

Worship at home June 27, 2021



<https://www.pathwaystogod.org/resources/biblical-models-prayer>

God calls us to worship:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.¹

Let us worship God.

We bring our praise and confessions:

Great and holy God, source of our life and all life,
your glory is incomprehensible and your majesty infinite.
You are the wellspring of new life and the fountain of true freedom.
We worship you in gratitude,
offering you our praise with the voices of all creation,
and our trust because you have come to close to us in Christ Jesus.
Receive our love and loyalty, now and always,
offered through the Spirit who prays within us.

Great and merciful God, our judge and our hope,
We confess we have sinned against you and one another,
in the ways we think, the things we say and the things we do.
In your tender mercy, O God, forgive what we have been,
amend what we are, and direct who we shall become,
through the grace of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.²

¹ Isaiah 55:10-11.

² Adapted from worship resource for June 27, 2021 available at <https://presbyterian.ca/worship>

God assures us of his forgiveness:

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ—and Christ died for us; Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free by God's generous grace! Rejoice in God's good gift.

Hymn: #510 "Deep in the shadows of the past"

Thank you to Judy Armstrong and Marilyn Shaw.

**In response to the gospel,
we confess our faith and offer our lives and resources:**

Please remember to prayerfully make your offerings to the congregation of which you are most associated. If you're a member/adherent of Knox-Moore or St. Andrew's, Mooretown, please send your offering to Howard McKellar or Judy Armstrong.

God speaks to us through his Word:

No empty words: Prayer

Living the Word of God in reliance on the Holy Spirit is predicated on the belief that: God is real, good, living, and that God speaks through the written text of Scripture. Also, that our relationship with this God is not that of an engineer with a robot, but of a Creator and his creation, of a loving Father with his children.

This means, that our relationship with the One who spoke creation into being is dialogical. Back and forth. God speaks, and we respond; we speak, and God responds. This, by the way, is the reason our worship follows the order it does.

We have already talked about *receiving* God's word by recognizing the sacredness of the moment in which we approach the Bible, by listening attentively, and by embracing Holy Curiosity.

And, we've talked about *meditating* on what we've received. Committing it to memory. Mumbling it. Talking about it. Thinking about what it means for us.

In our final two sermons, we'll talk about our response to the Word we receive from God. This sermon will address *prayer* and next sermon will address *living the Word*.

Hear now the Word of God:
READ LUKE 11:1-13.

This is the Word of God, for the people of God.
Thanks be to God.

Here we have Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer. It's worth noting that it is different than Matthew's (cf. Matthew 6:7-15.) Matthew's is likely more familiar. Luke's is much more concise and less poetic. Nevertheless, the elements are the same. Perhaps it's worth considering, given we have two versions of the one Lord's Prayer, that this ought to caution us against assuming there's only one way to pray.

As helpful as litanies and formats can be, prayer is not a formula. It's not a sequence of magic words to get God to do what we want. It's not a prescription that must be filled exactly in order to heal our maladies.

Prayer is our side of a two-sided conversation.

Just as we learn how to communicate with one another – sometimes in a formal setting like Toastmasters, sometimes by our parents telling us not to interrupt, other times by simple observation – so too, we learn how to communicate with our heavenly Father.

In our reading from Luke 11, Jesus offers three lessons on prayer.

(i) In the first (verses 2, 3, 4), we are given Luke's rendition of Jesus' model prayer. the lesson has to do with content.

And, here we learn:

- Who is the One to whom we pray.
 - I've been struck recently by how many references are made in t.v. shows to the "Universe" arranging events. This perhaps suggests a need to connect with something greater than ourselves, something that can give meaning and peace to our souls.
 - God is not an unknown quantity. Because of Jesus, we can speak with the Living, Creating, personal God who speaks to us through the written text of Scripture. And, because of what Jesus has done on the cross, we can relate to this God as children to a loving Father. This is the essence of the gospel: That the God we cannot see, the God who has been from the beginning, the God who created all that exists, the God who gives life, is the God who adopts us into His family and who speaks to us and listens to us as a perfect Father speaks and listens to his children.
 - And so, we do not pray to the 'Universe', nor to an unknown deity, nor to our inner selves as we seek an emotional experience of peace and affirmation, we pray to "Father."

- In this conversation, and thus in life, is ultimately we hold the Father as holy. As Other. As Mystery.

- Notwithstanding we know God through Jesus, we are connected with Him as our Father, in Him we live, move, and have our being; yet, He is not common. He is not the same as us, or our culture, or our human families.
- The Father we know in Jesus is the One from whom all things flow, in whom all things have purpose and wholeness, and by whom all will be made right.
- He is Father, He is holy, and His way of living is the good way.
- So, we pray: “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.”

- Our Father is able and willing to provide what we need for body, mind, and spirit.
 - Like the Israelites in the desert who learned that stockpiling manna only produced rot, we learn to trust our Father for today, and lay down our anxieties about tomorrow.
 - So, we pray: “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread.”

