

Dear friends,

We all know the saying 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going!' – and this can be recast for us today: 'When life becomes needy, the needy need to pray.' Today is about keeping going and keeping faith. Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray, using the words which we know as 'The Lord's Prayer'. Then he encourages them to persevere in prayer, in all circumstances, trusting that God will provide what is needed. We can be part of God's answer to prayer, through the power of the Holy Spirit. As Christ taught, we are asked to persist in prayer – to keep asking for that which is good, to keep seeking for that which is true, and to keep knocking until faith is sure. As always, every blessing – Margaret

Call to worship:

Let us tell of the ways of the Lord, for great is his glory.

Lord, we come to worship you, for great is your glory and great is the love which welcomes us.

You walk with us in our troubles, and your love lasts for ever.

So we bring you our praise and thanks.

God of the world, God of our hearts,

God of grace and love unending,

God of peace and abundance: we wait on you.

We wait on your Spirit, awaiting gentle prompting.

We wait on your Son, awaiting his love in our hearts.

We wait on our heavenly Father. We wait in love.

Lord of the world, Lord of our hearts,

Lord of grace and love unending,

Lord of peace and abundance: we wait on you.

Awaken our hearts to your presence.

Awaken our hearts to your love.

Awaken our hearts to your grace and change us all. Amen.

The words to 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God' written by Karen Lafferty [b. 1948] and arranged by Roland T. Fudge [b.1947]

1 Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you,
Allelu-, alleluia.

Refrain: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu, alleluia!

2 Ask, and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find:
knock and the door shall be opened unto you;
Allelu-, alleluia: Refrain.....

3 We shall not live by bread alone, but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord:
Allelu-, alleluia: Refrain.....

[In Hymns and Psalms 138, verse 3 begins: ‘Man shall not live by bread alone....’]

Prayers including the Lord's Prayer:

You, God, are the centre of our being, the plumb line by which we measure our lives.
For you are God of all, and all are your children.
You are the promise of what is right and the measure of what is wrong.
You are the teacher of love, respect and understanding.
In you we find sufficiency and more.
It is you, O God, that we worship – it is you and your ways that we adore.
It is you and your giving which shows us how to live our lives. Amen.

‘Forgive us our sin as we forgive those who sin against us’, we readily pray – as Jesus taught.
But forgive us for often failing to get even this point: to be forgiven needs us to be forgiving.
In a world of blame and counter-blame, hear, then, our acceptance of fault, and our commitment to change, and our whole-hearted willingness to forgive – not so that we are then forgiven but just because your justice demands it.
And so we pray that we might yet be forgiven and that, even through us, your Kingdom might come.
Amen.

Our words, dear God, are so often hollow and empty – your word is full and for ever – your word promises to forgive us – it assures us of our freedom from past sins, failings and falterings.
Let us hear now your word and be set free to live our lives for you. Amen.

Are you mad, God?
You persist with us even though we have an unerring tendency to let you down.
You keep loving us through the thick and the thin of our discipleship – though both faith and mercy are often strained.
You keep trusting us with the job of spreading gospel truth through word and action, though we mumble and stumble along truth’s way.
You must be mad, God!
Except you choose no other way to let love rule.
Not for you compulsion, but the free consent of faithful folk.
Bless us in the roles you call us to play, for the sake of your Kingdom.
In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy will. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Luke 11: 1-13. The New Living Translation. [Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, Wheaton, Illinois 60189, United States of America. All rights reserved.]

Once when Jesus had been out praying, one of his disciples came to him as he finished and said: ‘Lord, teach us how to pray, just as John taught his disciples,’
Jesus said: ‘This is how you should pray:
Father, may your name be honoured. May your Kingdom come soon.

Give us our food day by day. And forgive us our sins – just as we forgive those who have sinned against us. And don't let us yield to temptation.

Then teaching them some more about prayer, he used this illustration: 'Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You would say to him: "A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat." He would call out from his bedroom: "Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and we are all in bed. I can't help you this time." But I tell you this -though he won't do it as a friend, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you what you want so his reputation won't be damaged.

And so I tell you this, keep on asking and you will be given what you ask for. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And the door is opened to everyone who knocks.

You fathers – if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?'

