

2026-07-19 When You Pray... Six Practices, Week 2

We're back on our "faith pathway" this morning – last week this represented the road to Emmaus where Cleopas and his companion had been walking and talking – when Jesus showed up and walked and talked with them. The faith practice that we heard about last week was talking! Pastor Chris encouraged us to TALK about our faith, ask our questions, share with one another what we think and what we're uncertain about. Because when we have conversations together the Spirit moves among us as we talk about our faith, we learn from one another and encourage each other.

Today we're focusing on the practice of prayer and Justine read us the story of Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray. And he made it pretty simple for them. The Lord's Prayer, as we call it, isn't flowery or fancy, it isn't long or complicated. Jesus taught them a prayer that could easily be memorized and repeated. But here's the thing. The Lord's Prayer, as Jesus taught it, was never meant to just be words that were memorized and repeated. He meant it to be practiced – in real life. He meant for those words to be lived out, demonstrated, incorporated into our souls.

As I thought about this morning's service, I was reminded of this little book that I've had on my shelf for years by James Mulholland. It's called *Praying Like Jesus: The Lord's Prayer in a Culture of Prosperity*. It's a good little book, so I've based the service on it. So, as you can see, and as you heard from Kyle in the Children's Time, we're going to practice praying this morning, using the Lord's Prayer as our model. You might have also noticed that there are three hymns interspersed in the sermon. Singing hymns and songs is definitely a way of praying, so I chose these hymns to help us pray along the way. If you're not a singer, that's fine, but I encourage you to read the words as we sing so you can still use the poetry as part of your prayer.

Mulholland divides the prayer into five sections – the ones you see on the insert in your bulletin. There's the "Our Father", "Thy Kingdom Come", "Give Us", "Forgive Us" and "Deliver Us". He makes a few important introductory remarks. I'll start there.

When Jesus' disciples asked him about praying, he didn't say "Well, if you pray, pray like this..." He said, "When you pray." People of faith pray. It's a given, an expectation, an assumption. Mulholland says "Prayer is a window to the human heart and mind. The prayers we (offer) reveal more about us than about God." And much more than asking about the words of prayer, the disciples were asking about the attitude of prayer. As devout Jews, the disciples would have prayed lots of scripted prayers, not the least of which was the Shema which they recited twice daily. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." But the disciples wanted to know what their prayers meant, particularly because they had witnessed Jesus being offended especially by two kinds of prayer – prayers of self-righteousness and prayers of self-interest.

As Jesus taught this prayer, he was setting out a pattern that would lead to a healthy, transparent relationship with God and the world.

So what I'd like to suggest this morning is that I'll give just a very brief idea of what Mulholland writes about each section of the Lord's Prayer. And then I'll give just a little time for you all (children and grown-ups alike) to write or draw or just consider ways you might pray each part of this prayer. The ushers have some pencils – just raise your hand if you need one or would like one...

First: Our Father...

- Praying like Jesus reminds us to whom we are speaking. God is not hostile. Prayer is not persuading some indifferent "entity", or manipulating an obstinate Master, or lobbying a reluctant Ruler, or pleading with a stingy Boss. Prayer is climbing into the lap of a Parent who knows what we need before we ask. God loves us and can be trusted to meet our needs. Not to check all the boxes of our wants, but to meet our needs. Take some time to pray to God as your loving parent, keeping in mind that God is everyone's loving parent – not just yours but ours... Let's continue to pray together number 517, Children of the Heavenly Father, verses 1, 3 and 4

Second: Thy Kingdom Come...

- Praying like Jesus reminds us that we are children of God and as such we have a responsibility in the world. God is not distant. God is right here, at work – with us. And our job is to look for ways to establish God's kingdom in the world and to do God's will in the world. Prayer is a pledge, a promise. Praying like Jesus reminds us that we are brothers and sisters. That God created and loves all of us. Prayer is not trying to get a bigger piece of the pie, it's an opportunity for God to teach us how to live and love. How to create the beloved community. Write or draw or think or whisper a prayer that is a promise to God that you'll work together with God and with one another to bring God's kingdom here on earth – as it is in heaven... Number 416, Beyond a Dying Sun

The third section: Give us, just for today, our daily bread

- Praying like Jesus reminds us that "Greed is the unchallenged sin in the North American church." When some siblings have way too much, it means that there's not enough to go around for others. So, in our prosperity, what does it look like for us to pray, "Give us this day, our daily bread." What does compassion look like? What if "Give us this day our daily bread" is a prayer for equality, for justice? A prayer for everyone to *have* enough, to *be* enough, to live in a world where everyone has enough? Take a few moments with this part of the prayer...

Fourth: We move from give us to forgive us. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who've sinned against us.

- Praying like Jesus reminds us of our need to be forgiven and to offer forgiveness. God offers and expects grace. Prayer needs to acknowledge our sin and to seek reconciliation with others. It longs to restore our proper relationship with God and everyone else, with all creation. Offer a prayer of forgiveness...

And finally, Deliver us from evil:

- Praying like Jesus reminds us of our constant temptation to trust in the powers and principalities of this world – the people and the money and the power that seem to make

the world go around. Praying like Jesus is making a commitment to a new way of living. A new heaven and a new earth. We live our lives on this earth and for the time that we're here we promise to work with God and with one another to bring it as close to God's vision as we can. But this world is imperfect and there is evil in it. In these moments, offer a prayer asking God to deliver us from the evil of this world... We'll bring our service to a close by singing, Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying #682.

Last week we invited the children to come forward during our Sending Song and bring their "thought bubbles", their thoughts about what they might have talked about with Jesus on the road, up here and we put them up on the wall. So we'll do the same this morning! Children if you'd like to bring your coloring sheets up, we'll add them to our collection here. And grown-ups – the invitation is to you also, while we sing Like a Rock, anyone can feel free to bring your prayer sheets up to be added to our faith pathway. Let's sing it through twice.

Benediction – As you go from this place, may every breath become a prayer and every prayer draw you nearer to God. Go in peace. Amen.