

PRAYING THE LORD'S PRAYER

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

“What a man is on his knees before God, that he is and nothing more” (Robert Murray McCheyne)

Every one of us needs to learn how to pray. As a church we need to learn how to pray – praying with sincere repentance and specific requests. Getting to know God better and releasing God's love and power into our lives and into our town.

The disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray.” And when we ask, “Lord, teach us to pray,” God's answer to us will be the same. We learn to pray through The Lord's Prayer. For 2000 years Christians have been praying what we call the Lord's Prayer but of course Jesus gives it to us to be The Disciples' Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is a pattern prayer, not a parrot prayer. Beyond the words and phrases, it gives us a pattern for all our prayers, a way of praying. Over the next five weeks we will learn how to pray, and we begin by learning just who we are praying to! This is the secret of all prayer, to know who we are praying to. Prayer is conversation with God and in any conversation it matters who we are talking to. So the Lord's Prayer begins by reminding us just who it is we are praying to – “OUR FATHER, IN HEAVEN.”

IN HEAVEN

Let's begin by reminding ourselves just how different God is from us human beings. God is God IN HEAVEN. Not just in a different place from us, but in a spiritual realm totally inaccessible to mere mortals.

IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

God IN HEAVEN. Consider the greatness of God – God is Almighty
God, all-powerful, nothing is impossible for God!

Isaiah 40 ¹² *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has
held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on
the scales and the hills in a balance?* ¹³ *Who has understood the
mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor?*

¹⁴ *Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him
the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him
the path of understanding?* ¹⁵ *Surely the nations are like a drop in a
bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands
as though they were fine dust.*

²¹ *Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you
from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was
founded?* ²² *He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its
people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a
canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.*

²³ *He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to
nothing.* ²⁴ *No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no
sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and
they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.*

²⁵ *“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the
Holy One.* ²⁶ *Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all
these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them
each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not
one of them is missing.*

This is God Almighty! God IN HEAVEN

God is Almighty. God is All-knowing. God is Ever-present,
everywhere all the time!

And God is ETERNAL – beyond space and time!

Psalm 90 ¹ *Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.* ² *Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.* ³ *You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men."* ⁴ *For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.* ⁵ *You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning—* ⁶ *though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.*

God is eternal. And then consider the HOLINESS of God

Habbakuk 1:13 *Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.*

Human beings are selfish and greedy and proud. God is different. God is God is Holy and pure and just and righteous, and yet at the same time God is also all-loving: God IS love.

Almighty, eternal, holy, all-loving. And there is one more word which describes God very well – God is TRANSCENDENT. God is above and beyond and unreachable and unattainable and incomprehensible. God is transcendent.

God is almighty, all-knowing, ever-present, eternal, holy, loving, transcendent. He is God IN HEAVEN. Bow down and worship, for this is your God.

This is the God we are praying to. Our prayers become deeper and more meaningful the better we get to know the God we are praying to. So it is good to spend time meditating on just who God is. We might say that a person in high office has the ear of the Prime Minister, or of the Queen, or of the President. Christians have the ear of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, even God IN HEAVEN.

The God we are praying to is God IN HEAVEN. So what then is the name that Jesus gives us for the God we are praying to? Should Christians, as the Jews would do, come before our God in deep humility addressing Him in reverential phrases such as "Almighty, holy and eternal God, Creator of heaven and earth and Lord of all"?

No. The name Jesus gives to his disciples to address God with is simply this

FATHER

There are different words for Father in the languages Jesus spoke, Hebrew and Aramaic . Luke's Gospel uses the word a young child would still use today to address their father. Abba. Daddy.

Respectful but at the same time intimate. Abba. That was the same word Jesus Himself used for God time after time particularly throughout John's Gospel and especially in his own prayers. Abba, Father.

