

Matthew 6:7-21

And when you pray, don't babble like the Gentiles. They think God will hear them if they use a lot of words. Don't imitate them. Your God knows what you need before you ask it. This is how you are to pray:

Our God in heaven, hallowed be your name!

May your reign come; may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today the bread of Tomorrow.

And forgive us our debts, as we hereby forgive those who are indebted to us.

Don't put us to the test, but free us from evil.'

"If you forgive the faults of others, our God will forgive you yours. If you don't forgive others, neither will our God forgive you.

And when you fast, don't look depressed like the hypocrites. They deliberately neglect their appearance to let everyone know that they are fasting. The truth is, they have already received their reward. But when you fast, brush your hair and wash your face. Don't let anyone know you're fasting except your God, who sees all that is done in secret. And our God - who sees everything that is done in secret - will reward you.

Don't store up earthly treasures for yourselves, which moths and rust destroy and thieves can break in and steal. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can destroy them and thieves cannot break in and steal them. For where you treasure is, there will your heart be as well.

The Lord's Prayer is a fascinating thing, full of depth to be explored - it was praying the Lord's prayer that made my Grandfather seek out all of his siblings in their old age, to make sure there was forgiveness among all of them (decades after his decision to leave the Amish church, with his siblings still members). While, at the same time, this prayer can be rout and routine - something we can say with the detachment of our brain, just words pouring forth. It might be one of the only things memorized and said together by churches like ours, part of the "free church" tradition who don't feel beholden to liturgies, lectionaries, and memorized prayer. And yet, many of us still memorized the Lord's prayer somewhere in our lives. Perhaps it is because they are words of Jesus, direct instructions from this Son of God. Or perhaps we recognize a depth in these words, and in our struggles to understand prayer, there is comfort to be found here. Or, perhaps our elders simply needed something to teach us at Vacation Bible School. Whatever the reasons, this prayer Jesus taught us has a special place in our life of faith.

It is the prayer of two realms - of heaven which we think of as God's space, where God's laws and ways run things. And earth, our space, where cost accounting, sacrifice zones and capitalism seem to more settle the way things are. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray for these two worlds to be one - for God's ways to rule here. It is like the vision at the end of the Book of Revelation where the holy city, the new Jerusalem, comes down from heaven to earth.

We are praying, as Jesus was praying and acting, for the redemption of the world; for the radical defeat and uprooting of evil; and for heaven and earth to be fully integrated at last, for God to be in all and through all. And if we pray this way, we must of course be prepared to live this way. If we pray this way, we must be prepared to live this way.¹

¹ NT Wright, in his article "Thy Kingdom Come."

Our Father and Mother, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Hallowed be thy name. Holy is the name of God. People of the Lord's Prayer, living lives that show the holiness of this name, God.

Just this past week a small Dutch chapel concluded what might be the longest worship service ever, 96 days of continuous worship. Sometimes when we have communion our service goes until noon, which can feel long. 96 days of worshipping the holy name of God, beginning October 26 of 2018 - that is when the Tamrazyan family moved into this neighborhood church. This family had been living in the Netherlands for 9 years, having fled Armenia in fear for their lives. But now a court had ruled that they must return from where they came, and the Tamrazyan family believed strongly that their lives would be in danger if they were deported.

And so in response, the Bethel Church began worshipping, not just to pray for this family but to protect them. For under Dutch law that [police](#) are forbidden from disrupting a church service to make an arrest. Thus, this family of five moved into their little church - and together, people began worshipping round the clock. This included volunteers, song leaders, worshippers and pastors from all over Europe - as far away as even Columbus, Ohio - to go in and worship together. Until, this past week, when the Netherlands agreed to let the family stay.²

96 days of living the holiness of God's wonderful name. *Hallowed be thy name.*

² Thanks to Beth Landis for bringing this story to my attention. For more on this story, see <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/31/690403074/months-long-dutch-church-service-to-protect-migrants-ends-after-policy-shift>

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

In the wake of learning that families at our southern border were being separated, a group of San Diego State professors gathered together to share their anger and heart-ache, and to decide what they might do. Together they found the names and alien registration numbers for 30 detainees at Otay Mesa detention center outside of their city - people now detained who had been part of a migrant caravan held up at the border in Tijuana. And they began writing letters, simple letters with some information about themselves - letters that said things like, “I am terribly sorry for what you are going through both in your home country and now here,” she wrote. “I applaud you for your bravery, courage and determination.”

