

The Lord's Prayer: On Earth as It Is in Heaven
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Revelation 21:1-4

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

Matthew 6:9-13 Easy-to-Read Version

⁹ So this is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven,
we pray that your name will always be kept holy.

¹⁰ We pray that your kingdom will come—
that what you want will be done here on earth, the same as in heaven.

¹¹ Give us the food we need for today.

¹² Forgive our sins,
just as we have forgiven those who did wrong to us.

¹³ Don't let us be tempted,
but save us from the Evil One.'

I promise the Holy Spirit was involved in the sermon schedule because I didn't put together until Wednesday that this phrase of the Lord's Prayer, "on earth as it is in heaven," would follow the week of the mission trip. On earth as it is in heaven could have easily been the theme of our week. Certainly we were amidst sad situations, working with kids and families who had been homeless or in war-torn, famine-suffering Somalia, assisting kids who were struggling to learn, kids who were angry, angry because of their circumstances, angry because they were taught to be, situations which awaken the "fixer" in each of us. And isn't that sort of what we're supposed to be doing to make earth like heaven – fixing things? Things like injustice and poverty and hatred and hunger and conflict? It is and we must be very cautious to remember to fix **things**...not people. We on the mission trip were reminded early in the week to be mindful of judging others, of categorizing them. This is important because God doesn't stereotype us, label us, AND it is important because, when we identify someone by their flaws, we identify an area we want to fix in them, or at least an area we think they should fix.

Some of you may have seen the musical *Wicked*. The musical is based upon Gregory Maguire's book of the same name and the story centers around Elphaba, who we know as the Wicked Witch of the West in L. Frank Baum's *Oz* books, and Galinda, whose name, we learn, is mispronounced as Glinda, or the Good Witch. They end up at school together as roommates and, after a rough start, the beautiful Galinda sings this song to the green Elphaba. She says, "Elphie – now that we're friends, I've decided to make you my new project," to which Elphaba replies, "You really don't have to do that." Galinda says, "I know. That's what makes me so nice!" The song continues,

Whenever I see someone
Less fortunate than I
(And let's face it – who isn't
Less fortunate than I?)
My tender heart
Tends to start to bleed
And when someone needs a makeover
I simply have to take over
I know I know exactly what they need
And even in your case
Tho' it's the toughest case I've yet to face
Don't worry – I'm determined to succeed
Follow my lead
And yes, indeed
You will be...
Popular!
You're gonna be popular!
I'll teach you the proper ploys
When you talk to boys
Little ways to flirt and flounce
I'll show you what shoes to wear
How to fix your hair
Everything that really counts
To be popular!
I'll help you be popular!
You'll hang with the right cohorts
You'll be good at sports
Know the slang you've got to know
So let's start
'Cause you've got an awfully long way to go...
Don't be offended by my frank analysis
Think of it as personality dialysis
Now that I've chosen to become a pal, a sister and adviser
There's nobody wiser
Not when it comes to popular –
I know about popular
And with an assist from me
To be who you'll be
Instead of dreary who-you-were... are...

There's nothing that can stop you from becoming popular... lar...¹

At the end, Elphaba, unsure how to respond says, "I – I have to go," and to the closing door Galinda says, "You're welcome! / And though you protest / Your disinterest / I know clandestinely / You're gonna grin and bear it / Your new-found popularity."²

I won't ask you to raise your hands but I suspect this caricature may feel familiar to some. I know it has for me. There was a man working with YouthWorks, the group who coordinated our mission trip, who had worked with them for many years and who had been homeless and who has some mental challenges. When I met him I noticed the primary tooth he had was very, very damaged and I began thinking of ways to help him get dental care. And then I realized what I had done. I had skipped right over the part where I saw him as one of God's beloved and began devising a plan to fix him, literally. Asking for it to be on earth as it is in heaven, praying your vow that you wish it so and will be part of making it so, is about showing God's love through service. It's also about showing God's love by seeing others as God does: beloved, valuable, accepted. That includes ourselves.

To pray "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" is not a timid or harmless prayer. It is immensely powerful. It has the power to change the whole world, ourselves included. We talked this past week about how our culture encourages us to judge others, to rank them, to understand them via rough sketch, using generalities, even when we've had people in our lives take us by surprise by not fitting into the box in which we've put them. I know I've surprised people sometimes – tattoos and pastors are not normally pictured together, yet there are a remarkable number of inked individuals whom God has called (but I'm not naming names).

If you've ever had your eyes checked professionally you've sat behind a large tool with many different lenses, designed to winnow down to the lenses which correct your vision so you see clearly. What if we were able to shed all those "bad" lenses we use, the one that sees homeless people as lazy and the one that sees long-haired teenage boys as shiftless and, well, fill-in-the-blank? What if we only used that best lens, the one we use for the person we value the most, maybe the person we critique the least, the one maybe we use to see grandchildren or best friends or spouses, the one with a fuller measure of grace and acceptance? What if you used **that** lens to see the person who makes your blood boil, the person on whom you look down because they made choices which you would not have made? I guarantee you it will change you and your world.

¹ *Wicked* "Popular," music and lyrics Stephen Schwartz.

² *Ibid.*

If you've had your eyes checked, you know how tedious it can be flipping through the lenses to get to the right combination: Better one? Better two? Better two? Better three? Similarly, it's not easy to change how you view people; it can't be overnight. In fact, with years of judging programmed into each of us, it will likely require lifelong mindfulness of the thoughts when they come and lifelong practice shifting lenses when you recognize the thoughts. Value is inherently in each of us, and in the same **full** quantity in **each** of us, for we have all been made in God's image. When was the last time someone told you that you are 100% valuable? You may not feel 100% of the person you once were or you hope to be but you are 100% valuable, at all times, every time. That is how it is in heaven and so it should be on earth. That is how Jesus lived, how Jesus saw the woman caught in adultery, how Jesus saw Nicodemus the tax collector and the men being crucified with him and the men crucifying him, how Jesus sees you, how Jesus sees me. The persons who aren't how **you** would be or how you would hope to be, even if **they** aren't 100% of the people they once were or hope to be, they are 100% valuable. One hundred percent. Fully and wholly valuable. When we see others that way, even if it took effort to get there, if it took changing a habit of judgment, when we see others as fully and wholly valuable, and treat them as such, then truly the world **will** be changed, truly it will be on earth as it is in heaven.

So let us pray like this: thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, through us, as shown the way through Jesus Christ, until mourning and crying and pain are no more. Amen.