

Sunday, September 24, 2023

First Lesson: Matthew 7:7

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 6: 9-13

Sermon Series: Prayers that Move Mountains: Jesus
Week 2

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

- We are continuing with our sermon series called, “Prayers that Move Mountains.” This is a 4 week sermon series that will use our First Lesson of Matthew 7:7 that we just heard and that will serve as the central theme of the sermon series; “Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you;” and see how it manifests itself in each focused prayer of study for the week, with the hope that our discoveries will speak to our life situations and experiences of today.

- In addition, the sermon format for how we will engage in conversation each week will be by applying the Wesleyan Quadrilateral Model as a tool, to ensure that how we are engaging our scriptures are thorough and exhaustive;
- For just a quick recap on what this Wesleyan quadrilateral model is; The United Methodist Church, asserts that “John Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, **illuminated by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason.**
- Therefore, this morning what we are asking, seeking, and knocking on the door for, is for a deeper connection and understanding for where our Gospel lesson of focus is coming from this morning regarding a prayer that we proclaim weekly together; the Lord’s Prayer.
- For our sermon time together, I would like to unpack the scripture, tradition, experiences and

reasons for why such a prayer, instructed by Jesus for us all to live by is so important in our faith journeys.

- So to begin with the scriptural aspect of our Matthew gospel, it is important to name that there are two instances in the Bible where we will find the Lord's Prayer.
- The first is in our gospel of Matthew 6 this morning that I will just re-read for emphasis;

Our Father in heaven, may your name be revered as holy.

10 May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- The second place where we can find the Lord's prayer is in the gospel of Luke 11: 1-4 in which the prayer reads; *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.”

- In researching the reason behind the two variations of the prayer; it is mainly because of the context in which the prayers are coming from.
- For Matthew’s version contextually is longer— simply because it was embedded in the *Sermon on the Mount*, of which Jesus instructed his disciples on personal practices of piety.
- Luke’s shorter version is given at the request of his disciples, rather than delivered to a multitude.
- Furthermore, despite the prayer’s universal use in Christianity, biblical scholars disagree on its interpretation.
- This fact, may shed some light on our Wednesday Night Class, “Applying the Sermon to Life;” for a lot of us even wrestled with some of the variances

in the language; not to mention that both of these passages of Luke and Matthew also differs significantly from the prayer language that we use in our worship service surrounding the Lord's Prayer; in which I will unpack in the tradition section of this sermon a little bit later.

- So getting back to the actual scriptures themselves of Luke and Matthew; some scholars view the prayer as “existential,” referring to present human experience on earth, while others interpret it as eschatological, referring to the coming kingdom of God.
- For others that do not fall into these two schools of thought; the prayer lends itself to both interpretations, in which further questions are posed by the existence of different translations and the problems inherent in the process of translation.

- Either way, this prayer from these two canonical gospels **are rooted in the tradition of our faith.**
- The Lord's Prayer was in relation to our discussion, a constituent part of the Matthean community's tradition and liturgy from its earlier days.
- Thereby making the Lord's Prayer, a customary feature of church services around the world of today.
- For although different versions of this prayer are already in use in different denominations; I found it interesting to learn that Pope Francis for instance, has now approved a rewording of the prayer for the Catholic church.
- For instead of saying *lead us not into temptation*, it will now say, *do not let us fall into temptation*; which I am thinking such a revision will be made, due to a question that came up in our Wednesday

night discussion, regarding the implications of the original wording; *lead us not into temptation.*

- For to take this particular verse at face value, it could be implied that **God is the One who is tempting us to fall astray.**
- Therefore, perhaps this is the Pope's way of clearing up any theological confusion of God's role in our human free-will autonomy that I talked about last week.
- Along these same lines, one of the Wednesday night scholars remarked how they preferred the wording of our gospel this morning in verse 10 that says *May Your kingdom come* verses the language that we use traditionally in worship, *Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done.*
- For this classmate, the king version language of *thy* is not as accessible and furthermore does not indicate that the one reciting the prayer, has a role to play in the kingdom making process;

