

When You Pray . . .

July 25, 2010

Luke 11:1 – 13

¹It happened, that when he finished praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.”

²He said to them, “When you pray, say,

‘Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come.

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

³Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴Forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

Bring us not into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one.’”

⁵He said to them, “Which of you, if you go to a friend at midnight, and tell him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread,’ ⁶for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him,’ ⁷and he from within will answer and say, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give it to you?’ ⁸I tell you, although he will not rise and give it to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence, he will get up and give him as many as he needs.

⁹“I tell you, keep asking, and it will be given you. Keep seeking, and you will find. Keep knocking, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened.

¹¹“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he won’t give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, he won’t give him a scorpion, will he? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

Let us pray: (Nazarene Transliteration of the Lord’s Prayer; Avoonan Dbishmaya)

Oh Thou, from whom the breath of life comes, who fills all realms of sound, light and vibration. May Your light be experienced in my utmost holiest. Your Heavenly Domain approaches. Let Your will come true - in the universe just as on earth. Give us wisdom for our daily need, detach the fetters of faults that bind us, like we let go the guilt of others. Let us not be lost in superficial things, but let us be freed from that what keeps us from our true purpose. From You comes the all-working will, the lively strength to act, the song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age. Sealed in trust, faith and truth. (Amen.)

This morning we encounter the disciples spying in on their Lord as again he is praying, as our text says, “in a certain place.” They’ve encountered this same experience many times as they have traveled together, but this morning something is different. One of the disciples has realized that there might just be something to this whole praying thing and the disciple decides it is an important time for a lesson on prayer.

As we’ve seen over the course of the past few weeks, Jesus, according to Luke’s Gospel, has been teaching them about discipleship. They have seen their Lord instruct others to *go* and tell others about what God has done for them, he has cautioned others about the responsibility of relationship with God and they have seen Jesus instruct Martha that there are many choices to be made and that Mary, her sister, has chosen what is better, that is to temporarily put aside worldly responsibilities and expectations and take time to sit at the feet of Christ; to revel in his presence and his teachings.

The disciples have had a lot to think about. They’ve chosen to put their entire lives on hold and to physically follow Jesus during his ministry. They have a lot invested in this journey and are beginning to see that this man, Jesus, has power and authority; even more so than his cousin John the Baptist and they want more of what Jesus has to offer. Knowing all that Christ has taught them and all that they have experienced in his presence and at his command, they are beginning to note that even Jesus himself takes time out of his busy ministry to pray. There must be something to all this and they want to know more.

As an educator myself, I can tell you that one of the most rewarding experiences comes when a student has one of those vested interest moments and desires to know more. When a student realizes that what you have to teach them is important and comes to you and ask to be

taught, you know you are getting through to him or her. The gospel account today of the disciples asking to be taught is the only instance in scripture when the disciples actually ask their teacher to teach them and I imagine that Jesus must have been, as any teacher would be, excited to hear them asking to be taught. And so Jesus teaches them about prayer.

When you pray, say:

‘Our Father in heaven,
 may your name be kept holy.
May your Kingdom come.
 May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
³Give us day by day our daily bread.
⁴Forgive us our sins,
 for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
Bring us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from the evil one.’”

That’s it? No fancy words or long winded tributes? There must be more to it? But as we see in our reading today, it is just as simple as this. However, we must come to understand that though this prayer may appear skeletal at best, the words contained within it are very selective, well chosen and are thorough. Let’s take a look at the prayer and see exactly what it is that Christ is teaching us.

Oh but before I continue, let me point out a few things. First, we’ve been studying discipleship and I want you to know that we have not moved on to something new. We are still being instructed about discipleship. Not only are we to “Go and Tell Others” or to “Sit at the Feet of Jesus and to Revel in His Teachings” but we are to pray! We are to pray not only for our wants and desires, but we are to pray for God’s Will and for awareness in our lives that we cannot do this on our own. That is what this prayer is about. Though we have come to know this as the Lord’s Prayer, many people refer to it as the Disciples’ Prayer because it is instructive

of the type of prayer life that a disciple should have. As we will see it is vastly different than the prayers that so many pray when they find themselves in desperate need or have foolish wants; “Lord, please get me out this mess and I promise to follow you – I will never do anything bad ever again.” You know that kind of prayer, don’t you? Of course you do, but that isn’t the kind of prayer we are talking about this morning and if I may be so bold, I don’t believe there is any real power in that type of desperate prayer. Prayer that is self seeking or petitions for worldly gain without any acknowledgement of the Power, Authority and Will of God is meaningless at best.

When the disciples asked to be taught about prayer, Jesus begins by instructing them to say, **“Our Father in Heaven, may your name be kept Holy.”** There is the key to any powerful and affective prayer life. We must acknowledge the Power, Presence and Purpose of God in our lives. The name of our Creator (our Father, if you will) is Holy! Once this is established then the Will of God can begin to manifest itself within our lives.