No respectful Jew would ever have dared to address God as Abba. The word is far too familiar, far too intimate. But Abba, Father is the word which Jesus teaches His disciples to use as they come to God in prayer. Christians are allowed to address Almighty God with the same language as Jesus Christ the Son of God himself did. We can come to God as Abba Father because of what Jesus has accomplished by His death and resurrection.

After His glorious resurrection this is what the Risen Jesus said to Mary in the garden.

John 20:17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

"My Father and your Father." Jesus dared to call God "Father", and now his followers can call God "Father" as well. Because of Jesus, all of us who put our trust in Jesus become God's children. We are born anew into God's forever family.

John 1:11 ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Christians are born again into God's family, and we are also adopted into God's family.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ ...

Christians are God's children, and that gives us the right to call God, "Abba, Father." When we call God Father that reminds us of all our privileges as His children. We can come to God and call Him Father as naturally and easily as any of us would come to our own human parents. The Christian name for God is "Father." Prayer is about having a relationship to God which is THAT close!

But calling God "Father" also reminds us that we are not coming to God on our own merits, but only through His one and only begotten Son Jesus Christ. We are God's children only because of Jesus. Because of Jesus we can come to God the Father with BOLDNESS.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

We come to God and call Him "Father." The version of the Lord's Prayer in Luke's Gospel begins simply with "Father." But it is interesting that Matthew's version begins instead with "Our Father" and that is the way the Church has generally used the prayer. Our Father reminds us that our salvation and our access to God and indeed all the blessings God has for us come, not just to me individually, but to us all, together, collectively. For Christians, the emphasis is not on God as "my Father" but as "our Father". Our salvation is corporate – it comes to us in the fellowship of the church. "Our Father" reminds us of our brothers and sisters every time we pray, "Our Father".

So far we have seen two truths which we need to hold together as we come to God in prayer. God is God in heaven, almighty, eternal, holy, transcendent. And yet we have the incredible privilege of coming to God as Abba, Father. This is always the God we are praying to.

And then in this Pattern Prayer Jesus leads us on to six requests which we will look at in the weeks ahead. Three requests are centred on God and then another three are centred on human beings. Just the first of these requests will give us plenty to think about for this week. And that prayer is this.

HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

Good News translates – May your holy name be held in honour

New Living Translation – May your name be kept holy

We want God's name to be proclaimed and lifted high. All prayer is concerned with the glory of God.

IN OUR OWN LIVES and IN OUR CHURCH

We are praying that we will give God all the glory and all the honour and all the praise of which He is worthy. We want God to be recognised as Almighty and Eternal and Holy. We want God to be adored for Who He is. We want God to be praised for all the wonderful things He has done in creation and redemption.

Hallowed be your name. In the Lord's Prayer we are asking God to help US to glorify His Name as He deserves. We join our praise with all the angels and the saints in heaven around the throne of God,

Revelation 7:12 "Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever! Amen."

But more than God's children worshipping God, in the Lord's Prayer we are praying that the whole world will give God the glory and the praise which He so richly deserves.

Hallowed be your name **THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE COSMOS!** As we sometimes sing, "Glorify your Name in all the earth." As the Psalm says, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!" We want every living being to show God the respect and the obedience which He deserves. We know that one day this will indeed happen.

Philippians 2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

May God's name be kept holy. Hallowed be your name. So here is the beginning of learning to pray. Asking that God's holy name will be honoured and exalted in our lives and throughout God's world. And the secret of prayer will be to really get to know the wonderful

God we are praying to. We sometimes spend a long time thinking about what we ought to ask for in our prayers. We need to spend just as long thinking about the Person we are praying to ... "Our Father in Heaven." We need to get to know more and love more and worship more the God who is Almighty and Eternal and Holy and Transcendent, yet who invites us to come into His presence and call Him "Abba, Father." So that is our homework for the week. Draw close to God and He will draw close to you. Let us all set time aside to pray, and reflect on what it means to be able to pray to "Our Father in Heaven."

