

Bellaire Community United Methodist Church

August 28, 2016

## **“The Lord’s Prayer – Our Prayer”**

*Love to Pray, part 7 (based on a sermon by Al VanderGriend)*

Matthew 6:5-15

I am so glad you are present in this worship service today. There are plenty of other places you could have chosen to be – at the lake, sleeping in – but you chose to join those in this church who want to worship God. God is pleased with you, and I am humbled by your choice. I love being the pastor of this church, so before I say anything else, let me say thank you for sacrificing your time to hear God’s Word this morning.

I invite you to pray with me, and I encourage you to open your hands in front of you, inviting God to fill up your soul this morning.

Thank, God, for who you are. Our Creator, our Sustainer, our Redeemer. Lord, we offer ourselves at this moment exactly as we are, trusting in your Holy Spirit to fill us, guide us, and challenge us to more fully live our lives according to your Word. As the disciples asked, so now we ask: Teach us how to pray. And teach us how to live, following our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.

For a very brief moment of my life, I thought that the Lord’s Prayer was actually referring to my dad, Howard. It was because I misheard the line, “Hallowed be thy name,” and thought they had said, “Howard be thy name.”

You wouldn’t believe what some other misheard phrases in this famous prayer are:

- “Our Father, Richard in Heaven; Harold be Thy name.”
- “Our Father, who makes art in Heaven; How do you know my name?”

- “Forgive us our trash passes, as we forgive those who passed trash against us.”
- “And lead us not into Penn Station.”
- “But deliver us from eagles.”
- “Deliver us some E-mail”
- “For mine is the kingdom, the flower and the jewelry.”

Now, when we know what the actual words are supposed to be, we find these mistakes amusing. But honestly, there are many people who don’t know what this prayer is, let alone what it means, even though we repeat it so frequently in church.

We call this passage in Matthew “The Lord’s Prayer,” but actually that’s a misnomer. It should be labeled, “The Disciples’ Prayer” – our prayer – because Jesus used this model to teach his followers how they should pray.

In Luke 11, the disciples came to Jesus and requested, “Teach us how to pray.” The implication is that Jesus prayed so much that his disciple took notice. They knew that power was tied to prayer, and they wanted to follow Jesus in every way, so they asked him, “How should we pray?”

Now before we answer that question ourselves, I want to make an observation. Isn’t it a little odd that Jesus prayed at all? I mean, he was God! So it seems that he would be praying to himself, wouldn’t he?

That’s really not the best way to understand Jesus’ relationship with God the Father. Jesus is part of what we call the Trinity – One God, Three Persons – The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the church we understand and affirm that Jesus Christ is God, but in his relationship with God the Father, Jesus is the beloved Son of God. Therefore, Jesus communicated with the Father constantly.

And the Father talked with Jesus. Several times in the Gospels, the heavens opened up and a voice was heard, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

Although Jesus could have neglected prayer, he didn’t. Jesus was a faithful Jew, who knew the same Psalms that we did, who read the same stories of Adam, Noah, Moses, and Elijah that we can. And Jesus knew that he could do nothing apart from the Father, so he offered everything up to heaven in prayer. Whether he was eating, healing, performing miracles, suffering and dying, he was constantly praying and enjoying a love relationship with God the Father.

So, I have a question for you. If Jesus, the Son of God, prayed, what does that mean for us? I can give you at least one answer – when Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray, we better pay attention, too! As Jesus’s followers, we want to reflect his attitudes and actions as well.

Jesus gave this Disciples’ Prayer to tell us what our attitudes should be when we pray. First and foremost, we should expect this prayer to change us. That’s probably something you’ve never thought before, especially if you have said this Disciple’s Prayer often. The Disciple’s Prayer has so many good petitions, we cannot help but expect to change if we take it seriously. When you pray this prayer, this is what you are saying (courtesy of Al VanderGriend):

- You marvel that you are a child of God.
- You deeply revere God’s Name.
- You long for his kingdom.
- You delight to do his will.
- You are utterly dependent on God.
- You are keenly aware of your deep need for forgiveness.

- You understand that extending forgiveness is not a burden but a privilege.
- You desperately need and want God's leadership.
- You know you need and want his deliverance.
- You rest assuredly in God's position, ability, and reputation.

This is a powerful prayer. Just take the line, "Hallowed be your name." We are not praying that God's name will be made holy. It already is. God proclaimed in Leviticus 11:44, "I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy." Truthfully, we are praying that the world will recognize God's holiness. We pray that God's holiness will be known, be on display for the world, and be acknowledged by the world – which will fully happen when Jesus returns and God's kingdom comes.

When we pray, "Give us our daily bread," we are focusing on our need for God to provide. We are also constraining our worries and concerns to the present. We don't ask for yesterday's bread – our past is over and done. We don't ask for tomorrow's bread – God holds our future. We ask for what we need just for today. And we will pray the same thing again the next day, and the next day. There's a whole other sermon right in that one verse, about not worrying! But I'll save it for another day.

