

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL MENNONITE CONFERENCE

The Lord's Prayer

2019

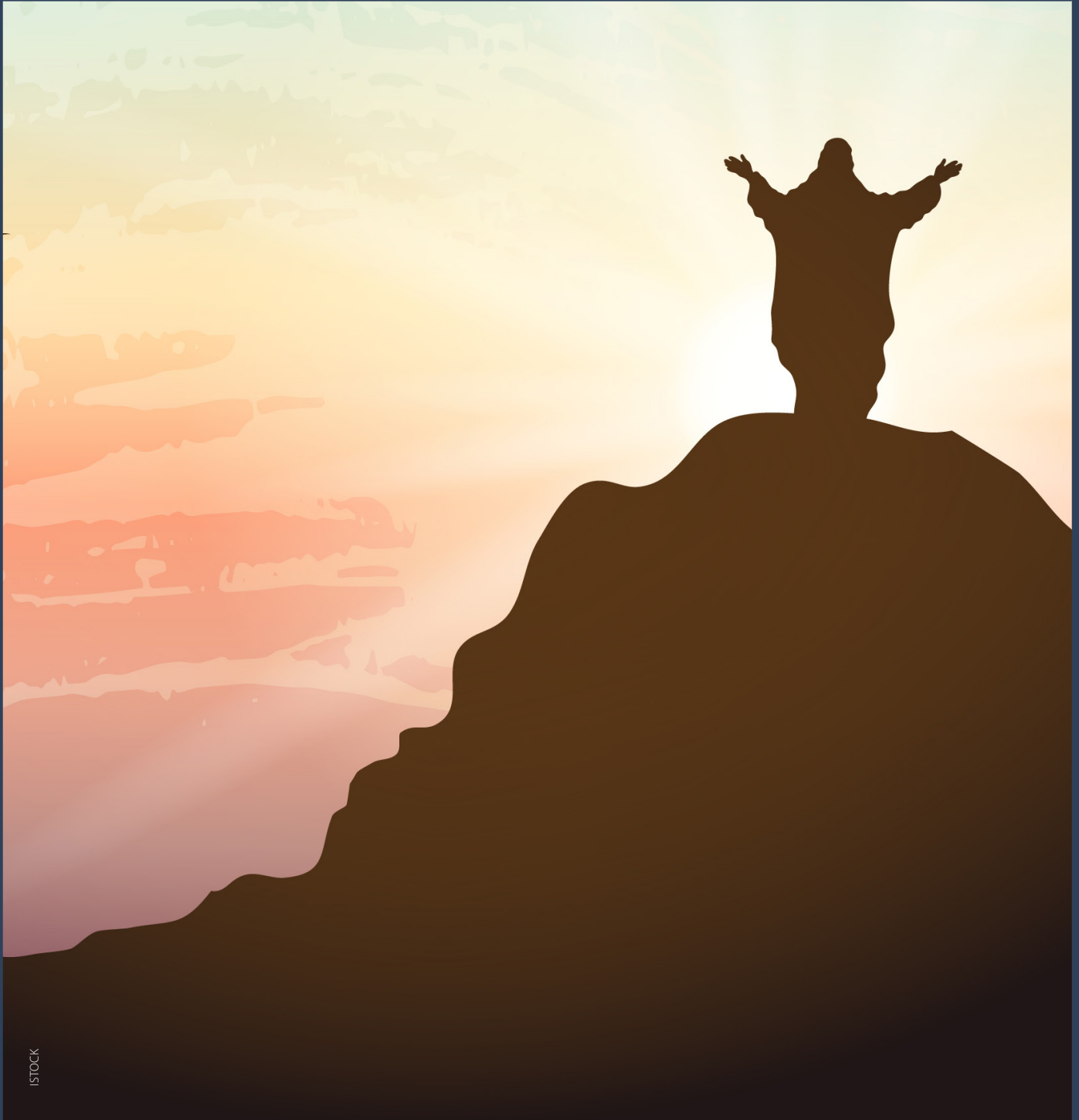


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The Lord's Prayer 2019

Our Father in Heaven

by Dr. Arden Thiessen



ISTOCK

Editor's Note: *There will be a series on the Lord's Prayer in 2019. This follows the Apostles' Creed (2016), the Protestant (Radical) Reformation (2017), and the Mental Health Initiative (2018), whose articles are, or soon will be, available online in booklet form.*

I once made a bad mistake. I had concluded a committal service at the cemetery by inviting the group to say the Lord's Prayer with me. Later, at the church reception a total stranger approached me in anger. "You treated my God with contempt," he shouted. "You said, 'Our Father *which* art in heaven.' 'Which' implies God is a thing. That's terrible; you insulted God." He was furious.

I was so taken aback that I could not even explain why I had done it. I just apologized for my bad language. After he turned away I realized what had happened. I had recited the King James version as I had once memorized it and as I had used it for decades. I still use the Prayer when I lead committal services. But I've left the language of 1611.

We speak about reciting the Lord's Prayer. Or about saying it. Such expressions have a liturgical

feel about them. Let's just pray the prayer from the heart. It should seem like a conversation. However, prayer seems like a mystery; the longer I toil at it the more mysterious it seems.

Maybe that should not surprise us. Even the Apostle Paul, who understood many things far better than I do, says simply, "We don't know how to pray as we ought" (Rom. 8:26). So, while I may not understand it either, I will try to say a few sensible things about it.

Puzzled

I am puzzled. The first line of Jesus' prayer sounds as if the prayer is intended to be used in the assembly of believers. "Our" implies the prayer will spoken by a group. However, the

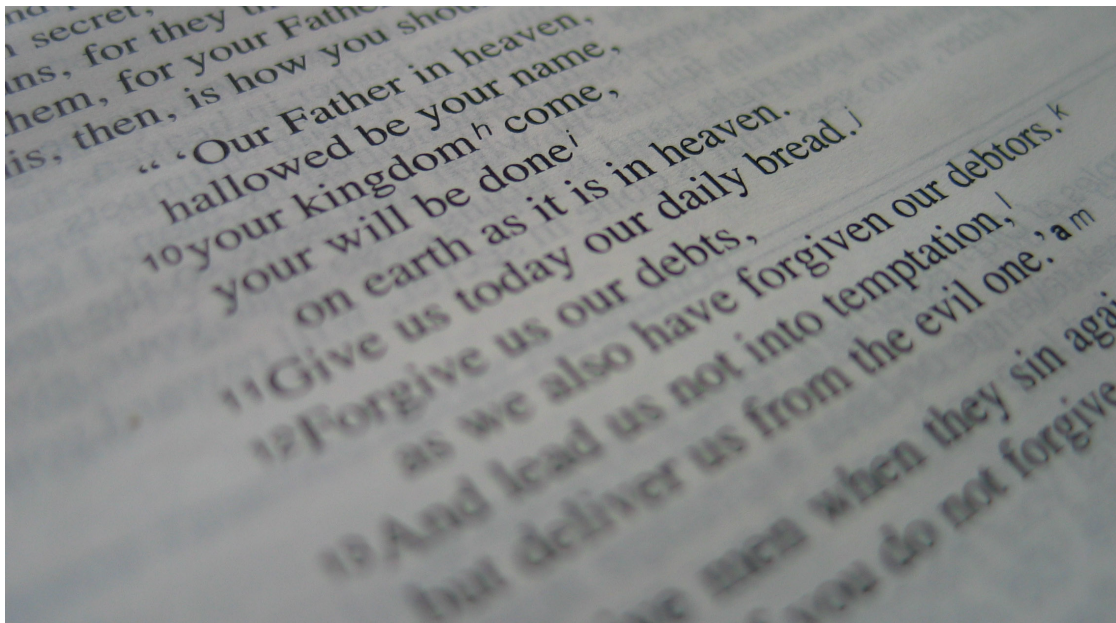
Jesus used the term "Our Father" only this once.