YOUR KINGDOM COME

"Prayer does not enable us to do a greater work for God. Prayer IS a greater work for God" (Thomas Chalmers). Prayer is not an optional extra to the work of the church – prayer IS the work of the church. So we all need to learn to pray which is why we are working through the Lord's prayer which gives us a pattern for all our prayers.

We start by praying to Our Father, Abba, Daddy. We continually need to develop our relationship with God our Heavenly Father.

Who art in Heaven. This reminds of just how great God is. He is Almighty and glorious, Ever-present and All-knowing, Eternal, Holy and Righteous, Loving and yet Transcendent.

Hallowed be your name. May your holy name be honoured. Glorify your name in all the earth. And God's name will be glorified if the next three petitions are answered.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Three requests which run in parallel and are all centred on God himself.

Some people have the wrong idea that God's kingdom only exists where human beings acknowledge God as King and allow him to be King. That is not the way it is at all. God is always King. And the

world experiences God's Rule as King whenever God chooses and in whatever ways God chooses. God's kingdom comes when God in his Sovereign power acts as King in his world. So what are we actually praying for when we pray, Thy Kingdom Come? We are praying for the return of Christ. "Come, O Lord!"

God is King and always has been King and always will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. God is Sovereign Ruler of All. But at present he is allowing evil to continue to exist. Sin and suffering have been defeated, but they still exist in the universe. At the moment, God is on the Throne of Heaven despite the presence of evil and all its consequences on the earth. But one day evil will be removed completely and every eye will acknowledge him as King.

This was the central hope we find in so many places in the Old Testament looking forward to God acting as King to bring His salvation to all the earth.

Isaiah 52:7-10 ⁷ *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'* ⁸ *Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes.* ⁹ *Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.* ¹⁰ *The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.*

In Jesus's generation the Kaddish was the prayer that Jews prayed every day to God, "Magnified and sanctified be his great name. May he establish his kingdom in your lifetime, even especially at a near time". Every Jew would bring this urgent prayer that God would bring this world to a close, to bring an end to injustice and suffering and to begin his eternal reign of peace and joy. That was the hope which Jesus picked up on when he proclaimed in his own ministry, "the Kingdom of God is at hand." And that is the hope which underpins that phrase in the Lord's prayer, "Your Kingdom come."

Jesus came announcing to everybody that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand, in other words that the reign of God on earth was beginning. God's kingly rule was beginning, but it did not fully arrive in Jesus's lifetime. Even after the decisive victory over sin

and death and the devil which Jesus won on the cross, and even after his glorious resurrection from the dead, God's Kingly Rule on earth was not fully complete. The prayer, "your Kingdom come" was not fully answered – so we are still praying forward to the return of Christ, the Second Coming.

2 Peter 3 ⁷ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. ⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. ¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Only when Jesus returns and there is a new heaven and a new earth will God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Until then we are in the Last Days, the time between Jesus's first coming and his Second Coming. God's Kingdom has been inaugurated, but it is not yet fully established.

So for almost 2000 years the church has been praying the same prayer, "Come, O Lord." It is such an important prayer that the phrase is retained in the original language of Aramaic in 1 Corinthians 16:22 in the middle of the rest which is in Greek. The phrase is Marana tha – our Lord come. And the prayer is there in Revelation 22:20. *He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'* Amen. (So be it) Come, Lord Jesus!

God's eternal Kingdom is not based on us acknowledging him as King. It is all about the things God does as king by his Sovereign power. We cannot do anything to bring in or to build the Kingdom of God. Only Christ can do that and he WILL do that when he returns

in glory. We can't make Jesus return – we can only pray, “Your Kingdom Come.”

But we don't need to wait until the Second Coming of Jesus to see the beginnings of that prayer being answered. God had already begun to reveal his glorious salvation! In his earthly ministry Jesus announced, “The Kingdom has come near you” The Kingly rule of God has not completely arrived. But it certainly began as Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom in words and also in actions. In bringing healing and deliverance. In sharing table fellowship with sinners. In forgiving sins. All these were acts of love and power repairing the damage and suffering which sin has caused in the world. And all these signs of the coming Kingdom of God were repeated in the life of the Early Church, as Jesus at the end of Mark's Gospel had commanded.

