

Trinity 9 2016 Lord's Prayer Rev Godfrey Hilliard

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer the Lord Jesus taught His disciples says, "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. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'" Many people misunderstand the Lord's Prayer to be a prayer we are supposed to recite word for word. Some people treat the Lord's Prayer as a magic formula, as if the words themselves have some specific power or influence with God.

The Bible teaches the opposite. God is far more interested in our hearts when we pray than He is in our words. "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. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words". In prayer, we are to pour out our hearts to God (, not simply recite memorized words to God.

The Lord's Prayer should be understood as an example, a pattern, of how to pray. It gives us the "ingredients" that should go into prayer. Here is how it breaks down. "Our Father in heaven" is teaching us whom to address our prayers

to the Father. “Hallowed be your name is telling us to worship God, and to praise Him for who He is. The phrase “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” is a reminder to us that we are to pray for God’s plan in our lives and the world, not our own plan. We are to pray for God’s will to be done, not for our desires. We are encouraged to ask God for the things we need in “give us today our daily bread.” “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” reminds us to confess our sins to God and to turn from them, and also to forgive others as God has forgiven us. The conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” is a plea for help in achieving victory over sin and a request for protection from the attacks of the devil.

So, again, the Lord’s Prayer is not a prayer we are to memorize and recite back to God. It is only an example of how we should be praying. Is there anything wrong with memorizing the Lord’s Prayer? Of course not! Is there anything wrong with praying the Lord’s Prayer back to God? Not if your heart is in it and you truly mean the words you say. Remember, in prayer, God is far more interested in our communicating with Him and speaking from our hearts than He is in the specific words we use. St Paul tells us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Most of us can't imagine what it would have been like to walk and talk with Jesus physically as He made his way across Galilee. If we could have been there we would have seen Him touch the sick. We would have been amazed as He walked across the waves of the stormy sea. We surely would have been inspired as we heard Him teach, and then been mesmerized as He explained the meanings of His teachings to the smaller group. Imagine what it would have been like to ask Him whatever question came to mind?

When the disciples saw Jesus perform miracles and teach, they didn't clamor, "Lord teach us to teach like you!" or, "Lord, teach us to do that miracle!"

Instead, what captured their attention was hearing Him pray. "He was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."

They wanted to know how to talk to God in prayer. Notice what Jesus gave them when they asked this question.

Don't allow yourself to become weary as you pray for things. This reminder from Jesus on how to pray should encourage us. When it seems like the answers are slow to come, remember this passage. Jesus knew we would feel that way and He tells us to keep on praying. We find security in the fact that God hears and will respond to our prayers.

If you were to describe your prayer life would you use the words "persistent" and "perseverance?"

This intimate moment between Jesus and his disciples should inspire us to have a stick-to-it-attitude about prayer.

Prayer that pleases God

"If our churches don't pray, and if people don't have an appetite for God, what does it matter how many are attending the services? How would that impress God? Can you imagine the angels saying, "Oh, your pews! We can't believe how beautiful they are! Up here in heaven, we've been talking about them for years. Your sanctuary lighting - it's so clever. The way you have the steps coming up to the pulpit - it's wonderful." I don't think so."

"If we don't want to experience God's closeness here on earth, why would we want to go to heaven anyway? He is the center of everything there. If we don't enjoy being in His presence here and now, then heaven would not be heaven for us. Why would He send anyone there who doesn't long for Him passionately here on earth?" (*Jim Cymbala, Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire (Zondervan, 1997), pp. 58-59.*)

A little girl came to her mother and said, "I suppose, up in heaven, they think I am dead." The mother replied, "Why Mary, why do you suppose they think you are dead?" "Well," said the little girl, "because, I have not said my prayers for a week." (*Unknown*)

Prayer is probably the most difficult thing about being a Christian. How often do our prayers sound like a heavenly shopping list?

How often do we pray bullet prayers? These are quite common outside examination and interview rooms.

Morning and Evening prayer said together as clergy is one of the highlights of my week and one of the many reasons I enjoy working in a team after too many years working on my own.

Thursday MP and EP are said at St Mary's each week and until we had to stop during the installation of the new lighting I was rarely on my own. You are welcome to join us any Thursday at 9.00am.

The family that plays together stays together. The parish that prays together stays together as well. Food for thought. Amen.