

Real Prayer

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Date: 16 July 2006

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Paul Barnett

[0 : 00] Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the prayer that Jesus taught us. We pray that by your Holy Spirit this morning, we will come to a new and deeper understanding of it.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. David, thank you very much for your very warm welcome. It's a delight and a privilege to be present with this congregation. My wife Anita and I were here last Sunday, and indeed the Sunday before, but last Sunday was especially encouraging to us to see those children who had been involved in the Narnia program in the previous week, to know that there were several hundreds of them, and a hundred or more dedicated leaders who had been leading them in wonderful ways to understand about our Lord Jesus Christ and the Heavenly Father.

We were deeply moved by that, and I'm sure many of us present were as well. The Lord's Prayer is from Matthew chapter 5.

It would be good if you could turn that text up. I think it's on page 5 of the New Testament sections. It's part of a series, I understand, from the Sermon on the Mount, and of course we would really need many, many opportunities to teach about the Lord's Prayer, and here we have just the one.

[1 : 35] Our Lord originally spoke in the Aramaic language, we understand, and in the newly constructed extension to the library at Regent College in the Tower, the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic will be there for us to be reminded.

Around the world at this time, there are many thousands of Christian congregations meeting in many languages, and the Lord's Prayer is prayed, I understand, in more than a thousand languages.

It is a prayer that turns up two places in the New Testament, in Matthew and Luke, and also in early Christian writings like the Didache. It really consists not only as a church prayer, but as a series of prompts, in fact six.

It's worthwhile noting the priority of those prompts. The first three relate to the Father. I guess that comes as something as a surprise, because when we pray, we typically begin with me, and the things that concern me.

But here we begin with the Father, his name, his kingdom, and his will. And we're reminded here of the prayers of St. Paul that appear in his letters, where he routinely begins with, I thank you, Father.

[3 : 08] And then, after having expressed thanksgiving to God, that is beginning with God first, he will then raise other matters of petition. So, Father, hallowed be thy name, in a world where God is ignored, at best, or dishonoured, or even blasphemed, at worst.

It is appropriate that we pray this prayer in respect to ourselves, that we hallow, or honour, or glorify, the name of our Father.

Father, of course, implies on the one hand, God's almightiness, which makes reverence, appropriate.

But at the same time, we think of God as Abba, an Aramaic word, a domestic word, used by small children, of a father.

The first word, perhaps a small child would learn, as to how to address a father. That speaks of intimacy, almighty, on the one hand, speaking of true reverence, and on the other hand, Abba, speaking of intimacy.

[4 : 38] My adult children call me Dad, which they began to do when they were very small. My grandchildren typically call me Papa.

Though there's one little guy who's just a bit over two, he can't say his P's very well, so I am called Bapa. Or even, The Bapa.

Which makes me feel like a mafia Don. I fantasize, Don Barnett Corleone.

And every time the little guy wanders in and calls me the Bapa, well, I fantasize. Jesus alone has the right to call Almighty God Father, which he does.

But he shares this familiarity and intimacy and relationship with God, with us, by this teaching, but also by the Holy Spirit that the Father sends.

[5 : 56] God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. And without the supernatural, miraculous work of God through his Holy Spirit in our hearts, we simply would not think and sense and believe in our heart of hearts that Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, was our personal Father.

We are walking miracles if that is the reality of our experience of God. My wife and I have a good friend in Israel and another good friend in Turkey.

The one is a Jew, the other a Muslim, and they are indeed dear and trusted friends and decent human beings. But they do not pray to God as Father.

For neither of them knows the reality of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, and neither of them has the Holy Spirit in their hearts, whereby they know and pray to God as Father.

And so we worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and it matters not whether we are very young or very old or in between, and we worship the Father anywhere, at home, church, in the woods, at any time, day or night, in good times and bad.

[7 : 42] And so, Father, hallowed be thy name. thy kingdom come is really a prayer for the second coming of Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus, is how the book of Revelation finishes, and the Aramaic prayer, Maranatha, which comes at the end of 1 Corinthians chapter 16, is an Aramaic prayer along the same line. Come, Lord Jesus. But until he comes, we pray that the Father's kingdom in our lives may be personal and real, that we might indeed serve God as our king, and see ourselves as God's subjects and servants, and that part of the mission of our church will be to pray and work and give, so that others likewise will be part of the kingdom of God and acknowledge God's kingly rule in their lives.

And I think, among other things, that's what excited so many of us last week about that Narnia service, to see the fruits of our work and our labours in the lives of children who were acknowledging God as king.

father, thy will be done is a prayer for us and for others that the father's moral will, which is the ten commandments exercised through love and in the power of the Holy Spirit, will be done by me and by others.

[9 : 37] but it is really only those who have been blessed by the second birth, the new birth, who have become genuine Christian believers, who have had the miracle of regeneration occur within their hearts, who will truly say, father, thy will be done.

And this too is not only therefore personal for us, but part of our mission. as God's people in this place for children and young people and adults.

And so once again during the Narnia week, we thank God that there was a reflection of those who know God as father and honour him by that name, who bow down before his kingdom and do his will.