Mark 16 ¹⁵ *He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on people who are ill, and they will get well.’*

¹⁹ *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. ²⁰ Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.*

God's Kingdom will only fully be established when Jesus returns, but God is already preparing the world for that day as his Kingly Rule in invading this present darkness. When we pray “your kingdom come” Christians are praying that God will act in sovereign power here and now to set people free from suffering and sin and evil. We are asking God to break in and transform the world and the church. We are acknowledging that we cannot build the Kingdom of God. Only God can do that. Through miracles of healing and deliverance. Only the power of the Holy Spirit, the dynamo and the dynamite of God's power, can bring God's Kingly Rule.

SHOW YOUR POWER, O LORD,

Demonstrate the justice of Your kingdom.

Prove Your mighty word.

Vindicate Your name Before a watching world.

Awesome are Your deeds, O Lord; Renew them for this hour.

Show Your power, O Lord, Among the people now.

In praying “your kingdom come” we are inviting God’s Holy Spirit to break into our lives. Praying for that day when God’s will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. But that has to begin with a personal response. Beginning with me – may God’s will be done in my life.

Of course, praying “your will be done” is not about us telling God what we think should happen. The Almighty and Omniscient Creator and Redeemer doesn’t need our bright ideas for solving the problems of the universe! It is God’s will which must be done. Our task is simply to find out what God’s will is and say, “Yes Lord, do that”.

So we pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” On the whole earth. By every person in every country all around the world. May every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Amen come Lord Jesus.

GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD

“Seven days without prayer makes one weak”

We are learning to pray from Jesus Himself in the words of the Lord’s Prayer. We begin by remembering who we are praying to

Our Father in heaven, Almighty, Eternal, Holy, Loving,
Transcendent

Hallowed be your name – may God be glorified and honoured by everyone everywhere.

Your Kingdom come, Amen, Come Lord Jesus,

Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Show your power O Lord.
Your will be done – starting in my life!

So our prayers have begun by focussing on God and His glory. Now we come to two requests for our own needs.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

A daily prayer – in Jesus's time in middle east with no fridges bread would only last for one day, they needed to bake fresh bread every day. So quite rightly they needed to ask God for their bread for that day.

People living in Jesus's time, as people living in the Third World today, recognise that the whole of Creation is completely dependent on God for all the necessities of life.

PSALM 104 ¹⁰ *He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. ¹¹ They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. ... ¹⁴ He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate – bringing forth food from the earth: ¹⁵ wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart. ... ²⁰ You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. ²¹ The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. ²² The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. ²³ Then man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening. ²⁷ These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. ²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.*

FOOD – we can so easily take our food for granted. That's why it's good to say grace before our meals – in passing a meal is technically defined as anything more than a Mars bar. That's one reason why it's good to give something up for Lent: I've given up chocolate again.

WATER – again we take a free supply of fresh water for granted, never being thirsty, working bathrooms, etc. Floods and homes destroyed remind us just how fragile our lives are.

HOME, SHELTER, warm in winter, dry in rains, safe from predators

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

TRAVELLING – every journey in Uganda began with a prayer for travelling mercies and ended with thanksgiving for a safe arrival, because for so many people so many journeys are hazardous, if not impossible.

COMMUNICATIONS – first radio and landline telephones, then TV and video, mobiles, text messages, Skype, Facebook, Twitter and social media.

POSSESSIONS – luxuries and necessities

CHURCH, FELLOWSHIP, BIBLES

Especially living in a society where we regard as necessities things which so many people in the world would view as luxuries, if they had access to them at all, it is very important that we don't take all these different kinds of blessings for granted but receive them with gratitude. Asking every day for our daily bread reminds us of our complete dependence on God, day by day and into the future.