Meditation of Andrew: [A Most Amazing Man – year C; written by Nick Fawcett. Copyright 2009 Nick Fawcett]

I'm not sure what we were expecting, but we wanted help, for we found prayer as much of a struggle as anyone.

We did our best, yes – but when it came to communing with God, opening up before him and hearing his voice, we were floundering, all at sea.

Not Jesus though – for him prayer seemed to come naturally, instinctive and spontaneous, every moment – not just those set apart for God – seemingly lived in dialogue with the Father, as though the two were one.

What was his secret, we wanted to know? What method should we follow, techniques use, aids employ?

But he offered none of those, just a prayer of his own, incredibly short and simply saying it all – a reminder if ever there was one that, when we pray, it's not the number of words that matters but the attitude behind them: our willingness to seek God's glory, accept his will and work for the kingdom here on earth – to trust in his love and accept his forgiveness, responding to others in turn.

Approach God with such thoughts in your heart – speak and listen as best you can – give time to him, and though it may still not come easily, you'll have learnt what it means to pray.

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Teach us, good Lord, instead of looking for secrets of prayer, some special method or formula that will make it easy, to look to *you*, making time to study your word, seek your presence and nurture a meaningful daily relationship.

Help us honestly, regularly and simply to express what lies on our hearts and show us, in turn, what lies on yours. Amen.

Comment: In the Gospels, we find two versions of the Lord's Prayer. In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus provides a pattern of praying that is brief and to the point 'pray....in this way']. Here in Luke, he gives his followers a prayer to pray for themselves ['When you pray, say.....'] – but not just in words. By praying 'Father', the disciples share something of his relationship with God and claim their place in the communion created by the coming of God's kingdom into the world. 'Your kingdom come' is a prayer for grace in the face of human needs.

‘Daily bread’ means enough for the day and no more [as the manna was received in the wilderness]. ‘Forgive our sins as we ourselves forgive’ asks that God may be like we are at our best – only far more so. ‘Do not bring us to the time of trial’ is a more accurate translation than ‘lead us not into temptation’, and prays that we might be faithful to God’s kingdom in the face of evil. In the parable following we see that the obligations of hospitality are such that the destitute host’s friends will give him what he asks for – however inconvenient, just because he asks. But even the best that human beings can achieve falls far short of the goodness of God. Yet if neighbours and parents can be hospitable and generous in their responses to others, how much more this must be true of God!

Prayer: Let us pray for those who need bread because they starve during the daytime and go to bed hungry – because they lack the means to provide for their families and communities.....
For those who seek love and companionship with other human beings, yet find only ill-treatment and injustice, cruelty in the place of tenderness.....
For those who desperately need a place of safety where they can have a life with opportunity.....
God of all: we ask on behalf of those in need. Amen

Today we hold before our gracious God: all those who are asking and those who do not know what to ask for. May they be given all that they need and may they recognise truth when they meet it.
Today we hold before our gracious God: all those who are searching and those who do not know what to search for. May they find all that they seek and may they recognise their discovery.
Today we hold before our gracious God: all those who are knocking and those who knock but do not recognise the door. May the door be opened to them and may they be greeted by the God who loves them and who created them Amen.

The words to ‘Pray without ceasing’ written by Charles Wesley [1707-1788] Singing the Faith 528
[this is the second part to ‘Soldiers of Christ, arise’ and so sings to the same tune.]

1 Pray without ceasing, pray, your captain gives the word;
his summons cheerfully obey, and call upon the Lord;
to God your every want in instant prayer display;
pray always; pray, and never faint; pray, without ceasing, pray!

2 in fellowship, alone, to God, with faith, draw near,
approach his courts, besiege his throne with all the powers of prayer:
go to his temple, go, nor from his altar move;
let every house his worship know, and every heart his love.

3 Pour out your souls to God, and bow them with your knees,
and spread your hearts and hands abroad, and pray for Zion’s peace;
your guides and kindred bear for ever on your mind;
extend the arms of mighty prayer, and grasp all humankind.

Close: Lord, help us to think before praying, and pray before acting. May we see our community and the people who make it up as precious to you and precious to us, as we seek to preserve all that is beautiful and build up all that is holy and Godly. Amen.

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