

April 23, 2006  
The Lord's Prayer  
Our Father in Heaven  
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Luke 11:1-4 (THE MESSAGE)

One day he was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said, "Master, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." So he said, "When you pray, say,  
Father,  
Reveal who you are.  
Set the world right.  
Keep us alive with three square meals.  
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.  
Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.

When Jeff and I began talking about preaching on the Lord's Prayer — My first thought was — WOW — What a task.

Most of us have such crazy understandings of prayer (if we have any understanding at all). SO, how in the world do you tackle this subject.

Most of you have heard many, many sermons on prayer — and I am willing to bet, that when after a number of them — as you got up to leave the church — you felt guilty.

- I don't pray like that . . . does that make me less of a Christian?
- When I pray before I go to sleep — I often find myself falling asleep before I get too far
- I feel silly praying

I am sure that you could add many other feelings that you have had over the years.

Over the next six weeks — Jeff and I are going to go through this prayer line by line ---- attempting to give you a handle on this most common prayer of Christianity.

I am sure you have heard the story about the two people flying in an airplane when all of a sudden they begin to hit some major turbulence. It looked like

the plane wasn't going to make it — so the two began talking.

What do you think we should do?

*Maybe we should pray?*

Do you know any prayers?

*Sure I do, I know the Lord's Prayer?*

Really, I never have thought of you as the religious type.

*I learned it when I was a kid.*

And the man began to pray:

*Now I lay me down to sleep . . .*

By golly you really do know the Lord's Prayer.

But at the same time — Jeff and I will bring our own unique understanding of prayer and of this particular prayer to you.

I say that because I want to affirm from the get go that there is NOT one set required way to pray — nor to understand prayer.

I do believe that there is one set goal to prayer — and that is to understand God and God's desires for our lives.

Let me begin this morning by sharing with you my own personal struggles with prayer.

When I first started out in ministry, I became convinced that in order to have a good prayer life (and you had to have a good prayer life to be a good pastor — otherwise God would not bless you) you needed to do or maybe a better way of saying is create a couple of things.

One was a prayer space.

I took a place in my office and set it up as my prayer space.

I got a candle that I would only light when I was engaged in prayer.

I got a book so that I could record my prayer requests and could mark off which ones God answered.

I created a set time for prayer every day.

There were even times — when I felt like it wasn't "working" like I thought it should that I would "get down on my knees" in prayer.

But none of it worked.

I felt foolish and disconnected from God —> not connected like I thought, and now really believe is the purpose of prayer.

The other thing that I realized is that I had turned God into a Gin — a magic

lamp.

If I prayed just right  
 If I prayed hard enough — then things would come true  
 AND if they didn't come true — well then you know what that said about my  
 prayer life — I failed!

And I know that over the years that I have said that God always answers prayer  
 — sometimes just not in the ways that we wanted.

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT ANYMORE

I haven't believed that for a long time — but I thought that I had to  
 believe that

I believe that prayer is an opportunity to “see” God — to understand God and  
 how God wants us to live in the world.

Bruce Larson in a sermon on the Chicago Evening Club said it this way:  
 Prayer is nothing more than practicing the presence of God. God is with  
 you. God is with us all the time. Brother Lawrence, one of the first to  
 capture this astounding idea, says to us that when he was called to a life  
 of relationship with God as you and I, if we are Christians, are called to,  
 he went to a monastery where he thought he'd be on his knees many  
 hours a day. Instead, they put him in the kitchen made him in charge of  
 pots, pans, buying, selling, cooking. And he discovered over the years of  
 cooking in a monastery kitchen that he was closer to God when he was  
 scouring pots and pans, going down to the market and buying produce,  
 cooking and preparing meals. He said, “You know when they rang the bell  
 for all of us working monks to join the others in the chapel for prayer it  
 interrupted my time with God.” You see, God is there with you and me all  
 the time and praying is talking to him in everyday life.

Prayer is not about coercing God or changing God  
 Prayer is about changing me  
 Changing me to see God's way of seeing the world

And I believe that is exactly what this prayer of Jesus is all about.

As we walk through “The Lord's Prayer” week by week, it is going to show us —  
 if we have eyes to see and ears to hear — glimpses of what the kingdom of God  
 is like.

So, let's take a look at this prayer.  
 It is found in only two of the Gospels  
 Matthew 6:9-13

Luke 11:2-4

They are in slightly different forms

(Matthew 6:9-13 NRSV) "Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. {10} Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. {11} Give us this day our daily bread. {12} And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. {13} And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

(Luke 11:2-4 NRSV) He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. {3} Give us each day our daily bread. {4} And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial."

Catholics pray it one way → Protestants pray it another

Sometimes different words are used  
debts vs trespasses

Many over the centuries have "re-written" the prayer into "contemporary (for their culture) language

How should we use the Lord's Prayer?

- Daily
- weekly
- in worship

NT Wright in his book *The Lord and His Prayer* writes:

this prayer sums up fully and accurately, albeit in a very condensed fashion, the way in which he (Jesus) read and responded to the signs of the times, the way in which he (Jesus) understood his own vocation and mission and invited his followers to share it. This prayer, then, serves as a lens through which to see Jesus himself, and to discover something of what he was about.

If we are truly to enter into it and make it our own, it can only be if we first understand how he (Jesus) set about living the Kingdom himself.

How did Jesus understand God's Kingdom?

Peace  
Love  
JUSTICE

Not justice as we often understand it (getting even), but instead, justice for the least, the last, and the lost

The prayer starts out quite simply: Our Father

Some believe that this is a unique understanding of God that nobody before had seen God as “father” or dad

But that is simply not true — many saw God as a parent figure — going all the way back to Moses.

And we are not talking about a MALE God here — Jesus is talking of God as a parent — and in his culture that would have always been in male terminology — but God is not — was not a MAN

What Jesus seems to be claiming is that by seeing God as parent we are being invited as God’s children to participate in ushering in the kingdom age.

It happens with our participation with God

Wright puts it this way:

calling God ‘father’ is the great act of faith, of holy boldness, of risk. Saying “our father’ isn’t just the boldness, the sheer cheek, of walking into the presence of the living and almighty God and saying ‘Hi, Dad.’ It is the boldness, the sheer total risk, of saying quietly ‘Please may I, too, be considered and apprentice son.’ It means signing on for the Kingdom of God.

Part of the problem that I am going to leave you with is WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

What is the Kingdom all about?

But that will have to come later as we continue to explore the glimpse at God through the prayer that Jesus taught us.