Colossians 3¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS

It is so easy to take God's grace for granted

We should receive God's grace and forgiveness with gratitude

I GET SO EXCITED, LORD, Every time I realise
I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven.

Jesus, Lord, You've done it all, You've paid the price:
I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven.

Hallelujah, Lord, My heart just fills with praise;
My feet start dancing, my hands rise up, And my lips they bless
Your name.

I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven.

I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven.

Living in Your presence, Lord, Is life itself:
I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven.

With the past behind, grace for today
And a hope to come, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven.

Saying sorry

It is good to cleanse our consciences and make sure that nothing gets in the way of our relationship with God

1 John 1 ⁵ *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.* ⁶ *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.* ⁷ *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

⁸ *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* ⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* ¹⁰ *If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.*

Prayers of repentance DAILY, not just once a month at communion.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father; we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen. *1549 Book of Common Prayer*

Reminding us of our own failings and sinfulness

Daily repentance is God's way for us to grow in grace and holiness and become more like Jesus.

Seeking God's grace to live a new life

James 4:6 *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*⁷
Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee

from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US

Does our forgiveness depend on us forgiving other people? NO! But then again, YES!

No part of God's free gift of salvation can ever be earned or deserved. It is always simply God's grace, purchased for us by Christ dying in our place on the cross. But what the Lord's Prayer reminds us is that the proper response we should make to God's grace is to forgive other people unconditionally, just as God has forgiven us. Remember Jesus's parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 21

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

²³ "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶ "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸ "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' ³⁰ "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³² “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ ³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵ “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

This is one of the most challenging parables Jesus told. What He is teaching us here is that if we have truly understood and received God’s forgiveness then we WILL forgive others. If we are NOT willing to forgive others, that may be a sign that we have not received God’s forgiveness ourselves.

God’s love for us comes first. We don’t earn or deserve that love by forgiving others. But when we have received God’s love and forgiveness then we love and forgive others, and that is proof to God and to the world that we are indeed forgiven. The apostle John spells this out in many places in his first letter.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

1 John 4 ⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4 ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Forgiving other people as God in Christ has forgiven us. I know it is not that easy! But when a person says, “I can’t forgive,” that usually means “I won’t forgive.” That is why when we are finding it difficult to forgive somebody for something we need to pray even more, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” We are asking God’s help to show his kind of forgiveness, from the heart! So we bring our grievances and our hurts and our anger to God in prayer, telling Him how we really feel. And as we receive God’s love and healing, so He gives us the grace to forgive other people.

Two requests for the essentials we all need. Daily bread and forgiveness. Our physical needs and our spiritual needs. Recognising that all good things come from God our Heavenly Father and that we all ought to be duly grateful. We depend on God from day to day for everything. So we pray

“Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

Leonard Ravenhill wrote, “The self-sufficient do not pray. The self-satisfied will not pray. The self-righteous cannot pray. No man is greater than his prayer life.” We know how important prayer is. It is the heart of our relationship with God. So we are learning to pray from the prayer which Jesus gave his disciples as a pattern for prayer, which we call the Lord’s Prayer.

We begin by recognising the enormous privilege of addressing Almighty God in heaven, Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, All-knowing, Eternal, Holy, Transcendent God yet we are invited to pray to Him as, “Our Father.” And we pray Hallowed be your name,” may God be glorified and honoured by all His Creation.

Then we pray, “Your Kingdom Come”, Amen, Come Lord Jesus, as we look forward to the day when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. We pray, “Your will be

done on earth as in heaven” asking God to reveal His will to us and give us the strength to obey Him.

Last week we thought about the next petition, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Our continual dependence on God for everything we need, not just for food and water but for all the blessings we so often take for granted: home and shelter, travelling and communications, and so many possessions which we think of as necessities but which so many people do not even have as luxuries.

