

Call to Worship: (Psalm 145)

I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise your name and extol your name for ever and ever.

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty – and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

Prayer

Lord, I come into your presence today, magnifying your name, thanking you that through Jesus I can be here.

Thank you for those generations that have told me of your majesty, your amazing grace, your power to save and sanctify me.

Lord, help me to share this good news with this and the next generation. Amen

Song: "Great is Thy Faithfulness" (Anders, Chisholm, Runyan)

1. Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father, there is no shadow of turning with Thee.

Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not.

As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy faithfulness.

Morning by morning new mercies I see.

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,

Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

2. Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,

Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,

Join with all nature in manifold witness to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,

Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine with 10,000 beside.

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Prayer of Intercession

Lord, I pray for the nations. I pray for those who are suffering disasters.

I pray for Ukraine, for the cessation of hostilities, for those who are homeless through missiles, for those bereaved, for those hungry. I pray for the church there, that God's grace might shine. And I pray that I, through prayer and support, might be a voice sharing God's love in this nation.

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I pray for Turkey and Syria, for the relief effort in those nations. I pray for those bereaved, those cold and hungry. I pray for the Christians there, that their lives will teach others of you, the only hope of salvation. And I pray that I will show the compassion of Jesus to these people, to be the neighbour of whom Jesus spoke.

I pray for those nations that persecute your people. I pray that the life and witness of Christians will have a powerful impact on those around them and those who persecute them. And I pray that I will be faithful in standing with these, my brothers and sisters in Jesus, in prayer and support.

I pray for the nations, including mine, that have more than they need, are blessed by abundance, and yet are abandoning your ways. And I pray that my voice may be heard by my neighbours, extolling the name of Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life. Amen

Bible Reading:

- Luke 11:1-4

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just 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. Forgive us our sin for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.""

- Matthew 6:9-13

This then is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Song: "Song for the Nations" (Keith and Kristyn Getty)

1. May we be a shining light to the nations, a shining light to the peoples of the earth.
Till the whole world sees the glory of your name, may your pure light shine through us.
2. May we bring a word of hope to the nations, a word of life to the peoples of the earth.
Till the whole world knows there's salvation through your name, may your mercy flow through us.
3. May we be a healing balm to the nations, a healing balm to the peoples of the earth.
Till the whole world knows the power of your name, may your healing flow through us.
4. May we sing a song of joy to the nations, a song of praise to the peoples of the earth.
Till the whole world rings with the praises of your name, may your song be sung through us.
5. May your kingdom come to the nations, your will be done in the peoples of the earth.
Till the whole world knows that Jesus Christ is Lord, may your kingdom come in us.
May your kingdom come in us, may your kingdom come on earth.

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Message: “Lord, Teach us to Pray”

I’ve had a long struggle with liturgy. As a teenager I found I easily lost concentration on the content and ended up parroting the words while thinking about something else. Some of you with a Methodist background will remember the communion service that was printed in the back of the Methodist Hymn Book. In my little country church we would use that service once a month on Communion Sunday and, although fully aware of the importance of Holy Communion, the long liturgy part I found a bit boring, so, in the longer sections as the minister began the reading I started at the end, reading it backwards, see where I met him in the middle! Now I’m sure that none of you played such games with words so solemn, but I wonder how many of us have recited the Lord’s prayer mechanically without much thought about what we are saying.

I have recently been saying the Lord’s Prayer with renewed interest and awareness after being alerted to how radical that prayer is. In the Luke passage above the prayer is prefaced by the disciples saying, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John has taught his disciples.” Wouldn’t you just love to have been there to hear his teaching and to hear him praying? Doesn’t it leave you wondering what John’s teaching about prayer was?

What do you think it was about Jesus praying that prompted the request? And what was their praying like before the lesson? The disciples were all Jews of varying degrees of devoutness as you would expect from such a varied bunch of blokes – from the scholarly Bartholomew, to the rough fishermen, Peter, John and James, to the probably much reviled Matthew the tax collector. I guess they all went to the temple or synagogue where they understood that the presence of their Holy God was found. The parable of the pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) gives us a picture of praying where both of them stood, and both of them addressed God as “God”. At least that’s so in our English Bibles, so I presume they really used “Jehovah”, or “Yahweh”, as the strict protocols for addressing the Holy God. And that’s the first radical part of the Lord’s Prayer.

It must have been an immense shock to be taught to say “Our Father”! They would have heard Jesus pray like that, but how difficult it must have been to speak to God on such intimate terms. Although, God had said in the Old Testament that he was the “father of Israel” (eg Jeremiah 31:9), it was now much more personal. Jesus was teaching them that this Holy God had a relationship with them that was as personal as that of a father/child relationship.

