

PREACHER: The Revd Stuart Langshaw

DATE: Sunday July 24, 2022. Wednesday July 27

CHURCH: St Matthew's Kensington.

SERMON SERIES. Lectionary readings

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke m13:1-11

SERMON TOPIC: The Lord's Prayer

One of my practices as a teacher of Year 11 and 12 English Literature was to require the students to commit to memory a speech from the Shakespeare play we happened to be studying that year. They were required to learn, for example, "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath It is twice blest. ..." and the rest of that speech. Which is from ??? (Merchant of Venice. Act 4. Scene 1. Spoken by ??? Portia dressed as a lawyer and is addressed??? to Shylock). Or, "Good name in man and woman, dear my Lord, is the immediate jewel of their souls: who steals my purse steals trash ..." and the rest of that speech. Which is from???? (Othello. Act 3. Scene 2. Spoken by??? Iago to??? Othello). And the students needed to know the moral, the teaching behind the speech as well as the words of the speech. The importance of mercy. The importance of a good name and reputation.

We know the words of the Lord's Prayer very well. We pray those words frequently. They are prayed in our Sunday services, and at the start of each day of our federal parliament's proceedings. They have been translated into many, many languages. And in our Gospel reading today from Luke's gospel we have the record of Jesus teaching this prayer to the 12 disciples. There's something about it in the Welcome Sheet today.

Each petition in the Lord's Prayer could be the subject of a separate sermon. That would assist us to know, not simply the words themselves, but the teaching behind the words. But today my plan is to give a bird's eye view of the Lord's Prayer, to be undetailed, and yet, I hope, helpful.

Someone said that the Lord's Prayer may be quickly committed to our memories, but it is slowly learned by our hearts.

The obvious pronoun feature of the Lord's Prayer is that it is all "we," "us" and "our." There is no "me," "I," or "mine" anywhere in it. So the first thing to say about the Lord's Prayer is that it is **Relational**. It is as though it is being prayed by a group, a community or congregation. "We," "us" and "our." As we pray the Lord's Prayer we are in a relationship with the people around us who are also praying these familiar words, and we need to be conscious of their presence in this time of prayer.

The various petitions of the payer contain our group desires and our community wishes.

But the Lord's Prayer reminds us that we are also in a relationship with God as our father. There were so many titles for God and ways of addressing God that were familiar to Jesus and the disciples from their Judaism. "God Almighty." "Creator God." "God of Justice," "Lord of Hosts." But the title for God that Jesus chose was that of "Father." In Isaiah 64:8 Jesus knew that God is called "Father." "But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand."

But not simply "Father," but "Abba." That was a close, family, tender way of referring to our male parent. It was the way that Jesus would call upon God in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Abba... Father ... take this cup from me." (Mark 14)

So, the Lord's Prayer is **Relational**.

The petition about God's name being hallowed – being recognised and used as holy is **Respectful**. The 3rd of the 10 Commandments tells us not to take God's name in vain – and this part of the Lord's Prayer prays that that commandment may be observed. People these days do use God's name as a means of expressing surprise, dismay, appreciation, frustration, annoyance, even anger. If we pray the Lord's Prayer, in our

conversations and private talking we must use God's name carefully and worshipfully, for that is what the Lord's Prayer prays. To be **respectful**.

The part of the Lord's Prayer about God's kingdom and about God's will prays that we may be **Responsive**. "Your kingdom come" is a prayer that people everywhere will respond to God's love, and bring themselves under the loving and beneficent rule of Christ as their king. It is an evangelistic prayer. But it is a prayer that we also may bring our lives under Christ's rule, and be in that kingdom of God. And how is God's will done in his kingdom? We pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven ... in God's kingdom." God's will is done there gladly, immediately and fully. So this petition of the Lord's Prayer is that we may be responsive to the rule of Christ by living according to his will gladly, immediately and fully.

Relational, respectful, responsive.

Then we move on to the three prayers for ourselves in the Lord's Prayer. "Give us this day our daily bread." This makes us admit to ourselves that we are **Dependent** on God. It's a prayer that each day we may have sufficient for the needs of that day - enough food, enough shelter, enough protection, enough love. They are the things we need for each day. What we have beyond enough food, shelter, protection and love is a bonus. We need those things for ourselves, and if we are blessed with this world's goods, we can help this prayer to come true for others – that they might have enough food, shelter, protection and love. But it makes us admit that we are **dependent** on God who provides for all our needs.

Martin Luther had great trouble with the next petition of the Lord's Prayer. "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Luther said that in nearly all our prayers we pray that we may be like God. But in this petition we pray that God will be like us. This is a **Demanding** petition. Why is it demanding? Because it demands that we look at the quality of our relationship with others and our forgiveness of others. We pray, "Forgive us our sins in the same way and to the same extent that we forgive others. That's what "as" means. If we are slow to forgive others, we are praying that God will be slow to forgive us. If we refuse to forgive others, then we are praying that that God will refuse to forgive us.

And the final petition of the Lord's Prayer is **Defensive**. It is a prayer that we may be defended from the snares of temptation and from doing, saying or being evil. "Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil." We pray that we ourselves may be protected from evil, and that we may be saved from being agents of evil ourselves. When we pray for safety for times when we travel – this part of the Lord's Prayer is the prayer that we are praying. When we pray for the safety and protection of our families, this is the prayer we are praying. "Deliver us from evil."

Relational, respectful, responsive, dependent, demanding, defensive.

The Lord's Prayer ends with a great outburst of praise – a great doxology. It is **Praisey**. Why do we pray in the Lord's prayer as we do? Because we know, and in our lives we have proved, that God is the God whose resources can meet our needs and can answer our prayers according to his will. After all, God has all the kingdom and the power and the glory. God has them now, and God has them for ever. The praise of the final section makes us confident to bring our petitions and intercessions to God in prayer.

And the final word of the Lord's Prayer is **Emphatic**. "Amen." It's a Hebrew word that is literally translated as "truth." It's not an afterthought tacked on to the end of a prayer. It means, "Emphatically, I wish this prayer to be granted." In the Australian section of heaven, the Ozzie saints don't say "Amen." They say "Fair dinkum." Or they say "Right on." That's what Amen means.

So the Lord's Prayer is **Relational, respectful, responsive, dependent, demanding, defensive, praisey and emphatic**.

So the Lord's Prayer – taught by Christ
Learned by his followers

Prayed in faith
Beyond mere words.