Then we learned to pray, “Forgive us our sins”, reminding us that we should always acknowledge and confess our sins and seek God’s grace to repent and become more like Jesus. But we were also reminded that the proper response to God’s forgiveness is for us to forgive those who sin against us. So our prayers should always recognise that God is the provider of all our needs, physical and spiritual. And this leads on to the next two requests in the Lord’s prayer which are concerned with our growth in grace and maturity and holiness.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

Some people only pray the first three words of that sentence. “Lead us not!” It is as if they don’t want God to reveal his perfect plan for their lives to them, or that they can’t be bothered to follow that perfect plan. But if we want to become more like Jesus we have to ask for God’s guidance and be prepared to follow it. The sad thing is that many Christians do fall into temptation precisely because they don’t seek or follow God’s leading.

“Lead us not into temptation.” God is a holy God – He would never cause anybody to sin. So we need to think a bit about what this prayer means. The key word has two meanings at the same time: temptation and testing, or trial. So the prayer means two things.

Do not allow us to give in to temptation.

Do not bring us to the time of trial.

Do not allow us to give in to temptation.

The Bible is clear that God never tempts anybody.

James 1 ¹³ *When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but*

each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Christians are all in the middle of a battle against temptation. It is a battle fought on three fronts against the world around, against our own sinful human nature and against the devil and all the powers of evil. We need to pray if we are going to escape all the traps of the world, the flesh and the devil. In this materialistic world which thinks that “greed is good” we need to be on our guard especially for the temptations of society around us.

1 Timothy 6 ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

In this battle against sin prayer is vital if we are going to keep hold of God and His priorities and values and standards. We must seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. “Your kingdom come, your will be done!”

Being tempted is not sin – giving in to temptation is sin. So often we have just a moment between temptation and giving in – a brief opportunity to cry out to God for the grace and strength to resist the temptation. Too often we don’t put up a fight.

“Lead us not into temptation” is a prayer we can use in that very moment of temptation, a breath prayer if you like, seeking God’s grace.

I don’t know what temptations you are struggling with in these days. Somebody once said, “A holy life is a succession of holy moments.” Christian maturity only comes through a life-long series of victories over temptation, through prayer. Remember the words of Paul, which are not only a promise but also a challenge.

1 Corinthians 10 ¹² So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! ¹³ No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

In every situation of temptation God provides a way of escape – and we ought to take it!

“Lead us not into temptation”. Do not let us give in to temptation. One very obvious practical point. We cannot pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” if we deliberately put ourselves into situations where we know we are going to be tempted. To pray against temptation and then to put yourself in a place you know you are going face temptation is as foolish as putting your hand into a fire praying you won’t get burned. Don’t do it!

Do not bring us to the time of trial

The second sense of the key word here is not temptation but trial or testing. Jesus knew his disciples would all face tough times for being Christians. Some would be persecuted, some would be martyred. Suffering in such “times of trial” has been part of the experience of the church in every age. Many of the Letters of the New Testament were written to Christians facing persecution and even death.

1 Peter 4 ¹² *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.* ¹³ *But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.* ¹⁴ *If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.* ¹⁵ *If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.* ¹⁶ *However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.* ¹⁹ *So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*

The Bible explains God’s purpose when Christians are facing suffering and persecution.

1 Peter 1 ⁶ *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.* ⁷ *These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

James 1: ² *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

Most of us haven't experienced much of these kinds of times of trial. I have met believers in Bulgaria whose family members were imprisoned for their faith in the communist years. I have met Christians in Uganda who had relatives and church members who were martyred in the years of Idi Amin. And there are believers in Syria and Sudan and too many other places even today facing "times of trial" more horrible than we can imagine.

Christians need God's strength to stand firm in their faith in times of persecution. They need a holy boldness to continue to witness for Christ when they will be punished for doing so. And even in our society, we need God's grace to stand up for Jesus and preach the gospel. So it is good even for us to pray, "Do not bring us to the time of trial," and for God's strength when those times come.