Normally, when he taught his disciples, he spoke of "*Your* Father."

context shows that Jesus was not thinking of group prayer here (He did that in Matt. 18). Here he says if someone wants to pray they are to go to their room, shut the door, and then pray (Matt. 6:6). This sounds like personal, private prayer.

Jesus used the term "Our Father" only this once. Normally, when he taught his disciples,

he spoke of "*Your* Father." (The concept that Jesus and his followers have the same Father





is, however, taught in Hebrews 2:11-12. When we allow ourselves to be sanctified by Jesus we become his brothers and sisters.)

I have thought that Jesus meant that he and we have the same Father. Like, “When you speak to the Father you are also speaking to my Father.” Helmut Thielicke has a significant addition to that. He suggests Jesus taught us to pray “Our Father” because we are to remind ourselves that Jesus is with us when we pray. “Our” refers to Jesus and me.

In prayer we stand beside Jesus and tell the Father what we need; in other words, Jesus and I are together on this. This is another way of reminding ourselves of the same truth that we verbalize when we conclude our prayers with “In Jesus’ name” (Matt. 18:19, 20; John 15:16). By reminding ourselves that we are onside with Jesus, that we are praying with him, that we are praying for that which we can request in Jesus’ name, we are reminding ourselves that it is important that we pray for that which agrees with Jesus’ will.

Jesus was the messenger of the Holy Trinity who came to us in the far country of earth to seek us and reconnect us to the Triune God in

heaven. Among other things he wants to be with us in our praying. If we could remember this, our prayers would likely seem more valid and more essential in heaven. It might also destroy our self-centred, narcissistic focus on ourselves. That would likely be seen in heaven as a healthy and wholesome change. And maybe we could even learn to enjoy the liberty of being more interested in Jesus’ concerns than in ours.

Father, a New Concept?

I’ve heard it said that Jesus introduced a new God concept when he spoke of “Father.” That hardly agrees with the evidence. First of all, God himself

assumed the role of father when he declared, “Israel is my first-born son” (Ex. 4:22, 23). The Lord assured King David about the son who would succeed him, “I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me” (2 Sam. 7:14). The Lord in his compassion is compared to a kind father (Psalm 103:13). Isaiah uses the “Father” term three times (Isa. 63:16; 64:8). What Jesus

does is that he takes a concept that had been only sparingly used in the Old Testament and makes it central for the lives of his people.

Jesus is not only teaching his disciples how

In prayer we stand beside Jesus and tell the Father what we need; in other words, Jesus and I are together on this.

to pray, he is showing them how to think of God. In Israel's history it was a momentous day when Moses heard that the God with the generic Semitic title of Elohim was for them the God with the personal name Yahweh. Now Jesus takes the revelation of who God is one step further. Not only is God personal, he is like a father.

God is There for Us

Like a good father, God is there for us before we pray. He has far deeper and more informed interests in our lives than we ourselves have. It may seem as if God is not hearing our prayers; but like a good father he may be waiting to give us what we need instead of what we desire.

Like a good father he knows our needs before we report them to him (Matt. 6:8). Why then pray if God already knows more than we ourselves know? Because God wants us to grow into a relationship with him. Good relationships require intelligent verbal interaction. That is true of the spousal relationship, of the parent-child relationship, of the members on a hockey team, and of the corporate board. It is especially true of our relationship with God.

It starts by turning to him and speaking out, "Our Father." With that we treat him as a personal God. And the greatest blessing of the prayer life is not that we get a few things for free, without our toil, but that we sense we've been in fellowship, we've been in the presence of our Father. When people stop talking *with* God they

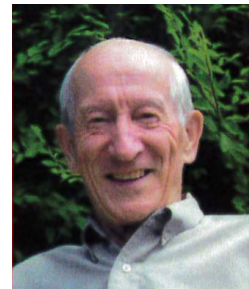
may still do some theologizing, but they are then only talking *about* God.

I understand Roman people would pray to "Father Jupiter," and Greeks would turn to "Father Zeus" in prayer. Jesus' followers are to pray to the Father who is in heaven. This is where the mystery of which I spoke above reaches its depth. How is it possible that we people of earth can with our words, even just with our thoughts, connect with God in his eternal, spiritual dimension?

The mysteries of heaven continue to confound me. Where is it? What is it? How can the God of heaven, who is Spirit, influence affairs in our kingdom of sticks and stones and flesh and bones? I wonder, and I keep on praying.

And now a concluding thought for your reflection. I suggest that if every one of the seven billion people on earth would pray to God simultaneously, God would pay fatherly attention to each one of them. That's how it works in heaven!

Arden Thiessen, DMin, has long served our conference as a pastor, Bible college professor, EMC moderator, and author. He and his wife Helen live in Steinbach, Man., and are part of Steinbach EMC.



The Lord's Prayer 2019

Hallowed Be Your Name

By Pastor Ron Thiessen



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Prayer has always been a mystery to me. I think it was a mystery to the early disciples as well because they seemed baffled by prayer in Luke 11:1 and said “Lord, teach us to pray.” They recognized that when Jesus prayed it was rich and personal and intimate—unlike the religious leaders of their day. It is no wonder that they tracked Jesus down and asked him to be their mentor when it came to prayer.

