your church, O God. You take care of it, I'm going to bed now." Ultimately, God is in control and we rest in our in God's care.

The Lord's Prayer is so complete in all its parts that it contains everything that we are to pray for. Simone Weil says: The Our Father contains all possible petitions; we cannot conceive of any prayer not already contained in it. If we pray as Jesus taught us, praying for the world as well as ourselves, praying for our physical as well as spiritual needs, our prayers engage our whole selves and our whole community and world. Our prayers are enlarged and reshaped and in turn enlarge and reshape us.

Let us conclude by praying with One Voice the prayer printed in our bulletin that mirrors the Lord's Prayer, written by Mennonite pastor April Yamasaki: O God, Creator of the Universe and our Closest Friend, Reveal yourself in this broken world, Pour out your compassion, and reign over us. Feed those who are hungry, Free those who are oppressed, Forgive us our failures, And find us again and again. All praise to you - today and to eternity. Amen.

Trio: Crowded Table and One Voice