- As we accept the forgiveness and loving kindness of our Father, living in His grace in reliance on the Holy Spirit involves forgiving others in Jesus’ name. Regardless of if they receive our forgiveness.
 - In Matthew’s record, he went so far as to say that if disciples of Jesus are unable/unwilling to forgive others, the Father’s forgiveness of themselves is rendered meaningless. (cf. Matthew 6:14, 15)
 - So, we pray: “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.”

- That our Father points us to a path of righteousness and holiness. Living the Word of God in reliance on the Holy Spirit involves our willingness to see this path and our courage to actually change our habits and take the path our Father offers.

- Asking God to free us from evil and temptation means little if we continue in the path that takes us to such temptation!
- So, we pray:

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.

(ii) The second lesson is in verses 5-8. This lesson is often taken as an encouragement in persistence. In this scenario we are depicted as the ones seeking bread, and the Christian's task is to just keep knocking until God relents, opens the door, and gives us what we want.

A problem with this interpretation is that the Father we see in Jesus is *not* a God who is unaware of the plight of his people, nor does he ignore the cries of his children. The Father is *not* a God who must be cajoled or bullied into helping us.

Instead, the Father we see in Jesus is the One who said to Moses at the burning bush:

I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them. ...³

He is the One of whom the psalmist wrote:

*In my distress I called upon the Lord;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears. ...
He bowed the heavens and came down. ...
He reached down from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of mighty waters. ...
He brought me out into a broad place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.⁴*

³ Exodus 3:7-8

⁴ Psalm 18, selected verses.

Indeed, He is the one who sacrificed his place in heaven and went to the cross on our behalf. Whether we accept his grace or not.

Instead, I think this second lesson is designed to make us realize that the friend who couldn't be bothered to help out a man trying to be hospitable, isn't much of a friend at all!

(iii) As we then learn from the third lesson (verses 9-13), unlike this so-called 'friend', the heavenly Father is willing and able to give not only bread, fish, and eggs, but of his own divine self: the Holy Spirit.

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

By the Holy Spirit, the Holy Father we know and approach through the Holy Son, opens the door of His very self and welcomes us in to share His life in our present circumstance.

And the tool that we have to build that relationship is language: written, silent, and spoken.

God speaks to us in the Scriptures when we approach the Word of God *asking* to *hear* from him.

We *meditate* on what we've received, *seeking* to understand, to find the One in whom our souls can know peace and the world can be healed.

And then it's our turn to respond.

Scripture without prayer is merely the command of a dictator. Prayer without scripture is merely an elevation of the self. Humancentric. Scripture with prayer is a relationship between a Holy Father and His justified and redeemed children.

Prayer is the means by which we not only read about God, but participate with God in His mission of creation and redemption. Prayer is our side of a two-sided conversation with a friend and a Father who will not turn us away.

Amen.

Hymn: #746 “What a friend we have in Jesus”

Thank you to Judy Armstrong and Marilyn Shaw.

We respond with prayer, faith, and service:⁵

Almighty and ever-loving God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

We give you thanks for your Word recorded in the text of Scripture,
for your promises which fuel our faith
and give us hope.

Yet, there is much for which to pray today.

We pray on behalf of the Muslim communities of London as they continue to grieve and
work through the attack of June 6, 2021.

We pray on behalf of the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls.

We pray on behalf of the Cowassess First Nation and the families and friends of the
children buried at the Marieval Indian Residential School.

(Silence)

You are our source of peace and healing, and we are grateful.

We pray for each one who faces choices and decisions about their health—
for all waiting for appointments or wondering if they should make another;
for any who find caring for their health frustrating,
and for all facing pain or anxiety after the months of pandemic...

(Pause)

You are our source of wisdom and generosity, and we are grateful.

We pray for each one facing choices and decisions about finances—
for those struggling with bills and budgets;
for those torn between covering necessities and enjoying a treat;
for those who want to be generous and yet feel overwhelmed by all the need.

(Pause)

You are our source of love and forgiveness, and we are grateful.

We pray for each one facing choices and decisions about their relationships.

We pray for people we ought to call but just haven't;

for those with whom we feel a grievance and have been avoiding;

We pray for those we'd like to invite into closer relationship but haven't yet;

and for those we miss dearly and need to tell how much we cherish them.

(Pause)

You are the source of rest and right relationship for God's whole creation,
and we are grateful.

We pray for the earth, its many creatures and habitats competing for survival,

⁵ From worship resource for June 27, 2021 available at <https://presbyterian.ca/worship/>

for its scarce resources and its abundant beauty.
(Pause)

Challenge us to live out our good intentions for the earth in our lifestyle choices, big and small,
so that your kingdom may come on earth not by disaster but through discipleship.
For it is as your disciples we pray together:

The Lord's Prayer.

God sends us with His blessing:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.
Amen.