So as we think about those first three petitions, we must take great, very great care ourselves, that we ourselves honour God by that name, that we submit to his kingly rule in our lives and that we indeed do his will, which is to keep his commandments expressed through love.

only then do we turn to ourselves, our daily bread. It is bread, we note, not cake and certainly not caviar.

[11 : 21] I guess the dream of many of us, truth be known, is that we live in that financial zone which sits above the zone called bread, the zone called enough.

There is a tendency to think that only when we sort of climb out of the bread zone into the surplus zone or the more than enough zone, only then we sometimes think will true living begin.

but Jesus said in the parable of the rich fool, beware of all covetousness, a man's life does not consist in the abundance, the surplus, the more than enough, that zone.

Daily bread tells us that God's unit of time is a day, a night to sleep and a day to work, and to serve. So a prayer for daily bread therefore implies health, health to be able to work.

A prayer for daily bread implies a prayer for good seasons and good harvests. A prayer for daily bread implies a stable society where farmers can take their grain to the mill, from where work can

be taken to the baker, and from the baker to the bread shop, and from the bread shop to our tables.
[13 : 05] A prayer for daily bread is really a prayer for providence. And this country is a country of good providence, is it not? A land of plenty.

God has answered that prayer abundantly for us. A prayer for bread for today implies contentment, but it also implies generosity to share our bread with others, and certainly to share our abundance with others, so that we are living neither indulgently nor hoarding.

A prayer for daily bread implies generosity. The apostle Paul once wrote, let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him work, so that he may have the means to share with those in need.

As we pray for our sins to be forgiven, we are to be reminded that sinfulness and sins continue on despite our second birth, our regeneration, at faith commitment.

At faith commitment, we are justified and saved and forgiven. But because sins continue, we need to reclaim our forgiveness quite regularly.

[15 : 00] One of the geniuses among many of Thomas Cranmer, our Archbishop, from whom we have our prayer book, is that all our public services have a very significant place in them to express our need for forgiveness.

And we will do this later in our service today. When we pray that God will forgive us our sins, two other things at least are implied.

One is that we need to repent from our sins, forgiveness. And if we keep on praying for forgiveness for the same things over and over and over again, it may mean that we have not seriously addressed the fact of the need to repent.

If our needs, in fact, are profound and persistent, it may call for pastoral intervention. it may mean meaning to seek help from our ministers or from professional counsellors.

If we find that we are praying the same things over and over again for forgiveness. For as the great Charles Wesley hymn says, he breaks the power of cancelled sin.

[16 : 24] He breaks the power of cancelled sin. He sets the prisoner free. And if we are not finding a freedom from particular sins, we may need help.

And thank God that is available for us. The other implication of our prayer that we are forgiven is that indeed we forgive others.

That we harbour no spirit of vengeance or unforgiveness or a desire for retribution. but that following the teaching of Jesus, as we are forgiven, so we forgive, and we think of his own consummate example on the cross when subject to terrible injustice, he prays, Father, forgive them.

They know not what they do. Jesus' prayer that we are not led into temptation but are delivered from evil is again a reminder to us that our fallenness continues after our new birth.

That within each of us there is evil which lies dormant. Romans chapter 7 to 8 from the Apostle Paul tell us of the titanic struggle within each Christian life between the spirit of God that would lift us up to God and godliness but the reality of the flesh or self-centeredness or willfulness which would drag us down and drag us back even to before we were born again.

[18 : 09] each of us has within us a hidden San Andreas fault line and this prayer is to the effect that we will not be exposed to some circumstances where that flaw within us might be devastatingly and destructively revealed.

In the case of Judas Iscariot it was greed. which when the time came revealed him to be both a thief and a traitor.

In the case of Peter it was a desire for affirmation and approval which made him a windbag and a loud mouth and which in turn revealed him to be an apostate.

God. When Jesus teaches us by this prayer to seek the deliverance of God from evil and from temptation these are not like matters.

The word temptation or trial or in Greek parasmos speaks to that situation that would expose my potentially fatal flaw to steal or to be fraud.

[19 : 38] It may be as it were a time of stress or depression that coincides with a pretty woman or a handsome man who just happens to be available at that moment of opportunity.

notwithstanding the devastating consequences of breakup of marriage loss of children loss of friends loss of faith a flood of self pity and self justification in the end perdition lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Even the Apostle Paul preacher to thousands founder of churches writer of texts that find their place in the Bible knew what he was capable of read the last words of 1 Corinthians 9 took himself in hand and no doubt prayed this prayer father lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Six petitions people are able to be prayed by anybody any place any time. May God lift the veil of over familiarity with this text.

It is a window into what the 90 week was all about. It's a window into what ministry from and in St. [21 : 22] John's is all about. As we meet together this morning there is a terrible conflict in the Middle East and there is a permanent fifth column of bombers in our communities.

But there is another battle dare I say a greater battle that this prayer confronts us with. The Father's name the Father's kingdom the Father's will our bread our sins our temptation. My dear friends these are times of great importance. I encourage and urge us to support our leaders within this church in their faithful ministry and for us to pray this prayer really pray this prayer.

Amen. Amen.