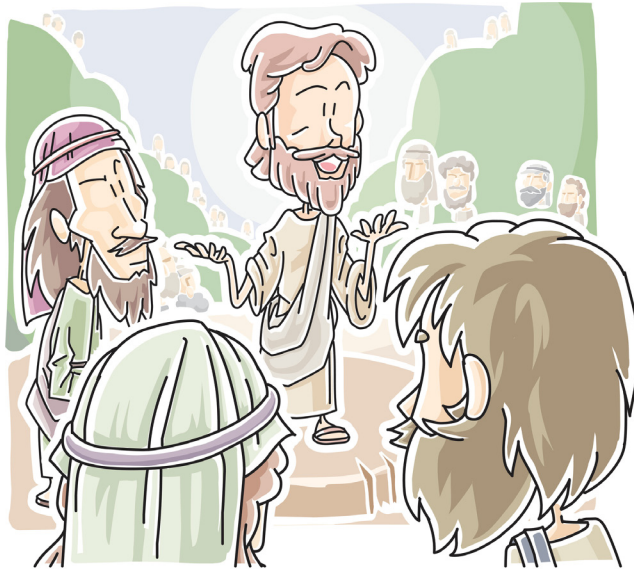
Were People Shocked, Offended?

The first phrase in the Lord’s Prayer is “Our Father.” Rather than addressing Him as some far-off deity, Jesus addresses him as His Daddy or Father. I wonder how much that must have shocked those sitting in the crowd that day? I wonder if the religious people got offended that God would be addressed so personally and casually?

The second phrase in the Lord’s Prayer, “which art in heaven,” talks about the location or address of God. In other words, God’s oval office is in heaven; that is where He resides and where He does His business. When we remember our position in Him, we can enter His presence with confidence. Colossians 1 says that although Christ is in heaven, He is also in us by His Spirit!

He lives in heaven and yet He lives in us. What a mystery! He alone is master of being in two places at once and yet, interestingly enough, we too live in two places at once: we are on earth and yet we are seated with Him right now in heavenly places.

The phrase I want to tackle today, that follows “Our Father, which art in heaven,” is this one: “Hallowed be thy name.” I took the time to look up the word hallowed, since it is not a word we tend to use today. Webster says that hallowed means “to honor as holy, to make holy, to revere and respect.”



Holy Represents God’s Character

Jesus is describing the Father’s name as holy. What does that mean? A person’s name in the Bible represents who that person is, their character. So what Jesus is saying here is that the Father is holy through and through. That is who He is.

Not only is the Father set apart by being in heaven, His personality and His entire being is holy. Reputation is what others say about us, but character is who we are. God’s character is holy, that is who He is. Sometimes we have a good name with some people and a bad name with others at the same time. The Father, on the other hand, always has a good name for His name is always holy.

He lives in heaven
and yet He lives in
us. What a mystery!

God is Not Just a Buddy!

We tend to live in a Christian culture where the attribute that is most often given to God is that He is a God of love. Rarely do we hear about the fact that our God is holy. We can relate to love. We feel comfortable with love. This can lead to us thinking of God as just a friend or a buddy, but God is far more than that. Holiness





is something that we tend to be uncomfortable with, and yet it is because God is holy that He stands apart and is worthy of our worship and our reverence. It is because He is holy that we should fear God, and fearing God always leads to obedience.

Did you know that there is only one attribute of God that is repeated three times in a row in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament? It is known that if something is repeated twice in a row in Scripture that the author is trying to make a point that he doesn't want you to forget, but when something is repeated three times you know that it is something you should never forget. So what attribute is repeated not twice, but three times in two different places in the Bible? The three words are "Holy, Holy, Holy!" (Rev. 4:8, Isaiah 6:3).

Because He is Holy, We Can Trust Him

Why, of all the different ways to describe God the Father, would Jesus address His Father as holy? I think it is because Jesus knew something about holiness that we have either never known or have forgotten about over time. You see, it is because God is holy that we can trust God. God is not just love; He is holy. Therefore, His love is a holy love. That's what makes His love so



different than human love. Man's love is imperfect, but God's love is not—because He is holy.

Not Just a Prayer to Memorize

Jesus did not give these words to the disciples as just another prayer to memorize. Earlier in Matthew 6:5-8 Jesus railed against simply repeating religious sounding words to impress both man and God. It is rather ironic that many people have learned the Lord's Prayer by memory. It is common to say this prayer in many churches; and what often happens is as they corporately say the words they once again fall into saying words that have no meaning.

I think that is what happens when we forget that the words Jesus uses here are to instruct us how to pray, not necessarily what to pray. Prayer is God the Father and us, His children, communicating. It is not about getting what we want, but about getting God.

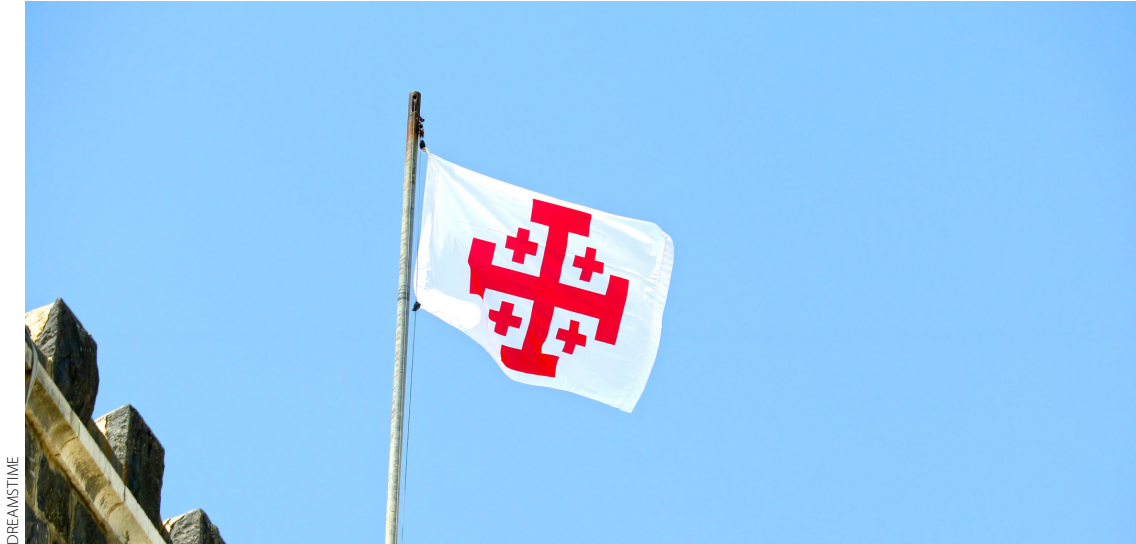
Did you know that there is only one attribute of God that is repeated three times in a row in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament?

May You, Jesus, Be Holy in Me!

Lord Jesus, hallowed (holy) be your name. In other words, may you be holy in both my personal and public life this day. I want to be more aware of what you say about me and think about me than what my friends think or say. May you be holy in me so that I am more concerned about my character than about my reputation. Amen.

Ron Thiessen is "married to my best friend Rita," and they are blessed with three adult kids: Kendra, Jayden, and Myron. He is the pastor of Community Bible Fellowship in Swan River, Man.





The Lord's Prayer 2019

Your Kingdom Come

By Flo Friesen

I can still see and smell the setting where I first said the Lord's Prayer. A two-room country school, oiled wooden floors, faded blackboards, and a high-mounted picture of King George VI keeping an eye on every student.

