

Stretching Toward Sunday

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

July 28, 2019

Proper 12C / Ordinary 17C / Pentecost +7

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](#)

Teach us to Pray

Imagine Warren Buffet teaching you how to pick stocks. Imagine Joe DiMaggio teaching you how to hit a curve ball. Imagine Fred Astaire teaching you how to dance. Then imagine Jesus Christ teaching you how to pray. But we don't have to imagine it. Jesus does it for us this morning in this unforgettable lesson.

While the words of the Lord's Prayer in Luke's gospel are immortal, they are not the most important lesson that Jesus teaches. More important than his words are his attitude, his behavior, his complete confidence in the Father's love. The Lord's Prayer reflects The Lord's life... the Word made flesh, to humbly dwell among us, to be the living, breathing manifestation of God's love.

Jesus does not besiege the Father with petitions. He does not ask for miracles. He does not try to persuade the Father to see things his way. He does not attempt to impose his will. Rather he teaches us to look for God's will in all things and to make ourselves open to that will. We don't pray to change God's mind. We pray to know it and to change our own hearts and minds to live in harmony with his will.

The very first words of Christ's prayer, Our Father, set the tone for our relationship with God and our place in his universe. We are not highly evolved creatures of appetite. We are not a superior breed of ape. We are the cherished children of God, the author of creation. We are his beloved, here to live in harmony with his will. Our gifts of intellect and energy come directly from his hands to serve his purpose... to witness his love in the world.

Our Father... what a humble, loving greeting. Jesus does not try to overawe us with the grandeur of God. There are no theatrics in this gospel. God is our loving Father, not some vainglorious Wizard of Oz. Our Father is an infinitely wise, caring, kindly, yet powerful parent. He loves us and wants us to love him. We are his beloved and he delights in understanding and satisfying our real needs.

We praise God's name. But God does not need to hear us praise him. We do. We need to put voice to our total

dependence on our loving Father. In this humble acknowledgement, we remind ourselves of the order of the universe and what must be the order in our lives... if we are to ever find peace in the world and peace in ourselves.

In praying for our daily bread, we ask for the physical and spiritual strength to do God's work in the world. And having given ourselves to God's will, we pray confidently that he will give us the grace to become instruments of his will, empowered to proclaim him, to serve him... to give of ourselves... to be active extensions of his love.

There is a single quid pro quo stipulation tucked inside this prayer. We pray to be forgiven as we forgive others. The formula is simple. The ramifications are profound. To receive mercy, we must be merciful. Beyond giving, we must be forgiving. We say it. But do we live it... especially in times when fear and anger are the order of the day?

In its form and in its content, Christ's prayer is a masterpiece. The fact that it is delivered off-the-cuff in response to a random question is further proof of the divine inspiration of the author. And while the words have echoed repeatedly in a thousand languages down the centuries, Christ cautions us that our prayer should never be a mindless incantation to wring a list of goodies from a grudging God.

With each new call to Our Father, we approach him anew and we acknowledge our total dependence on his love. His will defines our day. His love refreshes our soul. Jesus is not teaching us to say the Lord's Prayer. He's teaching us to live the Lord's Prayer.

~ Reverend David F. Sellery, [St. John's Church](#),



Reflecting on the Word



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

What do you think are some of the more important names and terms that have emerged in the news over the past few weeks and why? What is the significance of sharing so many names in this passage? What do you envision when you think of the relationship between Hosea and Gomer, given that they were married at least long enough to have three children? In what ways might this passage present problems to some people? What promise was given in this passage, and in what way might this apply to us as well? What do you think this passage teaches us about the various actors involved in it – including God – and why? When have you experienced spiritual insights while using someone's name in personal prayer or in worship? [Faith Element](#)

___ Psalm Reading: [Psalm 85](#)

Describe the pattern of rebellion found in the nation of Israel from the time of Moses until Christ came. What are the first steps towards spiritual renewal outlined in this psalm? What are the two things that constitute a marriage relationship and that constitute our relationship with God? How do Righteousness (Justice) and Peace kiss one another? In what spirit does the psalmist end the psalm? How did he begin the psalm? How careful are we to listen to the words of God? Do we love both God and His truth in His Word? Do we communicate the truth in love? [Generations](#)



Praying Toward Sunday

O Breathing Life, your Name shines everywhere!
Release a space to plant your Presence here.
Imagine your possibilities now.
Embody your desire in every light and form.
Grow through us this moment's bread and wisdom.
Untie the knots of failure binding us,
as we release the strands we hold of others' faults.
Help us not forget our Source,
yet free us from not being in the Present.
From you arises every Vision,
Power and Song from gathering to gathering.
Amen! May our future actions grow from here!

~ written by Mark Berry, posted on [Jonny Baker's blog](#)

So I say to you Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Luke 11:9-10

Jesus responds to the disciples request for a prayer which binds his community together and summarizes his teaching:

Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial. (Luke 11:2-4)
The teaching is followed by the directive, ASK.

Many teachers of prayer say that all prayer condenses into these petitions one way or another, and if you're prayer somehow doesn't, check the quality of your desire. Give us, then, our bread for the morrow. Forgive us. Help us forgive. Please don't bring us to the horrific test. Your kingdom come! Now.

Asking, longing, begging the kingdom to manifest fully within us and around us is, I think, the most natural state of being and Jesus' prayer satisfies the need of expression. A mere glimpse intensifies our desire which can never be fulfilled. Nevertheless, we must bring back whatever treasure we do find, for the good of the community. And perhaps the very wise may realize the very desire was the fulfillment.

~ Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

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

Have you ever gotten off track in the simplicity of walking with Christ in the past? How? What has kept you feeling discouraged or defeated? Read Ephesians 2:8-9. How does a person receive Christ? How then, according to this Colossians passage, is a person to continue in Christ? What is Paul's answer for feeling empty, discouraged or defeated? Why do you think it is important to remember all that Christ has done for us? What does His work imply about you? In the end we either go through life on 'self-power', or 'God-power.' Which has been your tendency lately? What is a step you could take to ensure you are being empowered by God? [Rackcdn.com](#)

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

What does the Lord's Prayer say about "who God is" to us? How does it affect your hearing of this text when Jesus says that God will give us the Holy Spirit, rather than "all good things"? Why do you pray? Why do you think Jesus highlights persistence in his teaching about prayer? When have you, and/or a situation, been changed by prayer? [Faith Element](#)