These volunteers and friends, rented a post office box for the detainees’ responses. For months now, volunteers and asylum seekers being detained have been corresponding through old-fashioned letter writing: sharing shock and empathy, sending Christmas cards, poems, pictures and updates about their own families. Volunteers have also sent small amounts of money to the detainees’ accounts for purchases of such things as extra food and drinks, toothbrushes and shoes.

One detainee from the Democratic Republic of Congo has wrote, “whenever you reply to my letters, it is a light for me in the darkness. It is true it makes me cry because your letter showed care and love as a human.”³

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

³ For more on this story, see <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/07/us/immigrant-detainee-letters.html?fbclid=IwAR0zN5XQ4PGiFOerigjYDiAPjEsodpOKTnajlBXN7RpmtMMe45w0WrywD08>

Give us this day our daily bread. Or, as our version for this morning read, “Give us today the bread of tomorrow.”

In the early 1970s Mary Beth and Lester Lind were students at Eastern Mennonite University when they first heard the phrase, “live simply so others can simply live.” They decided to make that phrase their life philosophy, and that they have done for almost 50 years.

They moved to West Virginia where they grew much of their own food and worked part-time jobs, working to earn enough to live just above the poverty line in order to avoid paying war taxes. Mary Beth was a nurse, Lester has done a variety of things including growing organic blueberries - if they ever ended up with more money than they needed, they gave it away – all decisions guided by the Linds’ commitment to simplicity and care of the earth. These have been the guiding principles of their faith.

As they are now in their seventies, decisions they made earlier in life about income and livelihood have presented them with new challenges of funding retirement and managing healthcare costs.

Nevertheless, the Linds remain as committed as ever to the simple lives they chose almost 50 years ago. “The value of simplicity continues to form who we are and how we live.” And when asked if given the chance, would they do it the same again? The Linds say, it has been a lot of hard work and many times it hasn’t been easy, but If we had it to do all over again? Yes, we would.”⁴

Give us today the bread of tomorrow.

And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sinned against us.

Of this line, the author and poet Frederick Buechner says, “To forgive somebody is to say one way or another, “You have done something unspeakable, and by all rights I should call it quits between us. Both my pride and

my principles demand no less. However, although I make no guarantees that I will be able to forget what you've done, and though we may both carry the scars for life, I refuse to let it stand between us.”

In November of 2012, Lourdes Guzman-DeJesus was killed while riding the bus to her Miami school; accidentally shot and killed by her classmate Jordan who was showing off his stepfather’s gun believing it was safe.

In the wake of this tragedy, at the sentencing for Jordan, Lourdes mother Ady Guzman-DeJesus asked the judge to give the boy a lighter sentence. She stood before the court and said that she knew that he did not do it on purpose - that this boy too should not lose his whole life - that she felt ready to forgive him. She didn’t just ask for him to be free though, but to go with her to schools - to talk to students and schools about the dangers of gun violence - to hopefully keep these kind of tragedies from repeating themselves. “Nothing’s going to bring my daughter back...but by the two of us going into classrooms, hopefully we can deter children from bringing handguns to school.”

And at the end of the court proceedings, Ady embraced the young man who took her child out of this world. Of this, Judge Ellen Sue Venzer said, “In 20 years (on the bench), I’ve watched human tragedy unfold in this courtroom, and I could have never imagined a victim’s mother embracing her child’s killer.”⁵

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us.

⁵ For more on this story see <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article1965773.html>

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver from evil

We are surrounded by temptation. Temptation to numb ourselves to the problems and pain of being on earth - to numb with endless streaming television, or substances, or accumulation of things, or to simply avoid looking beyond my own life. We are tempted to find meaning and hope elsewhere - in what Jesus calls treasures on earth, those things that rust and moth can destroy.

And so we gather together to remember the one who taught us what it means to follow our God of love - the one who cast the vision that redemption of the world is not about fleeing the world and its pain; that the biblical image of redemption isn't about humans being snatched up from earth to heaven.

This is what we remember everytime we pray as Jesus taught us:

We are praying, for the redemption of the world; for the radical defeat and uprooting of evil; and for heaven and earth to be fully integrated at last, for God to be in all and through all. And if we pray this way, we must of course be prepared to live this way.⁶

May we be a people of such prayer - with our words, with our souls, with our lives. Amen.

⁶ Again, this idea comes from NT Wright.