“May your Kingdom come; may your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

“But, wait a minute! I want a new car and a job making \$150,000 annually and a summer home on Lake Hartwell. What’s all this talk about God’s Will? What about what I want!” Well, the truth of the matter is it doesn’t really matter what you want, that is, the earthly you; the carnal you. If it is God’s will that you have a new car, or make good money or have that summer home then it will happen, but not because your earthly flesh desires it! And trust me when I say this, when we get into relationship with our Creator and rely on God’s Will and Way for our lives, then our desires will be the desires that God has for us; new cars, more money and lake houses may not be part of that plan and then again, they may be. But we must not petition God for the desires of our heart, but rather we should petition for the Will of God in our lives.

More importantly than the desires of our earthly flesh, we should be concerned about our daily needs; food on the table, clothes on our back, a place to rest our head at night and yes, even gas in tank. We live in a world where so many of us have taken for granted our access to food, clothing and a place to sleep at night. It seems almost silly to many of us to pray for these things because we live in a culture where these items are so readily available, but I guarantee you if you go down to Shirley's Sol Food any afternoon around 2:00 p.m. there is a group there who are praying intently for their next meal, a shirt to cover their back and a safe place to sleep at night. "Then let *them* pray this prayer, why should I?" Because we are all in need of the same basic sustaining life elements; food, clothing, shelter, etc and whether we have or have not, we must all be aware of the source from which these elements are provided and that is from God our Creator; our Father! Some may have more than others, but God has promised to provide for us according to God's Will and Way for our lives, if we simply acknowledge and ask.

"Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. . .
Alas, there is this need to acknowledge that we are all sinners. Paul reminds us of this in Romans 3:23 when he writes "For we are all sinners and fall short of the Glory of God." In daily asking for the forgiveness of our sins we are reminded of our earthly nature and the grace that has been offered to us through Jesus Christ. In realizing that we are sinners saved by grace, we can then begin to offer that same forgiveness to those who sin against us; those who are indebted to us by their own actions against us in this world. This includes those who marginalize us, speak ill against us and reject us. How wonderful it is to know that God gives us the ability and reasoning to forgive others.

If you have ever been able to show that forgiveness to someone else, then you know the kind of joy that is experienced by it! Now take that same feeling of peace and joy experienced

by our own forgiveness of others and multiply it by the largest quantity you can imagine; this only begins to scratch the surface of the joy and peace that God experiences in our forgiveness not only of one another, but for us as individuals when we move into relationship with our God.

Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. It is a guarantee that we will all be tempted in some form or fashion during our time on earth. Christ himself was tempted. Luke reminds us of this in Chapter 4, when he describes the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness. Again, in asking that we be delivered from temptation and from the hands of the evil one, we are gaining power over it. We cannot fight against a force we do not acknowledge and we cannot fight against the forces of evil alone; God must be with us and is with us, as Jesus reminds us at the end of his instruction to the disciples when he states, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

The prayer may seem skeletal at best, but there is power in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. We pray this prayer each week at the end of the Prayers for the People and like many traditions; it has become for many of us a marker of when the prayer time is over rather than an integral time of prayer. Once we acknowledge our dependence on God, “Our Father in Heaven, may your name be kept Holy,” what follows are 4 things God can then do in order to demonstrate the honor of God’s reputation and the power offered to us through that name. God can then: Come, Give, Forgive, and Protect:

1. "May your Kingdom come" is the whole meal deal. This asks for an end to life on earth as it is, an end to all oppression, injustice, and unrighteousness

2. "Give us day by day our daily bread" certainly addresses the very real and present concern of Jesus' followers and should be a real concern of ours, as well – to have enough to eat and to be taken care of for the purpose of God's call on our lives.
3. "Forgive us our sins for we ourselves also forgive!" God's standard of forgiveness surely has a higher standard than anything we have been able to realize, but still we are instructed to forgive just as God has forgiven us. God's standards may be high but we can seek to meet God's standards.
4. "Bring us not into temptation (Protect us). . ." requests that we ourselves do not have to face the direct testing by Satan as Jesus did at the start of his ministry; the temptations Christ experienced in the desert. (David Ewalt, <http://HolyTextures.com>)

Our sermon hymn today is [*Avoonan Dbishmaya*](#), that is, the Lord's Prayer spoken in the language of Jesus; Galilean Aramaic. I want this time to be a time of meditation for you this morning, a time of prayer. I'm going to ask that we begin by praying the prayer through together. As the hymn plays, take one phrase from the prayer and spend a few moments reflecting on that phrase. For example, imagining what it means for God's Kingdom to come, or how we forgive those who sin against us. You can then use these thoughts for further prayer. At the end of our hymn today, we will come back and together pray through the prayer again.

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name . . .

[*Avoonan Dbishmaya*](#)

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, Hallowed be they name . . . Amen!