- Whereas lifting up to God the words, *may your kingdom come*, resonated with the student as becoming a prayer that transcends the reciter, into becoming a willing participant in the kingdom making process; **which is why traditionally the Lord's Prayer exists in the worship service itself;**
- So that we as a community can be shaped in how we think about God, ourselves, the world and our role in the world.
- For the first three petitions of this prayer have to do exclusively with God: "Thy name be hallowed" —"Thy kingdom come"—"Thy will be done."
- And they occur in a descending scale—from God's self, down to the manifestation of Gods' self in God's kingdom; and from God's kingdom to the entire subjection of its subjects, or the complete doing of God's will;
- **In which the subjects are us;**

- And the prayer's intent, is for us as a people, to arrive to this place in our hearts and minds, where we begin to emanate the divine reflection of God's heart, in the unique and gifted way that each of us were created in the image of God to do so in .
- And how we will know when this transformation has begun to take root in our hearts in my mind, is when **our prayers in words becomes prayers in action.**
- For we see these prayers in action manifest itself, when people begin to move from the pews into purpose;
- This is traditionally how the church becomes more than just a building;
- This is how the Church becomes the people;
- **People** transformed in our relationship with God both individually and collectively;
- **People** who have moved from a place of not worrying about getting what we want—**instead we**

are most worried about who God wants us to be.

- For it is in these contributions of our God given gifts and graces, that I wholeheartedly believe is **what will make the world a better place to live in—for all of us;**
- For as I transition us to consider why this prayer is so crucial to **our lived experiences**, is because part of our mission as a reconciling community in my eyes, is to recognize that the world is not a loving place for all of us to live in.
- For I am recalling a story that was shared at our *4:15 Life Application of the Bible Class*, that also meets on Wednesdays.
- It was a painful story that one of our classmates gave me permission to share in the sermon;
- For we as a class were floored to learn that she is experiencing racism in the senior community that she is living in on a daily basis.

- For being part of the BIPOC community myself, I too relate to experiences of racism and bigotry but admittedly not in my own home;
- For in my mind, **home is somewhere** we are supposed to feel safe;
- **Home is supposed** to be a place where we feel comforted, protected, loved and free to be who we are...
- However, even as I name this truth in my heart and mind, I would be remiss if I did not share that there are a lot of people that do not have a place that they feel they can call home....
- There are sections of our society that would in fact attest to the fact **that they never had a place to call home;**
- Which for me is why the engagement and study of such a prayer is necessary for us to revisit, with hopefully a renewed sense of awareness and focus;

- For my reasoning ultimately rests upon this idea that I have already mentioned, that our work on Earth is about allowing this Lord's Prayer to transform us **from prayer in words, into aligning ourselves into prayers in action.**
- For I was inspired by a site that Elijah shared with me in class, that strengthened my understanding and reasoning for our role in the Lord's Prayer; where my attention was brought to the original Aramaic translation by Dr. Douglas-Klotz, who is noted for "Prayers of the Cosmos: Meditations on the Aramaic Words of Jesus," in which he offers **various translations for each line** from The Lord's Prayer from the Bible's King James V version.
- Furthermore, it is this Aramaic translation that might serve as a guide for how we ensure that the Lord's prayer truly becomes part of our daily actions.

Therefore in sharing the translation;

Our Father who art in heaven **becomes:**

**O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos, you
create all that moves in light.**

Hallowed be thy name becomes

**Focus your light within us — make it useful: as
the rays of a beacon show the way.**

Thy kingdom come...**becomes**

**Unite our “I can” to yours, so that we walk as
kings and queens with every creature.**

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
becomes...

**Create in me a divine cooperation — from many
selves, one voice, one action.**

Give us this day our daily bread **becomes—**

Grant what we need each day in bread and insight.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors **becomes—**

Forgive our hidden past, the secret shames, as we consistently forgive what others hide.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil **becomes—**

Deceived neither by the outer nor the inner — free us to walk your path with joy.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen...**becomes**

**From you is born all ruling will, the power and
life to do, the song that beautifies all from age to
age it renews.**

**Thanks be to God... let this become our daily
prayer.... Amen.**