I don't remember memorizing the prayer; it simply got cemented into our brains by listening to the 30 droning voices of Grades 1-4 stu-

dents. An austere, yet sacred, daily routine! I'm thankful I was introduced to The Lord's Prayer in public school. And I'm thankful it means so much more to me today than it did to a mumbling First Grader!

"Your Kingdom Come." Did my childish mind wonder how this heavenly "Kingdom" was connected to the King in the photo? Who is the real King, and what is the Kingdom? And how does this phrase impact my life as an ardent follower of Jesus today?

What is the Kingdom?

Jesus focused much of his teaching on the coming of the Kingdom of God and of Heaven. Matthew alone records 50 of Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom.

An Oxford definition of *kingdom* is "a country, state, or territory ruled by a king or queen." By contrast, John Piper says the biblical definition of *kingdom* is, "God's kingly rule - his reign, his action, his lordship, his sovereign governance" (*desiringGod.org* podcast, Sept. 8/17). In the first definition a kingdom is a territory or its people ruled by a monarch. In the spiritual kingdom it is the actual *rule* or *authority of God* in people's individual hearts.

The Good News that Jesus brought was that *He* is the King who would establish His spiritual presence in people's hearts, as opposed

"Your Kingdom Come." Did my childish mind wonder how this heavenly "Kingdom" was connected to the King in the photo?

to His physically reigning a particular territory. Through His death and resurrection, He defeated the opposing kingdom of Satan who was holding people captive to their sinful natures.

Through a new birth experience we are set free, and the heavenly kingdom is initiated into our hearts and we commit ourselves to the lordship of Christ. Jesus often said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” It was, and still is, starting to happen—God’s “indwelling” in people’s hearts. But the Kingdom of Heaven is also future. It will be fully completed at Jesus’ second coming when He will totally destroy the kingdom of Satan (Rev. 20:10). The war between the kingdoms will end and we will enjoy God’s rule and presence for all eternity. Kingdom, present and future.

The Kingdom is a Treasure

Jesus describes this Kingdom through parables (Matt. 13). In one, the kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field, or a pearl of immeasurable price. In both cases the person discovering the treasure sells everything to be the exclusive owner of this rare treasure. Its superlative value cannot be calculated! So, it is with the Kingdom of Heaven; its value is beyond articulation. An old hymn says,

Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the

skies of parchment made;

Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade,

To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry;

Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.

The Kingdom of Heaven ushers in a personal relationship with Jesus as my King, but also with Him as my BFF (Best Friend Forever). This thought gives me goose bumps and indescribable joy! Imagine! Jesus comes and sets up house in my life! He’s always available to listen, forgive, comfort, and teach me how to walk with Him. He is my King, but I am not afraid of His rule; I trust Him fully. He delights in me even more than I delight in Him (Zeph.3:17). What a treasure!

In both cases the person discovering the treasure sells everything to be the exclusive owner of this rare treasure.

The Kingdom Embraces Radical Principles

Besides being an indescribable treasure, God’s Kingdom is not “normal” as kingdoms go. It is characterized by extravagance (Matt. 13). A mustard seed, the tiniest of seedlings, grows into a huge tree, and a miniscule lump of yeast leavens an entire batch of freshly baked buns! So also, Jesus’ teachings were extravagant, often defying human reason.

They were heavenly principles, often opposites such as: to *save life* you must *lose it*; in order to *live* in His Kingdom you must *die* to yourself; and to *have treasures* in heaven you must *sell your earthly possessions*.

God’s kingdom is also characterized by radical forgiveness. Jesus explained that accounts in His Kingdom are not settled by “an-eye-for-an-eye” standard, but rather through a “70 times 7” forgiveness principle (Matt. 18). Kingdom members receive mercy, unmerited release from deserved punishment,



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and gracious favor lavished simply because we're His children. No wonder Jesus tells us to "Seek first the kingdom of God"; this is the pearl of greatest price! God's forgiveness is radical! Who doesn't need forgiveness? We long for our ugly sins to be drowned in the seas. We are fully pardoned in the Kingdom of Heaven!

The Kingdom Translates into Practical Reality

As a seminarian I loved grappling with deep issues. As a more seasoned follower of Jesus, I now want practical guidance on how to live the abundant life that Jesus promised. How does the Kingdom of Heaven inform and impact my daily life?

In Matthew 18, Jesus holds up a little child as a picture of someone who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Why? Childlike humility and innocent faith—that's what true greatness is! Jesus exemplified humility by His servant heart.

His gentle spirit draws me to want to be with Him and be like Him. Even in the one "kingly act" of riding into Jerusalem before His death, He rode a lowly donkey. A week later He took a servant's towel and washed his disciples' feet. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Servanthood and implicit faith are radical characteristics of Jesus' upside-down Kingdom!

Yet the Kingdom of Heaven is not weak. Paul says (1 Cor. 4:20) that the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power. Ephesians 1 and 2 remind us that with incomparably great power Jesus is seated with the Father in the heavenly realm with all kingdoms, including Satan's, under His feet.

Amazingly, we as citizens of the Kingdom are seated with Him in this heavenly position, with all authority of the Kingdom available to us *now*! Jesus promised us *all* power and authority to go and make disciples, assuring His presence to be with us always (Mt. 28:18-20). Today we walk in



Kingdom authority! Humility and authority are seeming opposites, but they co-exist in power for Kingdom citizens.

When I lived in Central Asia, my walks to the university became prayer walks. Looking up at the stark concrete apartments, I prayed, "Lord, *may your Kingdom come* to this country and people. Set them free from the bondage of Satan. May they hear your Good News and respond to your compelling love." When we realize the immeasurable treasure we possess, we long to share that treasure with ones we love and with ones He loves, even if we've never met them.

Possessing the Kingdom of Heaven inspires me to bring others into His Kingdom. So we pray, "May your Kingdom come!"

Yet the Kingdom of Heaven is not weak. Paul says that the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power.

Flo Friesen recently retired from full-time ministry. She has spent time in Ecuador, USA, Central Asia and Canada; in teaching, research, mobilization and leadership ministries with Reach Beyond and Frontiers; and finished the last decade in anti-human trafficking work in Central Asia. She is a member of Klee-feld EMC and fellowships at Anchor Point Church, Winnipeg.



Great Significance in Obedience: 'Your Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven'

By Dr. Harvey Plett

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Many of us memorized the Lord's Prayer in grade school. The Manitoba Education Department prescribed daily Bible readings and a daily reciting of the Lord's Prayer for the public schools. That has changed now, but many of us know the prayer from those days.

As we look at the Lord's Prayer it naturally divides into two parts. The first part is worship of God and recognizing who He is. He is our Father; His name is to be hallowed — honored; we pray for His Kingdom (rule) to come; and then we pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is followed by a number of requests for ourselves.

