

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

July 24, 2016
Proper 12C / Ordinary 17C / Pentecost +10

The readings this week:
• Hosea 1:2-10 • Psalm 85
• Colossians 2:6-15 (16-19) • Luke 11:1-13



[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Re-learning to Pray for Today

A few years ago I was in conversation with a friend who was considering becoming a Buddhist monk and we were reflecting on the two hundred and twenty seven precepts or commandments that govern Bhikkhu's lives. In that conversation I coined the phrase, "context-relevance" which describes the need for our doctrine, ethics and practice to be relevant with the context we find ourselves in. If we do not pursue context-relevance, (and I don't mean context-relativism) we run the risk of becoming anachronistic and irrelevant.

With that in mind, permit me to take another look at the Lord's Prayer (which would be better named "The Disciple's prayer"; as the Lord's Prayer is what Jesus prayed in Gethsemane.) Say it with me:

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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Such familiar words which we learn as children, and then as adults we love telling of the bloopers kids make whilst learning. Ones like, "Our Father who shouts in heaven, 'Hello what's your name?'" My favorite, was one of my sons who, as a little mite, earnestly prayed, "... and lead us not onto the station." The question that lurks behind the cuteness is, "What is the context-relevance of this prayer today?"

Permit me then, to apply what I have learnt of modern human needs, from my pastoral ministry; to the Lord's Prayer in an attempt to offer some insights that may remind us of its context relevance.

Our Father. Thank you that despite the dysfunction of some families of origin, I need never think of myself as spiritually orphaned nor abandoned in my life as it is now.

Who art in heaven and not in some faraway destination, but right within the heart of your creation. You live in the place of perfect bliss and love, which I can access every time I open to your reality within me.

Hallowed be Thy name which is above every human distinction and status. You are without equal and thus in

competition with no one. As wholly other, you do not require of me to justify you, explain you, or even defend you. I need only acknowledge you as the ultimate and everything else then finds its proper place.

Thy Kingdom come. May the discovery that you are in charge of all reality as the Prime One, be the experience of every conscious being.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May your dreamed destiny for everything you have created be realized within us, and made real around us, so that the intended perfection of all beings and relationships may manifest.

Give us this day our daily bread. Restore our perceptions so we may see you at the heart of all provision and work for a living and not to make a killing.

And forgive us our trespasses (sins) as we forgive those who trespass (sin) against us. Help us to understand that your unconditional acceptance of every person and culture is the ground of harmony and community for us all. May compassion grow for victims and perpetrators alike, so that real transformation will be our experience.

And lead us not into temptation (Save us from the time of trial) Guard us from our own destructiveness and the oppositional forces within us that keep us from being healed.

but deliver us from evil. May our shadows never overwhelm us, and may fear not be the ruling principle in our living and decision making.

So may it be for us all

AMEN

~ An excerpt by Peter Woods, [The Listening Hermit](#)



Reflecting on the Word



1st Reading: [Hosea 1:2-10](#)

Jesus' name, as well as Hosea's, means "the Lord saves" in Hebrew. How is the name of Jesus meaningful to you? In this passage, how do the names of Hosea's children play a key part in his message and ministry? How do you react to God's calling Hosea to marry an adulterous wife (v. 2, in Hebrew, "a whore")? Hosea names his firstborn Jezreel after a valley where many bloody massacres had taken place. What would it have been like to have a name like Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Wounded Knee or Tiananmen Square? The translation of the name Lo-Ruhamah is "not loved." How would this name speak to the people of Israel? In the midst of the judgment of God, how would the reversal of the names in these verses give the people hope? Some find it offensive that God called Hosea to marry a whore, yet the point was to characterize God's people as being as unfaithful as a prostitute. How are you unfaithful to God? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

Psalm Reading: [Psalm 85](#)

What are the thoughts of the returned exiles as they begin the task of reconstruction? How does God speak peace to his people? What is the individual's responsibility? How have you experienced God's blessing as seen in his attributes here? Why? What would a truly revived people look like? How would your life, church, and community be different? How does God affect revival? [the normal means of grace: humility, prayer, repentance, His Word] How does this happen when we are spiritually cold? How have you seen this take place in your own heart over time? [This Day with God, Redeemer Fellowship](#)

Praying Toward Sunday

O Birther! Father- Mother of the Cosmos
Focus your light within us – make it useful.
Create your reign of unity now-
through our fiery hearts and willing hands

Help us love beyond our ideals
and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures.
Animate the earth within us: we then
feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all.

Untangle the knots within
so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to
each other

Don't let surface things delude us,
But free us from what holds us back from our
true purpose.

Out of you, the astonishing fire,
Returning light and sound to the cosmos.

Amen.

*Douglas-Klotz's translation of the Lord's Prayer
published in Prayers of the Cosmos*

I am reading in my study at the church. Next door in the parlor a women's group is doing a bible study. I hear the sound of paper whispering, the heat register clicking, my breathing, the clock tapping its fingers on the bookshelf. Somewhere a door closes. Then through the gentle silence comes another sound: women's voices, in deep and harmonious unison, rising and falling in brief phrases. I can't hear their words through the wall, but I can tell by the cadence: they are praying the Lord's Prayer together. The sound is like waves rolling onto a shoreline, rising and falling, utter and pause, utter and pause. It is like the breathing of the world. I breathe with it. The waves of prayer lay themselves on the beach, wave after wave. They join the sea of prayers, waves moved by all the world's winds and all its movements, resounding across the ocean, touching every shore. They wash the world. They make it one, a single island surrounded by a sea of prayer. The final little splashes, "the kingdom and the power and the glory," and there is silence. It is the whole universe's ocean of silence. And the silence is deep and flowing, and it is in me, and it is full of dark, living mysteries, and I am not alone, and the world is alive.

~ Copyright © Steve Garnaas-Holmes, [Unfolding Light](#)

3rd Reading: [Colossians 2:6-15 \(16-19\)](#)

How would you finish the following sentence? "I would feel fulfilled if . . ." How do each of the images rooted, built up, strengthened and overflowing help us understand how we should continue to live in Christ? In verse 8 we get the first real glimpse of the heresy being taught to the Colossians. What do we learn about it? How would Paul's two statements about fullness in Christ protect the Colossians from those deceptive ideas? Silently reread verses 9-15, inserting your name every time Paul says you or us. How do these facts affect your view of yourself? What "shadows" are we tempted to add today? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

4th Reading: [Luke 11:1-13](#)

What is the significance of Jesus saying 'When' you pray, and not 'if' you pray? How is Luke using the story of the 'friend at midnight?' How would you state the big idea of that story? What is it that everyone who asks receives, finds, and has opened to them in v. 9? How would you summarize Jesus' teaching on prayer? Rate your prayer life on a scale of 1—10. Where is it lacking, where is it strong, how could it be better? How often do we pray that God's name would be magnified, glorified, lifted up, celebrated? How is God glorified in our praying to Him? How do we 'hallow' His name? How much do we depend on God for the ordinary, mundane, everyday stuff of life? What would encourage you to pray more, and to pray more boldly? [Radical](#)