

Week 3 The Prayer of Prayers

This is our third week now on our sermon series on prayer – the first week we looked at our desire for prayer and a desire to be with God in prayer, week 2 was prayer as a conversation with God, and today we are looking at the prayer Jesus taught us, which could be an entire sermon series. To unpack it in 10 minutes really doesn't do it justice, but here we go!

This prayer taught to us by Jesus may be the single set of words spoken more often than any other in the history of the world. 'Master teach us how to pray,' the disciples ask. It is a prayer that is the key to unlocking all the riches of prayer and yet we so rarely pray it. We say it frequently enough, but because it is so familiar we rattle it off without giving a thought to what we are actually saying.

It's like those catch phrases we respond too without thinking about;

Nice to see you – to see you nice!

Hi di Hi – ho de ho

Oggie oggie ogggie – oi oi oi

The Lord be with you – and also with you

'Imagine you visit a friend in their new home for the first time and its right by the high speed rail link from Ebbsfleet. You're sitting their having a cup of tea and a nice chat, when suddenly a train comes roaring by, just a few feet from where you are sitting. You jump out of your skin and cry out 'what on earth was that?' Your friend who lives there responds, 'what was what?' 'that sound I thought someone was coming through the wall!' 'Oh that' she says. 'that's just the train. You know, I've got so used to it, I don't notice it anymore.' With wide eyes you say, 'How is that even possible?' But it is.

We say the prayer so often that we don't notice it anymore.

So today we are going to look at it a bit at a time.

OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN

By praying this – calling God Father we are praying in the name of Christ – we are reminded that through grace we are adopted children, heirs to heaven, Sons and daughters of the king of kings. By the sweetness of his name, Father, we are opening our hearts and trusting in the Fatherly love.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Hallowed basically means holy, so what do we mean when we pray 'holy is your name'? Isn't God's name holy already?

Well of course it is, what we need to remember at this point is that all baptized Christians have God's name upon them. As name bearers we represent a good and holy God, and so when we pray hallowed be your name, we are praying that God would keep us from dishonouring the name by which we are called. We are praying that God would empower us to become ourselves good and holy.

That's pretty scary stuff!

However, there is more!

To hallow God's name isn't just to live a righteous life that honours him. It is also a prayer that glorifies God's name among all the nations, throughout the world. It is a prayer that Christian's worldwide would honour God with Christ likeness and holiness in our lives so that more and more people would honour God and call on his holy name.

Are you beginning to see this isn't just a prayer to be said, but to actually pray?

YOUR KINGDOM COME

For me this part is a really big deal, I pray this so often 'God would your kingdom come here in this place, would we see your sovereign rule and reign over our lives and at work here in this benefice.' I've been on my knees praying this.

God is reigning now, but just as a light is absent to those who refuse to open their eyes, so it is possible to refuse God's reign.

There are two ways that God's kingdom comes (possibly more, but today I'm talking about 2!) It comes through his Holy Spirit, who corrects our desires and help us to worship only God and put him first for if we worship other things, others spiritualities, stuff etc, then we are blocking the kingdom.

The second way is through his word, the word of God which shapes our thoughts.

When we pray your kingdom come, we ask God to extend his royal power over every aspect of our lives. Our emotions, desires, thoughts, and commitments. That's a powerful thing to pray.

The reign of God on earth is only partial now, but in the fullness of time his kingdom will be unimaginable. All suffering, injustice, poverty, and death will be ended. To pray your kingdom come is to yearn for that future life of justice and peace, it's to ask our God and king that the kingdom work he has begun in each of us will be fulfilled.

YOUR WILL BE DONE

This is where knowing and trusting God as Father is vital. This is why we start with Our Father. Only when we trust God as Father can ask for grace to bear our troubles.

This is the prayer Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsamene . We won't ever have to face what Jesus went through, but we do need to ask ourselves, do we submit to Gods will for our lives as Jesus did, rather than our own desires?

That is why we can trust in Jesus, his submission to God's will save us all. He isn't asking us to do anything for him that he hasn't already done for us. If we can't say Your will be done from the bottom of our hearts we will never fully know peace.

When I went forward for selection for ordination training the hardest thing ever was to pray your will be done. I have never felt so out of control of my destiny in my life. A group of people, many who were strangers, had total control over the future of my family and it was terrifying. I had no choice but to trust and accept God's will in the decision those people came too.

GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD

This is about necessities not luxuries! We come with expectant hearts, but also trusting that God knows what is best for us and that his will be done. But there is also a social dimension

to this prayer. For all to have their daily bread there must be a just society.

Now we could be praying daily bread as a spiritual need and hunger, Jesus tells us he is the bread of life, but he also says that he lives in us and whoever believes in him will not go hungry. So, I think it's actual food and justice. We already have the bread of life living in us, why ask for him again?

When we pray 'give us' we are praying for all people everywhere. We are praying against injustice and poverty, against those who exploit others and denies them their daily bread. This is a powerful prayer against the darkness that holds people slaves, it is a prayer that brings about social justice.

FORIVE US OUR SINS AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US

This fifth petition is about our relationship with God and each other. It's probably the part I find the hardest for I pray that God will forgive me in the same way that I forgive other people, when really I want God to forgive me much better than I manage!

When I first arrived in the Diocese the then Bishop of Tonbridge, Bishop Brian really helped me in this at the Diocesan Conference. He said forgiveness is a process,

nobody has the right to say to another person you must forgive. Forgiveness is an aspiration rather than something we must do. It's something we would hope to do at some point because it may bring healing, but sometimes, forgiveness on our part never happens. But it does always happen on God's part. Everyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Saviour is forgiven, and that means we have to accept that there are those who in our worldly view we could never forgive, but are forgiven by God.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPATION

To enter into temptation is to entertain and consider the prospect of giving into sin. Sin is simply being selfish, it's going your own way, doing your thing and completely ignoring God's will for your life. It's not putting God first, not putting Jesus at the centre of our lives. We all know areas in our lives where we struggle with temptation, so when we pray this, ask Jesus to be Lord in those areas, because if you are struggling, chances are you haven't given over that area of our life to him.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL

This petition is for protection from the evil around us. It can also be translated as 'deliver us from the evil one.' We pray for protection from the principalities and powers of this world

that wish to do us harm, and within this prayer we pray for all our brothers and sisters in Christ who face the most terrible persecution for the sake of the gospel.

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM THE POWER AND THE GLORY

We started with God, we came to God with our needs our troubles and limitations, and now we finish with God. Here we end our prayer, knowing in our hearts that nothing can snatch away the kingdom, the power and the glory from our heavenly, loving Father. Amen