Reading and reciting the prayer is good, but not very meaningful unless we understand what the prayer is saying. When have you heard an explanation of the phrase, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? So, think with me on the profound truth being prayed.

Creation

The first question that we face when praying this is, "What is God's will?" One answer is, "It is what the Bible teaches." When we pray that God's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we quickly think of the purpose of creation. We are also aware that God's will shall not be fully done on earth until sin has been removed. God's full will on earth will be done when the new heaven and the new earth are here. But until that happens, we are still to pray that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In heaven there is no sin. Things work for a purpose. They were made and in all God is glorified.

When we think of creation, we are aware God created it and set it in motion according to the laws He ordained. One example would be the seasons. Yet sin has warped creation and so we pray when we face storms, etc., remembering that the storms come from the ways nature runs

its course and will continue until Christ returns and gives us a new heaven and a new earth. God's will is also that we humans are to rule and have dominion over what God has created (Gen. 1:26-29). That includes using it wisely.

Relationships

There is another important dimension of God's will and that is how humans live, relate, and behave. In the human relationships area humans are responsible to make them what God wants them to be. God has spoken to this area and also stands ready to help humans bring God's will to this area as it is in heaven, but humans have to respond or it won't happen.

God's will for human relationships is to live in loving caring relationships with one another. He says, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Harmonious relationships are brought about when we love. It is the will of God that we "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself" (Lk. 10:27-28, Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18). It is also the will of God for us here on earth to accept ourselves and use the abilities and gifts we have been given. So, as we pray for God's will on earth as in heaven it involves accepting self and relating to others with love, respect, and care.

As we pray this and become available to God we must accept we are made in the image of God. This means I have value, but it also tells

God's will in human relationships
is done on earth as humans live as
outlined in the Scripture.

us how to relate to others as fellow image bearers. We bring in God's will as we are good image bearers and treat others as fellow image bearers. Then we love ourselves appropriately and also our neighbour.

This also means that I accept the gender I am born with, male or female, and treat others according to their gender. Genesis 1:26-28 puts it this way. "And then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . .'. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion . . . over every living thing that moves upon the earth." By His grace God's will is brought to earth when we obey Him. Thus, our prayer is asking for a process that will be completed when Christ returns.

Obedience

It is also important to note that as we pray for God's will to come to earth as it is in heaven, we are aware that God expects humans to

respond rather than that He does it arbitrarily Himself. God's will in human relationships is done on earth as humans live as outlined in the Scripture. God does not force them on us. We as followers of Jesus, when we pray this, are asking God to help us live in harmony with the way He has created humans with the responsibility to live in good relationships, and so our prayer for God's will in human relationships requires human response





and obedience. As we obey God, His will is brought to earth in this area.

God's will on earth is done when we love our neighbour as our self. How do we do this? We must first of all have accepted Jesus into our lives as Saviour and Lord. To love my fellow humans includes returning good for evil, seeking the welfare of the other regardless of cost, forgive when wronged and forgo vengeance.

Romans 12:14-21 gives us the will of God here on earth for human relations, and when we do that we are bringing God's will to earth as it is in heaven and this prayer is being answered. As you read these verses, do you feel like throwing up your hands and saying how is that possible? It is possible for you and me to do this by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and our decision to follow Him.

Following are a few truths from that passage. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, bless those who persecute you and do not curse them, repay no evil for evil but take thought of what is noble in the sight of all, leave vengeance to the wrath of God, do not be overcome with evil but overcome evil with good.

It is the will of God that we feed the hungry, care for the sick and nurture the faith through Bible study, prayer, meeting with fellow believers. We are to bring the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him.

The created world is groaning for redemption which will come when Jesus returns. Humans groan as they live for God waiting for the redemption of their bodies (Rom 8:22-23). Meanwhile we bring God's will into our relationships by loving, caring for others, preaching the Gospel and growing.

So, I suggest to pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" includes great significance in terms of our obedience to our Lord.

Dr. Harvey Plett has long served the EMC and the wider Church in various capacities—as a minister, SBC professor and president, Board of Missions chair, a counsellor, and as EMC moderator. He and his wife Pearl are part of Prairie Rose EMC and live in Mitchell, Man.



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Our Daily Bread—And What About the Future?

By Pastor Kevin Wiebe



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Our culture is one that is full of differing diets: gluten-free, paleo, ketogenic—and that is just the beginning. Many of these diets cut out or reduce carbs. So, when Jesus teaches us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” many readers may not be so appreciative of bread.

Or perhaps you are appreciative of it, and are mildly irritated because it brings to mind a food you are craving that your diet prohibits you from having. Please do not let this be a stumbling block to your dieting efforts, but graciously journey with me through this section of the Lord’s Prayer—even if you don’t join me when I go to the bakery later.

This section of the Lord’s Prayer is the first petition in the prayer that we pray for ourselves. There are subtle differences between the passage in Matthew and the passage in Luke, differences which, in fact, bring further clarity to both versions. This simple request has much to teach us about humility, contentment, trust and hope.

Comparing Matthew and Luke

In Matthew, the text in KJV says, “Give us this day our daily bread,” while the Luke version says, “Give us day by day our daily bread.” The difference is subtle. One is asking for simply today’s bread and the other asking for bread day by day. Neither version is asking for stockpiles; neither is asking for great riches. One asks for simply today’s need, which could be understood as a one-time request, but the other version helps clarify.

The Luke passage asks for bread day by day. It asks the Lord to continually provide. In light of this, when we re-read the Matthew passage, it is more than a simply one-time request, but

We come to God with our petitions not with a disposition of being boastful or entitled, but as humble beggars in need of God’s provision in our lives.



rather a greater principle about relying on God each day to provide for that day’s need.

God’s Beggars

Saint Augustine wrote about this passage, observing that in praying this prayer it turns us all into beggars. He writes, “When thou sayest, ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ thou dost profess thyself to be God’s beggar. But be not ashamed at this; how rich soever any man be on earth, he is still God’s beggar.”

This reminds us of our humble place before God. Augustine continues on this line of thinking to remind us that no matter how rich a person might be, they are still beggars in God’s sight. Think of the story of Job, where one of the richest men of the time was brought to ruin simply because God removed His hand of protection. Furthermore, whatever wealth someone might create through their work, it was God who gave them the ability to work, an ability which can also be taken away.

We come to God with our petitions not with a disposition of being boastful or entitled, but as humble beggars in need of God’s provision in our lives.

What is Bread?

Defining what was meant by the word bread has been the source of much discussion by scholars. Early church fathers often talked about this figuratively, Saint Augustine concluding that, “Our daily food then in this earth is the word of God.” Others read it as simply being our literal food for today.

Like many passages in Scripture, this has layers of meaning, which are not contradicting each other, but help bring about richer understanding and application of this passage. Bread can simply mean literal, home-baked, soft and warm; it reminds you of your mama's kind of bread, which was a staple food in the days of Jesus.