You will have heard recently of the furore of church denominations “genderising” God with the usual raft of names and titles. Seemingly the proponents have missed the point that Jesus is teaching about relationship. And seemingly this is an attempt to reduce God to the confines of human labels – and by doing so creating God in our image.

So, it was radical to the disciples, and should be to us a constant reminder when we address him in the Lord’s Prayer, what an amazing relationship we have with him – just as Jesus could speak to him as Father, so can we. And Jesus reminds us in the Lord’s Prayer that in that intimate relationship God remains holy. With the words “Hallowed be your name” we give him his rightful place – the name above all names.

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Jesus also teaches us to ask that God's kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. What do we mean when we ask for the kingdom to come? What are we asking to happen? What is the kingdom anyway? We understand a kingdom to be where a sovereign ruler has absolute power. Sometimes we have an aversion to being under the absolute power of anybody. Arguments spring to mind about freedom, self-determination, human rights. And we have all sorts of questions about the integrity of those to whom we are meant to be subject. And it is perhaps out of this that we have a deep yearning for this world to be better. So it should be with deep yearning, with deep desire, that we seek to be submitted to Almighty God because we know that his reign is just, merciful, loving. And it is with this mind that Jesus wants us to pray every time we utter the words, "Your kingdom come".

"Give us today our daily bread." Probably most of us reading or hearing this are in no danger of not receiving our daily bread. Nevertheless we can acknowledge that it is by God's provision that things grow, that we have jobs and pensions that give us money to buy our daily bread. Notice though that the Lord's Prayer uses plural pronouns all the way through. "Give us today....." The prayer is not just a personal one. We are praying for our community, even our world-wide community for the provision of our daily bread. How are they doing with the daily bread issue in Ukraine, in Turkey, in Syria? How about Somalia, Madagascar? The prayer is for all of us to have our daily bread, and just as we work to play our part in in God's provision for our own, so does God give us a part to play ensuring that others have their daily bread.

And then comes perhaps the toughest part of the Lord's Prayer. "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." I wonder if we were to each make a list with two columns - one headed "SINS" and the other "SINNED AGAINST". I'm thinking that most of us could make a long list of times and ways we have been sinned against. And I wonder how much shorter the list would be of our sins. How easy is it to justify the length of both lists! How radical is the prayer that God will deal with our short list in the manner we deal with the long one! Sin is such a destructive thing and it cost Jesus his life. The very first sin broke the relationship between Adam and Eve (fig leaves and the blame game) and between God and both of them (hiding). It is still destructive, the more so when we treasure and justify the that SINNED AGAINST column. It imprisons us, damages us, festers in us affecting body and soul, and only forgiveness frees us. And that means letting go of Column B, forgiving each act and each person so that God can forgive us and set us free. Quite radical really – engaging with forgiveness asks me to do some things that make me uncomfortable but in fact liberates me into a renewed relationship with others and with God.

I don't know about you, but what I have found as puzzling as anything else in the Lord's Prayer is, "Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil." Why would the Lord lead me into temptation when one of the struggles of the Christian life is resisting temptation. But I would have to say that there are times in my life when my "sin-resistance" is weakened. Times when I am more susceptible. Maybe then I should be praying "lead me not...". It's a bit like a Mum taking her kids into the supermarket, and although she may need something at the end of the confectionary aisle, she decides not to take them that way because she knows that at that time they will whinge and complain

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and cry and throw a tantrum because they won't get what they want. Mum knows that she shouldn't lead them down that aisle until they are better at resisting the temptation. Ultimately they will need to be able to go down that aisle, and similarly, at some time, we need to face and resist temptation or we don't grow and mature. If we don't face a test, we will never have a testimony! Sometimes we are weak and sometimes we fall, and the Lord's Prayer scoops up this possibility with ".....but deliver us from the evil one".

Satan is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8) and Jesus our Saviour is in a battle with the evil one for lordship over our lives. Resist Satan says Peter, and Paul (Ephesians 6) reminds us with his metaphor of the armour of God, that we can't fight against temptation or the evil one without help. This part of the Lord's Prayer acknowledges the battle and in speaking it we seek God's wisdom, power and Lordship in all that we face in our daily lives. Radical and front-line stuff isn't it?

I'm praying that as you hear or read this, every phrase you speak in the Lord's Prayer will have a powerful, and radical impact on your life and discipleship.

Song: "I Surrender All" (Dawkins/Clark/Dawkins/Van Deventer/Weeden)

1. All to Jesus I surrender. All to Him I freely give
I will ever love and trust Him, in His presence daily live.
*I surrender all, I surrender all.
All to Thee my blessed Saviour, I surrender all.*
2. All to Jesus I surrender, make me Saviour wholly Thine
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit truly knowing that Thou art mine.
3. All to Jesus I surrender, now I feel the sacred flame.
Oh the joy of full salvation, glory, glory to His name.

Benediction

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)

This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA