

The Lord's Prayer: Pray Then Like This...
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First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha
June 2, 2013

Psalm 25

- ¹ To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
² O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
³ Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
⁴ Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.
⁵ Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!
⁸ Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
⁹ He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.
¹⁰ All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.
¹¹ For your name's sake, O LORD,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.
¹² Who are they that fear the LORD?
He will teach them the way that they should choose.
¹³ They will abide in prosperity,
and their children shall possess the land.
¹⁴ The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him,
and he makes his covenant known to them.
¹⁵ My eyes are ever toward the LORD,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.
¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
¹⁷ Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me out of my distress.
¹⁸ Consider my affliction and my trouble,
and forgive all my sins.
¹⁹ Consider how many are my foes,
and with what violent hatred they hate me.
²⁰ O guard my life, and deliver me;
do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

²¹ May integrity and uprightness preserve me,
for I wait for you.

²² Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all its troubles.

Matthew 6:9-13 King James Version

⁹ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

You may have read the June newsletter already. If so, you know that our summer sermon series, which begins today, is centered around the Lord's Prayer. You may wonder what there is to talk about regarding a prayer that we know by heart, many of us having learned it at a very young age. In fact the Lord's Prayer is often so ingrained in us that, even for folks who have significant memory loss or communication troubles, if the Lord's Prayer is begun, we can still recite it; almost as if we can do it without thinking. That kind of familiarity can be both a blessing and a curse. For a while in the Wednesday Bible study group, we've been using books from a series called the *For Today* series, such as *The Parables for Today* and *The Beatitudes for Today*. These summer sermons will be informed somewhat by *The Lord's Prayer for Today* from the series, written by William J. Carl, III. Writing on the blessing of such familiarity with the Lord's Prayer, he says, "the Lord's Prayer carries believers...into a transcendent place through a liturgical, hymnic quality that enhances the theological content even before we understand it all."¹ You may know this lulling characteristic, particularly if you've even been shaken from your reverie and then completely lost your place! Don't think I'm not familiar with this, too.

Which leads us toward that curse aspect. When we know something so familiarly, when we can, almost literally, say it in our sleep, we can go for weeks, months, even years, without really thinking about what we are saying. We don't often **think** about the Lord's Prayer, its meaning, its context, its significance. So that is where we begin today. Each week we'll read the Lord's Prayer, as spoken in the gospel of Matthew, from different translations from different Bible versions, along with another reading which informs the section about which we're studying that Sunday. Today, we begin at the beginning of Matthew 6:9-13. While we regularly use the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible for our readings, our reading this morning comes from the King James Version because that translation is what

¹¹ William J. Carl, III. *The Lord's Prayer for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press; 2006) p. 3.

we say each week. The King James Version begins: After this manner therefore pray ye. Other versions read: Pray then like this.

Did you know that *The Book of Order*, part of our Presbyterian constitution, has an entire chapter on our personal spiritual disciplines? In the section entitled “Prayer in Personal Worship” is a list of “Helps in Prayer.” The very first suggested help is this: “Scripture, especially the Lord’s Prayer and other prayers, the psalms and other biblical songs.”² Our reading from Psalm 25 is just one example of the very personal prayers which can be found in Scripture and which can serve as a model for our own prayers. “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul...Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me...Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.”

In this same spirit of seeking to learn God’s ways, the disciples asked to be taught. The Lukan account of the Lord’s Prayer includes this introduction: “He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’”³ William Carl writes, “instead of launching into a six-week Lenten seminar on ‘The Power of Prayer for Today’s Living,’ he simply said, ‘Pray then like this...,’ and off he went.”⁴ From *The Beatitudes for Today* we’ve just recently been reminded that Jesus has authority when he speaks of who is blessed not just because he is the Son of God but also because he lived all of the Beatitudes: blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and more. The same can be said for the Lord’s Prayer. When Jesus says “Pray then like this,” what he means is “live then like this.” Theologian and author Daniel Migliore writes of the Lord’s Prayer, “Called to prayer, we are summoned not to passivity but to activity...not to indifference about evil in and around us but to passion for justice, freedom and peace in the whole creation.”⁵

I can’t say that I’ve felt that way after repeating the Lord’s Prayer; how might it be after **praying** the Lord’s Prayer? William Carl suggests, “You cannot understand this prayer’s deeper meaning without being changed...change from top to bottom is what Jesus is after with this little prayer...In the twenty-first century the Lord’s Prayer, especially its second set of petitions, reminds us in a truly incarnational way of our responsibility for the world, the environment, and those who are helpless.”⁶ All this comes from the simple request “teach us to pray.” And so, like the disciples and with the psalmist, we begin by saying, “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.” Teach us

² *The Book of Order*, W-5.4003a.

³ Luke 11:1.

⁴ William J. Carl, III. *The Lord’s Prayer for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press; 2006) p. 5.

⁵ William J. Carl, III. *The Lord’s Prayer for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press; 2006) p. 6.

⁶ William J. Carl, III. *The Lord’s Prayer for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press; 2006) pp. 5-6.

how to pray. Teach us how to live. We know how Jesus responds so let us pray in the words, and the ways, he taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.