Therefore, asking for "daily bread" is asking for God to provide for physical nourishment each day. This brings to mind the Exodus story and how God provided manna in the wilderness for the people every day.

Diving a bit deeper, the request for bread could mean a request for all their physical needs for the day, and going deeper still it can be representative of the holistic provisions needed for someone to do the will of God for that day. Michael J. Wilkins writes, "In the same way that manna was only given one day at a time, disciples are to rely on daily provision for life from God, helping them to develop a continuing, conscious dependence on him."

This Day

As Jesus teaches us to pray, we are taught to ask for daily bread. This is very consistent with what Jesus teaches in Matthew 6:34: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

We are not to become obsessed with all of tomorrow's needs, but to live our lives being present in the moment, while being wholly dependent on the Lord.

As we pray we are, therefore, taught to not get overwhelmed with all the worries of tomorrow. We are not to become obsessed with all of tomorrow's needs, but to live our lives being present in the moment, while being wholly dependent on the Lord.

This does not mean that we are to be irresponsible and squander the resources we have been given to steward. After all, Jesus teaches elsewhere about stewardship and the importance of it in Matthew 25:14-30. What this does mean is that we are not to fill today with tomorrow's troubles. If we were on a journey of 1,000 miles, it would mean not focusing on the daunting task of travelling 1,000 miles, but rather on the steps that we have to take today.





Comfort

One way people get through seasons of difficulty is simply by taking it one day at a time, one hour at a time, or even one minute at a time. This is a basic strategy in addictions recovery and a basic principle for dealing with grief.

In these seasons of difficulty, when people look at the valley ahead of them that they have to walk through it can seem overwhelming. It can even be hard to see where it will end. When focusing on such a huge journey, many get overwhelmed at the daunting reality of what they must go through. Yet when the direction is set and a commitment to moving forward is there, one step leads to another and progress eventually happens.

As a pastor, I have often met with people facing various life challenges. I don't know if I can count how many times I have heard the phrase, "I just can't do it anymore." This portion of the Lord's Prayer speaks exactly to that. Of course, they "can't do it anymore."

This comment is so often spoken with exhaustion because of how much they have had to deal with over such a long time; it is often spoken with tones of hopelessness because there is no end in sight. And, of course, they feel this way!

When we think about the gravity of those journeys, it is paralyzing. We can no more handle those big problems in a single day than we can stockpile a lifetime's worth of food in our kitchen pantry. It is a big-picture view of the struggle. Sometime we need to think smaller.

If you are in the middle of a struggle, you are not being asked to keep doing this forever. You are asked to be faithful for today. You are taught to pray that God will give you what you need for today—and I absolutely believe that God's provision will be enough for you to be faithful to Him for today.

So, what about tomorrow? Well, let me put it this way: when bread is stored too long it gets stale, so we can be thankful that God is up long before us every day to make us something fresh.

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My Forgiveness Journey

By Pastor Gavin Michaels

Before “*Once upon a time*” and “*Happily ever after*,” there was a plan. The Creator himself, the originator of the “beginning and end,” put in place a forgiveness plan. He ordained each moment of each life. “All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Psalm 139:16). Though God chooses all to be His children, God foreknew that not all people would accept His forgiveness plan.

Forgiveness is a journey that is a matter of choice. My responsibility as a believer is to extend forgiveness as Jesus did. His servant-heart led Him to humble Himself and wash the feet of his followers. Never did he hesitate, even when it came to washing the feet of His betrayer.

The Message of the Cross

The forgiveness journey is completed in my ability to forgive others. Scripture tells us, “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your

sins” (Matthew 6:14-15). It is my responsibility to embrace and live out the message of the cross. It might look something like this ...

It was a hushed courtroom as the victims came forward to share their stories. They were stories of what had happened so long ago, but were recalled as if they had just happened. The memories and feelings were seared into the depths of their souls. *Sexual abuse*, it has been

said, *violates the sanctity of the inner soul.*

I remember being called to the stand. It was the first time I recalled having a voice.

As a victim, I got to tell our story. It was somewhat tainted by the defence lawyer trying to twist an already twisted story of horrific abuse.

It was almost as if I was not there, but I was. I remember focusing on the prosecutor. I vaguely remember seeing the perpetrator, my stepfather. I was to tell them my story, yet how do you face one who has wounded you so deeply?

A few short months later the sentence was handed down. “The facts involving this man are about as ugly as the court has ever seen,” Judge Peter Doherty told a hushed courtroom.

“It’s hard to imagine a greater abuse of parental power.” I still recall reading the news story and thinking *that hard to imagine moment was my reality*. The judge continued, “He has destroyed their lives.”

Jesus Shares These Words

Apart from divine intervention, that would be true. However, I believe in and embrace the journey of forgiveness. Without forgiveness, I could not and would not heal. In the model prayer given by the Lord himself, Jesus shares these words: **“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”**

I have come to a place where I believe that forgiveness is an immediate moment by moment choice as well as a process. I have asked the Lord many times for the ability to forgive as He does.

I need to be able to recognize my need for forgiveness in my personal journey before I can extend it to others. I can be forgiven only to the extent that I have received, embraced, and extended that forgiveness to others.

Defining Forgiveness

It is not within me to forgive in human terms. Forgiveness starts with me recognizing that

I must relinquish my right to be compensated and I must give over my journey to God’s plan.

my feelings about someone else’s maltreatment is a separate and distinct issue that needs to be addressed.

To define *forgiveness* requires me to recognize that embracing unforgiveness is actually self-harming. The two definitions of forgiveness I believe in are:

The willingness to let go of self-harming or ineffective forms of anger, choosing instead to turn over ultimate resolution of the wrong doing to God.— Choosing to Forgive Workbook

To cease to feel resentment against an offender; to give up claim to requital from an offender; to grant relief from payment—The

Courage to Heal

To begin the journey of forgiveness requires me to step out of my comfort zone and to step into God’s comfort zone. I must relinquish my right to be compensated and I must give over my journey to God’s plan.

Processing Abuse

So many people spend so much time embracing the pain and hurt of what they have gone through. I, too, have moments where I struggle with the pain and hurt caused by the wounds that have impacted my soul. The pain is caused

because we had hoped for a safe, caring, emotionally intimate relationship. When that is betrayed, we feel violated. We then begin the journey of bereavement as we try to recoup our lost dignity. As a therapist, I teach people how to process the memories and feelings associated with abuse: **Identify, acknowledge, embrace, validate, own, explore, put down, and let go.**





The Choosing to Forgive Workbook is one of my favourite books. It has had a profound impact on my ability to embrace and extend forgiveness. Through it, I have gained some insight into understanding forgiveness.

