

**St. Andrew's Church – June 6, 2010**  
Sermon "Lord's Prayer Part 1" – The Rev. Doug Kendall

Lord God,  
May the words of my mouth,  
and the thoughts and meditations of all of our hearts,  
be acceptable to You, our God and our creator.

What is prayer?  
Can you think back to the first time you remember praying?  
What did you pray for?  
Were your prayers answered?  
When I think back to my first experiences with prayer,  
I remember bedtime prayers and mealtime prayers.  
We always said grace before we ate.  
It was short and sweet, but it was always done.  
"Dear God, thank you for our good food, Amen"  
Even when it was meat loaf and peas,  
we still had to say thank you for our "good food."

Those are my earliest recollections of prayer.  
In both cases, I was taught to pray by my parents and my family.  
Whether it was my bedtime prayers, or our family grace,  
I was taught and shown the words to use, and later added to those.

I don't remember how old I was when I learned the Lord's Prayer,  
I must have been pretty young though,  
because I can not remember a time when I did not know it.  
The Lord's prayer has got to be the most commonly said prayer in the entire world.  
These words are so familiar to us, everyone knows them... right?

*Our Father which art in heaven,*  
or is that who art in heaven...  
well you say potaetoe, I say potato...

*hallowed be thy name.*  
*Thy kingdom come*  
*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*  
*Give us this day our daily bread*  
*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us?*  
*Or is that forgive us our debts,...*  
*as we forgive our debtors....*  
*It seems to depend if you are Presbyterian or United Church or Anglican...*  
*Where did those different words come from?*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*  
Now is that part "deliver us from evil,  
or deliver us from the evil One...  
*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever Amen.*  
Wait a minute, when we read this from the bible earlier,  
those words were not in it?  
Where did those words come from?

Have you ever wondered why different churches  
use different words for the Lord's prayer?  
Are we saying different prayers?  
What are the real words that Jesus taught his disciples?  
Can we ever really know Jesus real words?  
All these versions of the Lord's prayer come from the bible don't they?

Well then are we using different bibles now,  
or are they just different ways of saying the same thing?  
Can't churches even agree on how to say the Lord's prayer?

This morning we read two different versions of the Lord's prayer  
in our scripture readings.

One of them was from the Gospel according to Matthew,  
and the other was from the Gospel according to Luke.  
If you look at them, you will notice that there are similarities between them,  
and there are also differences.  
Both the similarities and the differences are important,  
and that is part of what we will be looking at  
this week and for the next two weeks.

This three part series on our Lord's prayer  
is an opportunity for us to look more closely  
at the words we say so often,  
and answer some of the questions we have  
about this most ancient of prayers that dates back to Jesus time.

But why preach on the Lord's prayer?  
Won't looking at the words ruin some of the majesty and the mystery  
of the prayer?  
I believe that a stronger understanding of the Lord's Prayer  
will not take away from the majesty and mystery  
of this ancient prayer.  
In fact just the opposite.  
When we understand where these words came from,  
and the meaning behind the words,  
the preciousness of this gift to us through the scriptures from Jesus,  
becomes even more valuable.

This morning we will look briefly at the different contexts  
in which Jesus taught the Lord's prayer.  
And in the next two weeks  
we will consider the complexity and the content of His prayer.

Picture a scene if you will.  
Jesus has spoken about his death with the disciples at various times,  
and the disciples are beginning to worry.  
They have also seen Jesus deep in prayer many times,  
and have seen the strength he gains from speaking with God.  
The disciples have watched John the Baptist with his disciples,  
and they always seem to be at prayer.

It is a cool early evening in Palestine,  
and yet again Jesus has retreated a short distance from the disciples,  
he has sat under a tree, and has been praying to God.  
The disciples have just been lying about,  
never sure what to do while Jesus is praying.  
Finally Jesus finishes praying,  
he gets up from under the tree,  
and comes over to where the other disciples are.  
They are all still sitting on the ground.  
One of the disciples stands up and asks of Jesus,  
***"Lord, teach us to pray  
the way John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray."***  
Jesus looks at his disciples,  
and out of concern for them shares with the disciples the Lord's prayer.

That is how it happened in the Gospel of Luke.  
The disciples had a specific need,  
they wanted to know how to pray,  
and Jesus taught them.  
Like a child saying grace for the first time,  
or saying prayers before bed,  
the disciples needed to be taught the words to use to start with,  
and then they would learn to bring their own concerns to God.  
That is how it happened in the Gospel of Luke.

There is another different scene though.  
Picture a mountain.  
Jesus is standing before a great crowd preaching.  
He has just shared with them the beatitudes,  
and then he concludes his teaching by saying,  
"When you pray, do not pray like the hypocrites..."  
Jesus then goes on to warn the whole crowd against long prayers  
with fancy words and flowery gestures.  
He reminds us that God does not need those things. Instead Jesus says...  
"Go into your room, close the door..."  
"Your father already knows what you need before you ask."  
"Pray then in this way...  
Our father in heaven...'

This is how we see Jesus teaching the Lord's prayer  
in the Gospel of Matthew.  
It is in a sermon on a mountain.  
The prayer is about forgiveness, and about humbly speaking with God.  
When we forgive each other, God will also forgive us,  
but if we are unable to forgive each other... watch out.

So now we have seen how two of the Gospels introduce the Lord's prayer,  
what about the other two gospels?  
What about the Gospel of *Mark* or the Gospel of John?  
What do they say about the Lord's prayer?

Well, they don't say anything about the Lord's prayer,  
because the Lord's prayer only appears in Matthew and Luke.  
Mark which is the earliest Gospel written makes no mention of it,  
And John, the last Gospel to be written makes no mention of it either.

We have in Luke and Matthew,  
the words Jesus used to teach his disciples about prayer.  
There *are* differences and similarities in both of them.  
And neither of them is exactly the same  
as the words we use for the Lord's prayer today,  
whether we be Presbyterian, United, Anglican Roman Catholic,  
or any other Christian denomination.

In the next few weeks we will compare  
the differences and the similarities between them,  
and we will spend time looking at the meaning  
of the words we trace back to Jesus  
and that we say together so many years later..

No matter which translation or version of the Lord's prayer we use,  
it is still the Lord's prayer.  
The prayer we use to bring our concerns and our praise to God.  
The prayer we were taught as children  
nestled in our beds before we went to sleep at night,

It is the prayer we were taught in Sunday School  
no matter what Christian Church background we come from.  
It is the prayer that we repeat together as we worship God,  
in all God's majesty and mystery.

One little hint about the Lord's prayer for this week.  
Have you ever noticed, no matter which version of the Lord's prayer you use,  
none of them says "I" or "my" anywhere in it?  
It is "Our" Father to whom we pray, It is "our" daily bread we ask for,  
and they are "our" sins we confess.  
This prayer is not the prayer of an individual,  
It is the prayer of the community.  
It is our prayer.  
Next week we will go into the content of the Lord's prayer in more depth,  
Beginning with Jesus choice to begin the prayer with the words,  
Abba Father.  
In Jesus name, AMEN