

## Sermon 28 July 2019

### Colossian 2:6-15 and Luke 11:1-13

The Lord's Prayer.

Jesus gave it to his disciples when they asked him to teach them to pray.

I've been looking at it a lot this week. And I've been intrigued by the shape of it. If I were to describe what it looks like, then I might say something like this:

It's short.

It uses simple, straightforward language. It isn't flowery. It doesn't repeat itself.

The first three sections focus on God.

The second three sections focus on our world and us.

I've been intrigued too with why it has endured. Of all the prayers in the Bible, and those written throughout the last two millenia, it is the prayer that unites all Christians.

The reason for that might be that it is short, uses simple, straightforward language and so on!

But I wonder if it is because the initial focus is on God. That this prayer is about the 'who' we pray to, rather than the how, where and when we pray?

That rather than telling his disciples 'how' to pray, Jesus was inviting the disciples, and invites us, into a relationship with God through prayer. He invites us to approach the God whose name is too holy to be spoken and enables us to be familiar, bold and trusting with him. 'Abba/Father' are not words associated with the Old Testament God Yahweh.

I was listening to Beyond Belief this week and a former prisoner, now ordained, described the way of faith as needing to say 'yes' to God each morning. I've also read that continuing as a Christian is a bit like riding a bicycle, you need to keep peddling in order not to fall off. This prayer, grounded in God and then looking out to the needs of the world, is a way of saying 'yes'. It also has pedals and wheels.

It has a rhythm and pattern that we have absorbed.

And that rhythm and pattern can be expanded to include our response, like this:

God makes his own name holy;

And I want to live a holy life.

God brings in the kingdom;

And I want to play a part in that.

God fulfills his will;

And I want to obey his will in my daily life.

God gives the gift of daily bread;

And I want to want no more than I need.

God forgives;

And I long to forgive.

God guides me away from evil, from the time of trial;

And I want to live a life that resists evil.

I want to say 'yes' to God each morning and throughout the day. I want to stay riding that bicycle.

This prayer gives us all we need to build our prayers on. We can pray it as it is, or we can use it as a framework for further praise, intercession and confession.

Though we needn't lose sight of the fact that if prayer is a conversation with God, it can be silent, it need not strive or agonise, it can simply rest. It can be a chat. It can be a rant, a cry, a scream. It can laugh, smile and rejoice.

And it can grow beyond being an activity, to become a way of being, almost perhaps a way of breathing.

Malcolm Guite has written a group of sonnets on the Lord's Prayer, published in his book *Parable and Paradox* and I want to read the one on Daily Bread. It shows how those of us who are more prosaic can use the Lord's Prayer to weave our own prayers based on the structure Jesus gave us.

### **Daily Bread**

Give us this day our daily bread, we pray,  
As though it came straight from the hand of God,  
As though we held an empty plate each day,  
And found it filled, by miracle, with food,  
Although we know the ones who plough and sow,  
Who pick and plant and package, whilst we sleep  
With slow, back breaking labour, row by row,  
And send away to others all they reap.

We know that these unseen who meet our needs  
Are all themselves the fingers of your hands,  
As are the grain, the rain, the air, the land,  
And, slighting these, we slight the hand that feeds.  
What if we glimpsed you daily in our toil  
And found and thanked and served you through them all?

Amen

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