I must first recognize what forgiveness *is* and *is not*. Forgiveness recognizes that there are healthy forms of anger. It is when I embrace bitterness and resentment that I let unforgiveness own my soul. Forgiveness is not...

Allowing others to disrespect your needs and boundaries

Telling the wrongdoer that the past is no longer significant and everything's fine now

Pretending to go back to normal relations as if nothing happened

Denying that you may still have to live with the pain caused by the wrongful deed

To live with the pain caused from the wrongful deed is to live a forgiveness journey moment by moment. So, what does forgiveness look like?

You will let go of the demand for repayment, particularly as you have exhausted all reasonable attempts at restitution or restoration.

You will choose to give up any obsessions regarding the wrongdoer, recognizing, instead, that you have better things to give your attention to

You will be willing to refrain from the ongoing temptation to insult the wrongdoer

You will give yourself permission to make life choices that will lead to contentment and peace

How Would I Know?

Contentment and peace can only be experienced as I embrace receiving the Lord's forgiveness. His compassion and grace in my life allow me to share that with others. I was once asked how I know I had forgiven my perpetrator. My response was, "I guess I'd know if he were to walk through the door."

Maybe we should reflect on author Sean Sellers' words penned from his jail cell after his conversion:

Hatred and vengeance is like a hot coal. When we grab a hold of it, it burns us. The longer we keep a hold of it, the more we are scarred. The only way to let go is to release it. The only way is to forgive! And forgiveness is NOT an emotion... Forgiveness is a DECISION. It is a conscious act of your will.

Actually, I know that I have forgiven my perpetrator because I want to, and choose to, so I can move forward in my forgiveness journey. I have only two options: to be bitter or to be better. I can only live in kindness, caring, sharing, and compassion to the extent I have received it through my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Gavin Michaels, BA, MA (Biblical Counseling), is the pastor of the Church of Living Waters in Tillsonburg, Ont., "an amazing group of people." He has also been a family and trauma therapist for the past 23 years. He and his wife Jude "are blessed to be ministering to the people of Tillsonburg."



Strength and Victory: 'Lead Us Not into Temptation but Deliver Us from Evil'

By Michael Vanderzwaag

We have all dealt with temptation. We can eat a great meal and afterwards we can be offered a splendid dessert and we mutter, "That looks tempting." Maybe we are seeing something that we want and know we cannot have and we are tempted to take it anyways. We think, "That is tempting."

Is temptation wrong? No, it is not. In these two situations, would it be wrong to have dessert? No. Would it be wrong to take something that does not belong to you and you know you are not allowed to have? Yes, that would be stealing, which we know from scripture is wrong.

Why Pray Against Temptation?

So, if temptation is not wrong in and of itself, why when the disciples ask how to pray, does Jesus in Luke 11:1 include this phrase, "Lead us not into temptation"? God is omniscient (all-knowing). God is outside of time. He can see our lives completely at once.

Therefore, He can see our failures and triumphs completely and simultaneously. Jesus knows our temptations can lead us to sin as we can see many times over in scripture. That is

why, when He is teaching us to pray, He includes this line, "And lead us not into temptation" (Matt. 6:13).

Temptation Is Not Something New

Many people point to Jesus being tempted when we talk about our being tempted today. We read of Jesus being tempted by Satan for 40 days while in the wilderness (Matt. 4, Mark 1, Luke 4). The writer to the Hebrews talks about Jesus being our Great High Priest and says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin" (see Heb. 4:14-16).

Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are. When I read that, I am filled with peace and joy. It means Jesus knows me so well, He knows what I am struggling with when I am facing temptation because He was tempted as I am daily. He knows firsthand what it is like to face temptation!

Desiring Strength

If I conducted a survey and asked how many of us pray for strength each day, it would be safe to assume that most of us would admit to doing so. When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," that is exactly what we are doing: asking God for strength to face the temptations that come our way. Temptations come our way daily. Therefore, we need strength daily to fight against them so that we may not fall into sin.

At Gethsemane, Jesus returns from praying before



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His betrayal to find His disciples sleeping, and says, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). Our flesh is weak.

If our flesh is weak, then we need a source of strength to fight against the temptations that so easily try to lead us astray and sin. That source is Jesus Christ who was crucified and then raised to life so that through Him we might have life should we choose to believe in Him. He will strengthen us. When temptation comes, may we go to Him and ask Him for help and strength by saying these words, “Lead us not into temptation.” God will give us the strength that we need and desire.

Regardless of translation,
we can come to one certain
conclusion: The presence of
evil in the world today is real.

The Apostle Paul said, “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. 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 endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13). God provides the strength the way through temptations. May we seek Him as we pray, “And lead us not into temptation” (Matt. 6:13).

Deliverance from the Evil (One)

Depending what translation you read, the next phrase of the Lord’s Prayer has various interpretations. The NIV omits this line in Luke 11. Matthew 6 phrases it as “but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13). The KJV phrases it as “but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13, Luke. 11:4).

Regardless of translation, we can come to one certain conclusion: The presence of evil in the world today is real. We turn on the television and see the presence of evil on the news. Whether it is in the form of war, terrorism, racism, or something else entirely, we see the presence of evil around us. That should come as no surprise at all.

We cannot escape the evil that exists, but we can rejoice in the fact that it has been defeated by the finishing work of Jesus Christ on the cross. To put it differently, evil exists, yet holds



no power over me because the One in whom I am found has defeated it. The grave and death have been conquered.

Victory is in the Cross

If there is already victory over this evil that resides in this world, then why pray, asking God to deliver us from it? N.T. Wright says, “To pray ‘deliver us from evil,’ or ‘from the evil one,’ is to inhale the victory of the cross, and thereby to hold the line for another moment, another hour, another day, against the forces of destruction within ourselves and the world” (*The Lord and His Prayer*). Inhale the victory of the cross and dwell on what Jesus accomplished on that cross.

The dichotomy between good and evil is evident. Both are evident in our world as we take off the blinders and look at our society. We can see both good and bad influences around us. There is so much noise in the world today. We hear of people being intolerant of someone’s beliefs; we hear of people being belittled because they are not “good enough.” We can even see people finding dirt on one another for selfish gain. The world is a “me-first” world. We are to look out for number one.