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Again there is a double sense here. The word Evil can mean "Evil" or "The Evil One", the devil.

Our prayer covers either and both. The source of all evil is the evil one. The devil may attack us directly or he may attack through the world around or through our own fallen human nature. Ephesians warns us that the whole world is in the grip of the evil one.

Ephesians 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

And it is true that the devil focusses his attacks on Christians. He has no need to put any pressure on lost sinners. They belong to the devil already. So he concentrates his efforts on causing Christians to stumble and fall and pushing churches to become powerless and ineffective.

1 Peter 5 ⁸ *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* ⁹ *Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

“Deliver us from evil” reminds us of our continual dependence on God when we want to live a holy life. We cannot do it in our own strength. We need God to deliver us from evil, bringing the victory over the Devil which Christ won on the cross into our own lives. But that victory is not just for us Christians, but potentially for the whole world. So we pray “deliver us from evil” also for the world around us.

We are praying for our friends and neighbours to be saved, that God will deliver them from evil as well.

2 Corinthians 4 ³ *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.* ⁴ *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

So we are praying for opportunities to witness. Praying when the seed of the gospel is sown it will grow and bear fruit to eternal life. Praying that young Christians will be kept safe from the attacks of the devil. As we show God’s love to other people in compassion and social action we are also praying, “Deliver them from evil.”

And there are times when we need to confront the devil directly, when we are brought into contact with those who have been trapped in the occult, or in immorality, or in alcohol or drugs or other addictions. Jesus came to bring freedom to the prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, and to release the oppressed. And Christians are called to continue in this spiritual warfare, standing up against the principalities and powers. “Deliver US from evil” is only the beginning of the prayer: “Deliver the whole world from evil.”

William Law said, “He who has learned how to pray has learned the greatest secret of a holy and a happy life.” If we are serious about following Jesus, if we want to know the joy Jesus gives and experience true holiness, then we will pray every day as Jesus has taught us to pray.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

The kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever

Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

We are learning to pray from the Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus taught his disciples as a pattern for our prayers.

We start by recognising who God is, our Father in Heaven, and praying that God's name will be hallowed, honoured and glorified.

We pray for God to act as King on earth and that his will should be done on earth as it is in heaven, starting in our own lives.

We express our complete dependence on God for our daily bread and indeed all our needs as we also ask for forgiveness and seek God's grace to forgive other people.

And last week we learned to pray Lead us not into temptation, help us to overcome temptation and at the same time do not lead us to times of trials and testing, but deliver us from evil because we recognise that we will only have victory over evil and the evil one as we share in Christ's victory.

So now we come to the last part of the Lord's Prayer, the doxology or song of praise. We don't find these words in Jesus's original words in either Matthew's or Luke's Gospel and it appears they were added to a late Greek manuscript of Matthew maybe centuries later. But this little song of praise gives us a fine pattern for our own prayers and Protestants have always included it as part of the Lord's Prayer in their prayer books. So we gladly pray, "The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are yours, now and forever, AMEN"

THE KINGDOM IS YOURS

As Christians we should never be trying to build any kind of kingdom. Remember the teaching of Jesus:

Matthew 18:1 *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"* ² *He called a little*

child and had him stand among them. ³ And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

We are not trying to build our own kingdoms. As again Jesus said in Matthew 20 ²⁵ *Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

We should never be asking God to bless our own plans but only praying to discover from God what His plans are. We should never be trying to build our own kingdoms. Nor should we be trying to build God’s Kingdom. That is not something human beings can do.

In the Lord’s Prayer we are recognising that the Kingdom is God’s and we are asking Him to act as King in our lives and in His world. “Your kingdom come.”

Like King David we are recognising that everything in heaven and earth comes from God and everything in heaven and earth belongs to God.

