

11th June, 2023

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe,

light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea;
a great High Priest whose name is
Love,
who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on his hands,
my name is written on his heart.
I know that while in heav'n he
stands
no tongue can bid me thence
depart,
no tongue can bid me thence
depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair
and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look and see him there
who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died,
my sinful soul is counted free;
for God the just is satisfied
to look on him and pardon me,
to look on him and pardon me.

Behold him there, the risen Lamb,
my perfect, spotless righteousness,
the great unchangeable I AM,
the King of glory and of grace.
At one with him, I cannot die;
my soul is purchased by his blood.
My life is hid with Christ on high,
with Christ my Saviour and my God,
with Christ my Saviour and my God.



The Sermon by Robert Hughes: The King's petition.

Read Isaiah 42:1-9 and Matthew 6:5-15

Jesus gave us '**The Lord's Prayer**' to serve as a model when we pray to God the Father. Let's take a closer look, especially at the words concerning forgiveness:-

Our: The plural "our" is used throughout. As we give voice to the prayer we acknowledge both the presence of God and our connection to a wider praying community.

Father in Heaven: God is 'spiritual', heavenly presence, whilst we ourselves are bound to the earth below. God is utterly other than us. Yet here Jesus invites us to call upon God as Father. Theologically, we do so because God created us and gave us life. Spiritually we do so because Jesus the Son of God has reconciled us to God. The gift of faith we have received by the Holy Spirit, brings us we recognise ourselves children of God, and to call upon Him as our Father (*Romans 8:15*) trusting that our welfare is important to him (*Matthew 7:11*).

Hallowed by Your name: God is holy. According to *Ezekiel 36:23-33*, God makes his name holy by gathering his people, cleansing them from sin, and giving them a new spirit. By such holy actions God's "name" is made known in the world.

Your Kingdom Come, your will be done on earth as in heaven:

We are held captive by contending forces in this world. It is no longer the neutral space it was in the beginning. The powers of evil are manifest in diseases of mind and body, in falsehoods claimed as truths, in the sins that undermine life. Praying for God's kingdom to come is asking for God's power to prevail against every opposing force - to create the conditions prevailing in heaven.

Give Us This Day our daily bread:

Our individual needs are no different from those of the wider community. We seek bread not just for 'ourselves' but for "us," since all have need of sustenance from God. In Israel's tradition, the daily bread of the people was like the manna once gathered in the wilderness. They gathered but were unable to hoard it, since it spoiled; so they received only what they needed day by day. And we ourselves are like those who journeyed through the wilderness. Our lives are not self-generated, not self-sustaining. We rely upon the gifts we receive from the God.

Forgive Us our Sins: Our focus turns now to our relationship with God. The Greek text asks more literally for release from our "debts," and that is the word used in the King James Version; but the older translation of William Tyndale reads "trespasses". However the King James parallel narrative in *Luke 11:4* reads "sins." How does our understanding of sin affect our attitude towards forgiveness? That question arises again in next line of the prayer.

But just before we get there let's acknowledge that the hurts and grievances we accumulate as we go through life can end up defining our relationships. To let that happen is to close down the future. It's important then to understand that "to

forgive” is literally to release a relationship, to allow its re-birth. That is not to say that wrongs don’t matter - far from it! Receiving God’s forgiveness equips us to forgive each other - which leads to the next petition in the prayer.

As we forgive those who sin against us:

What you have heard so far falls far short of acknowledging the pain, suffering and damage caused by wrong doing. Abandon the Greek idea that a wrong is removed, expunged by a pardon. Forget the fiction that forgiveness cancels debt, wipes the slate clean. Wrong-doers might feel better for being forgiven, but their damage cannot be undone. We cannot ‘take back’ a sin. We can’t unhurt someone; consequences must be born, shouldered, carried. The question is: By whom? Replacing the word ‘sin’ with more comfortable words like debt can be misleading. In verse 6:12, *Matthew* writes the word ‘forgive’ using the Aramaic or Hebrew word that actually means ‘to lift’ or ‘to carry’. Jesus is asking our Father to ‘bear’ the weight of our sins. He is not employing the Greek word that means ‘pardon’. In *Matthew’s* eyes, Jesus takes our wrongs on his shoulders. By dying for us on the Cross he has atoned for the sins of those who are ‘his’, those who have ‘received’ him as their ‘Saviour’.

Matthew 6:14 invites us to understand the words ‘as we forgive those who sin against us’ in the conditional sense, as a quid pro quo: And yet Jesus might equally be asking God to bear patiently with our wrong-doing in the same way we must bear with each other’s wrong doing, not just because that is expected, (*John 13:34, 20:23*) but because we seldom have another option. We cannot stop others sinning!

Lead us not into Temptation but deliver us from evil:

The traditional version of the Lord’s Prayer says, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” A newer translation, “Save us from the time of trial,” reflects our unease with any suggestion that God would ever “lead” people into temptation. After all, it is Satan who tempts us, not God. (*James 1:13*). But I believe our unease justified.

As the Greek text makes clear, God **could** put people “to the test” (*Genesis 22:1 and Exodus 16:4*). There is a confrontational side of God. So, although Jesus’ prayer does not develop the point, here is an implicit warning that our otherwise loving God can be an unforgiving judge of human behaviour. Fortunately however, we have Jesus the Son to deliver us to intercede for us in times of trial.

In the Book of Ezekiel, God is preparing to abandon Jerusalem, to destroy it, to consign its people to captivity at the hands of Babylon. But in, Chapter 9, just before God’s judgment is given effect, He asks a man ‘robed in linen’ to pass among the people (verse 11) and to place a mark on the forehead of all those he finds sighing and groaning at the sinning around them. These are people who - flawed though they undoubtedly were - had been trying to live righteous lives

who were not complicit, just powerless to stop it. The 'man', the man dressed in priestly white linen, who wears a lawyer's belt around which hangs a writing tablet, an ink pot, and quills, is surely Jesus ... doing what he always does, saving the lost from the flaming sword of divine justice; (though quite how those he marked were saved the text does not reveal).

We began with the first word '**our**', a call to pray as one 'church'. But, when Jesus says '**Our**' Father he means God is **our** father as well as his. He means that even as King, as Son the The Father, - he is one with us; we are part of him. And it's that that gives Jesus' prayer it's power. For whenever we speak these words of Jesus, God The Father cannot fail to hear us.

- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, neighbours, and for family & friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: First Sunday after Trinity: O God, the strength of all those who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in the keeping of your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat & Bowls: Wed. 21st June at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 28th June at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.