Look to Jesus

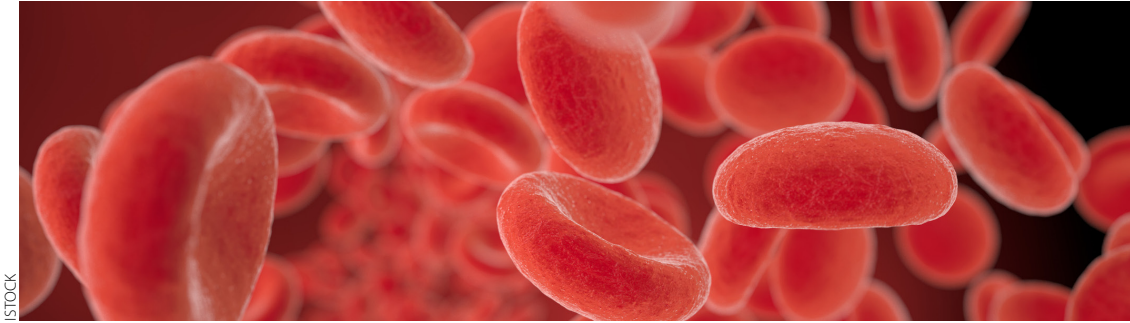
I hope we do look out for number one: Jesus Christ. He came, He died, He rose again. As

followers of Jesus, we are found in Christ; and because we are found in Him, and because He has obtained the victory by the way of the cross, we then have victory as well in Him.

When we come to this portion of the Lord’s Prayer, may we not pray it as a preventative prayer, asking God to guard and shield us from outward events and obstacles we encounter. Instead, may we pray this prayer with joy while dwelling on the victory of the cross (inhaling the victory of the cross as N.T. Wright suggests) and seeking the strength that comes from God (because of what has been accomplished) to face each day as we joyfully continue on this journey of following Him, seeking to bring glory and honour to His name daily!

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The Lord's Prayer

Bloodstream Truth: The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory

by Pastor Randy Fehr

This prayer was what Jesus gave his disciples when they asked Him to teach them to pray.

It has to be special; it was from Jesus, of course! It was something that was meant to bring about change in those who made it part of their daily lives. This last section is no exception.

"Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory," a sort of benediction, was not included in the earliest manuscripts. The theological truth and the practical impact of this ending are such that it should change us as we incorporate it into our bloodstreams. I am quite certain that the Holy Spirit authored its truth.

Moses never prayed this prayer, but his story is a great example of how these truths take shape.

Thine is the Kingdom

What is a kingdom? A kingdom is the place where the will and way of one king holds sway.

The first part of this triad should jolt us out of our self-built kingdom thinking and set our kingdom compass to Jesus and help us begin the transition of kingship from us to Him.

We have already told God in this prayer that we would like His kingdom to come both into

our personal lives and into the world around us.

We have been okay to relegate God's rule to the surrounding world and to the coming kingdom rule and reign of Jesus, but God had in mind our internal spiritual life and our physical kingdoms as well. He is the rightful King of all.

As a young man Moses thought he was building God's kingdom in God's way. Moses could see Egypt and being Pharaoh as attainable goals. Surely even God had his hand in this.

When Moses killed the Egyptian he hadn't only made a judgment error; he revealed he was building his kingdom his way. Too often we are preoccupied with building our own kingdoms.

He was allowed to live when all Hebrew boys were being killed. He was rescued from the Nile by Pharaoh's own daughter; he was moved into Pharaoh's household as one of the family who was taught and trained in Egyptian leadership.

When Moses killed the Egyptian he hadn't only made a judgment error; he revealed he was building his kingdom his way. Too often we are preoccupied with building our own kingdoms. We plan and organize our lives so that we can get a certain education, get a certain job, buy a certain vehicle, a house, take a certain vacation.

Yet there is a voice from the Lord's Prayer telling us that this place where we have set ourselves up as king is something or somewhere

that isn't really ours. Even our physical aspirations are God's kingdom. James says, "Now listen you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:13-14). The Apostle Paul says, "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

We need to be reminded again and again that Jesus really is king. He has our best interests at heart. He can do a better job of ruling than we can. Our physical lives should be submitted to His kingship as well. They are part of His Kingdom.

Thine is the Power

The reminder that teaches us how God's kingdom work is accomplished comes from these



words. It was Moses' kingdom and Moses' power that justified killing an Egyptian. It is a very disheartened Moses who sinks to the ground in Midian. He had lost his passion and purpose. God continued the process of training for the ensuing 40 years.

It was only then that God brought him to the burning bush at Mount Horeb. Of all the theological imagery that God could have used to speak to Moses through, He chose a burning bush that did not burn up. God was clearly teaching Moses again and the symbolism was absolutely intentional. We had better not miss the message.

God had seen His people suffering and heard their cries for help. He would act. Sometimes we act independently using our strength to accomplish our will as Moses did. We often independently interpret circumstances of our lives and place ourselves in the King's position.

We act and then are surprised when things don't turn out the way we think they should.

Still, the burning bush? It is the fuel for the fire that is not consumed. God is telling Moses that by obeying this call you will be fuel, but at the same time you will never be all used up. That is quite different from Moses' perception that he had 40 years earlier. It is God's power that accomplishes His work! The apostle Paul says, "Likewise we are weak in Him, yet by God's power we will live with Him to serve you" (2 Cor. 13:4).

We are like Moses. We believe that it is our power to accomplish our perception of God's will and we soon become used up. We try too hard. We have our own agendas. We are too strong. It takes a long time to recognize that it's His kingdom and it's His power that will accomplish His tasks, and we



are called to live life with God. We might be surprised to find that it's by God's power that we live with Him and serve others.

Thine is the Glory

We have had our eyes opened to the fact that it's His power at work in us that accomplishes what really needs to get done. It is natural and important that we would give that recognition and praise to Him. "I am the Lord; that is My name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols" (Isaiah 42:8).

There is more. When Moses developed and used his abilities and talents and followed through on God's call, it became a beautiful yet messy affair. God loves when people develop and use the gifts they have been given in God-directed ways. God is glorified. He shines with glory and becomes attractive when we align our lives with His life. Still we need to see His glory.

Moses has learned that he could not lead the people on his own. In Exodus 33 He explained that he didn't know who would go with him and he wouldn't budge without "God's Presence." When God reveals that He is with Moses on this

journey, Moses boldly asks God to show him His glory! What is Moses asking for and what does he want to see?

Hebrews 1:3 tells us, "The son is the radiance of God's glory." Jesus is the shininess of God, and Moses knew he wanted Jesus to go with him and he needed to see Him. We often relegate seeing God's glory to seeing His handy work in nature. We desperately need to meet with Jesus!

Moses shone because of his interaction with the beauty of Jesus. He was transformed every time. Paul believes that our relationship with the Holy Spirit in this new covenant should produce more glory than even Moses experienced. (2 Cor. 3:7-17). This should be happening in us because we are brave enough to engage these words, "Thine is the glory"!

The triad reminds us that we need to recognize where God has been involved. He has given us the gifting and ability from the start, yet we need to be faithful in growing our abilities and using them. Yes, we need to see God's beauty in creation, yet more important is the need to be changed continuously by the beauty of Jesus.

Praying this benediction should not only remind us that it's really His kingdom, His power and His glory; it should help us submit to its truth and transition into making it life-changing.

Submitting daily to His kingship is a better way to live. It doesn't simply recognize His power as the power to accomplish, but it transforms us. What a wonderful ending to this prayer. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for your work of getting this to us!

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