1 Chronicles 29 ¹⁰ *David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,*

“Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. ¹¹ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

¹² *Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.*

¹³ *Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.*

“Yours, O Lord, is the Kingdom,” and so God’s ultimate victory is guaranteed!

Revelation 11 ¹⁵ *The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:*

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

¹⁶And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷saying:

“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. ¹⁸The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great— and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

The Kingdom always has and always will and does right now belong to God!

YOURS IS THE POWER

We also recognise in our prayers that the only power which can bring God's Kingdom is God's power.

Zechariah 4 ⁶ So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.

The might of collective strength, of armies and warriors, cannot accomplish anything of God's purposes. Neither can the power or strength of individual human beings, however great their skills or experience or training or hard work. The only thing that matters is the actions of God the Holy Spirit, God living in us, the dynamo and the dynamite of God at work in and through our lives. It was A.W.Tozer who commented that if God had taken the Holy Spirit out of the Early Church 95% of their activity would have stopped and everybody would have noticed the difference. Whereas if God were to take the Holy Spirit out of the church today, 95% of our activity would go on and nobody would notice the difference.

Whatever power we may think we have, it counts for nothing at all. The only thing that matters is God's power. Remember the instructions Jesus gave his disciples after His resurrection in the Upper Room:

Luke 24 ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

And remember the wonderful promise Jesus made just before his Ascension: Acts 1 ⁸ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

That amazing power of the Holy Spirit was revealed time and again in the Early Church.

Acts 4 ³¹ *After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*

³² *All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.* ³³ *With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.*

Power to be witnesses for Jesus. Power revealed in miracles, signs and wonders. As we follow the story of the Early Church in the book of Acts and we see there how the power of God worked in the lives of those first Christians. “Yours is the power.” That is why we need to pray. Pray to experience God’s power in our lives and in our church. To open ourselves day by day to the power of the Holy Spirit. Yours is the power!

YOURS IS THE GLORY

Too many Christians say they are doing things for God but actually they are doing things for their own glory. There are disappointing stories emerging this week about an American pastor whose book only made it to the top of the best sellers list because he had paid \$200,000 to an organisation who strategically bought 11,000 copies to manipulate the list. For whose glory? Certainly not for God’s glory. As Christians what we do should never be for our own glory.

It is even possible to pray seeking our own glory instead of God’s glory. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said,

Matthew 6 ⁵ *“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.* ⁶ *But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.* ⁷ *And when you pray, do*

not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ *“This, then, is how you should pray:*

And that is exactly the point where Jesus introduces the Lord’s Prayer. As an antidote to hypocrisy in self-glorifying prayers.

Everything we do must be, not for our own glory but for God’s glory.

Ephesians 3 ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are yours, NOW AND FOREVER

Forever and ever – and that is a long long time. We must never forget that we are human and mortal. God is not. God is everlasting and eternal.

God’s KINGDOM is eternal. Not here today and gone tomorrow. Somebody once asked the football manager Bill Shankley if he really thought that football was a matter of life and death. Shankley replied, “It’s much more important than that!” But God’s Kingdom really is much more important than any concerns we might have. Human kings and earthly kingdoms rise and fall. But God’s Kingdom is eternal. God’s Kingdom is forever.

1 Corinthians 15 ²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

God’s Kingdom is forever. God’s Kingdom is eternal.

And God’s POWER is eternal. Only God knows the end from the beginning and only God has the power to shape men and nations.

God's eternal Kingdom can only come by His eternal power. God's power is forever.

And God's GLORY is eternal. We live in an era of celebrities. Everybody fighting for their 15 minutes of fame. But the Almighty Eternal God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. God's glory doesn't last just a week or just a month or just a century or just a billion years. God's glory is eternal. God's glory is forever.

Prayer helps us fix our eyes on God's kingdom and eternal power and eternal glory. Prayer keeps us aware of the eternal dimension and the eternal significance of everything we do.

2 Corinthians 4 ¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are yours, now and forever,
AMEN

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our **daily** bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4