For me, though, the most powerful part of this prayer is the part about the "trashbaskets." When we pray, "Forgive our sins, as we forgive others who sin against us," we are proclaiming grace. We are proclaiming mercy. We know we live in a broken world. I submit to you, the world could use more forgiveness. We can't pray this part lightly. If we say with our mouths that we forgive others,

and then walk out the door holding a grudge in our hearts, we simply aren't following Jesus.

Jesus concluded this scripture with very hard words. I love that about Jesus – he never backs down. Jesus says God will not forgive us if we don't forgive others. We cannot expect forgiveness from God if we hold on to bitterness. Holding on to something in the past is the same as saying, "God, I don't even want you to forgive me, let alone them." When we pray the Disciples' Prayer, we have to let it go, and often, we don't want to. Yet, this is the way of Christ.

We use this prayer to ask for help, to be saved from temptation and the devil. Oh yes, the "deliver us from evil" can also mean, "the evil one." Satan. Our accuser. James 1:13 tells us that God doesn't tempt us. Our sins are borne from our brokenness, our past, our desires that we give in to. Every single one of us has them. Nobody here is perfect. As we pray this prayer, we are admitting, we need help. We want to stand strong in trials, with God's help. We want to defeat the devil.

This prayer, when really followed, tells us a lot about ourselves. So what does the Disciples' Prayer tell us about God, who hears our prayers? (Again, from Al VanderGriend's notes.)

- God is our Father.
- God is heavenly.
- God greatly values his name.
- God rules his kingdom.
- God accomplishes his will.
- God provides our needs.
- God is able and willing to forgive us.

- God calls us to forgiveness like he does.
- God is able and willing to provide leadership for us.
- God is able and willing to provide deliverance for us.
- God owns the kingdom, has the power, and is worthy of all glory!

To proclaim the words of the Disciples' Prayer is to believe with all your heart that God is who he says he is and does what he promises. It's as simple as that.

I know this sermon is about praying like Jesus, but I need to ask you one more fundamental question. See, you can't pray like Jesus if you don't know who Jesus is. You won't be motivated to live like Jesus, to honor God like Jesus, to forgive like Jesus, if he is just some distant, historical figure who has no impact on your life today.

Who is Jesus? This is the fundamental question for the church. It is the basis of why we exist, and the foundation of everything we do.

C.S. Lewis made a famous statement that you cannot claim that Jesus was just a good teacher. Jesus is not just a good guy, or just a model to follow.

Lewis said it comes down to three choices. Either Jesus is a Liar, a Lunatic, or He is Lord. You see, Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. He had the audacity to proclaim that he would save people from their sins. But here's the deal. If Jesus claimed to be God, and yet, he knew he wasn't, that makes him out to be the worst liar in the history of the world. All those people who followed him, who put their trust in him alone, they would all have been deceived, if Jesus claimed to be someone who he was not.

But it could also be that Jesus honestly, truly thought he was God, and was just crazy. Do you know anyone who claims to be God? Who forgives sin? Who

fulfills prophecy? Who predicts he would rise from the dead? If any one of us said that publically, they would lock us up in the loony bin! But read the scriptures. That's exactly what Jesus said. Again, a normal person who claims to be God, and really thinks he is, is crazy. A lunatic.

Neither of those two choices makes sense. A liar would not risk his life for his friends. A lunatic would not experience the normal ups and downs of emotions we see Jesus having. The disciples were there. They saw him. They talked to him. They lived with him. They were in a unique position to know if Jesus was telling the truth and could back it up. And every single one of them went to their deaths believing Jesus was the Savior, the Son of God.

Jesus once asked, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone." (Luke 18:19)

Do you believe Jesus is just good? Or do you truly believe that he is the Son of God? If you believe that, then you must take seriously the commands he gives. You must say to him, "Lord, teach me how to pray. Teach me not to be a hypocrite. Teach me to confess. Teach me to forgive others. Teach me to rely on you daily. Teach me to be a part of your kingdom here on earth, just as it is in heaven. Teach me to see your glory."

What kind of prayer life do you want to have? If you want to know these blessings that we find in the Disciples' Prayer, look to Jesus. Call on his name. Ask him to be Lord of your life. Be honest with him. Tell him the worries, the concerns, the hopes and dreams you have. If you use the Lord's Prayer to talk with him, great, but whatever you do, pray. Spend time with the one who wants to come into your heart, the one who loves you so much, he sent his Son to die for you.

Memory verse

Luke 11:1 "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."

Reflection questions

1. Why do you think Jesus prayed?
2. If you had a face-to-face conversation with Jesus about your prayer life, what would you talk about?
3. How often do you use the "Lord's Prayer"? How does it shape your prayer life?
4. What is one thing you can do to make prayer a priority the way Jesus did?