

ORDER OF WORSHIP
January 31, 2021
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Pastor Matthias (Matt) Krier

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 6:7-13 from the Message Bible

7-13 “The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don’t fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are. Set the world right; do what’s best -- as above, so below. Keep us alive with three square meals. Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others. Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil. You’re in charge! You can do anything you want! You’re ablaze in beauty! Yes. Yes. Yes.

The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God!**

Reflections

Judy Reel & Jill Graff, Matthias Krier

This paraphrase from the Message Bible helps us to see and experience that there is more to the Lord’s Prayer than just reciting the words we learned from little on. The Lord’s Prayer is like an onion with layers and layers to be peeled before we get to the heart of this prayer. We may or may not resonate with this paraphrase, but it no doubt helps us to hear this prayer differently. Judy Reel shared with us a couple of weeks ago at Mid-Week Reflections this responsive reading. Judy and I would like to share that with you now. We will pause momentarily between each of these for us to take in its message:

LITANY OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Our"

People: if my religion has no room for other people and their needs.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Father"

People: if I do not demonstrate this relationship in my daily life.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Who art in heaven"

People: if all my interests and pursuits are earthly things.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Thy kingdom come"

People: if I am unwilling to give up my sovereignty and accept the reign of God.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Thy will be done"

People: if I am unwilling or resentful of having God in my life.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."On earth as it is in heaven"

People: unless I am truly ready to give myself to our Lord's service here and now.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Give us this day our daily bread"

People: without expending honest effort for it or by ignoring the needs of my neighbor.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"

People: if I continue to harbor a grudge against anyone.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Lead us not into temptation"

People: if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Deliver us from evil"

People: if I am not prepared to fight in the spiritual realm with the weapon of prayer.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, the Glory"

People: if I do not give disciplined obedience, if I fear what neighbors and friends may say or do, if I seek my own glory first.

Leader: I cannot say. . ."Amen"

People: unless I can honestly say also, "Cost what it may, this is my prayer."

What does it mean to say, "*thy kingdom come*"?

What does it mean to say, "*thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*"?

Yeshua had words for us in the book of Matthew on how we treat those who are at or below the poverty line; for those who are fleeing persecution and oppression from their country; for those who are ill and in prison;

*"Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, * you did it to me."*

This speaks to *'thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'*

As Yeshua continued to teach about the kingdom of God, we hear these words in the gospel of Matthew:

10 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Notice how certain leaders in our country are being threatened or persecuted for seeking justice and equality for all! Notice how certain leaders are threatened for doing the right thing. This is not just a current phenomenon, it goes back to the ancient prophets seeking to bring the kingdom of God to earth, even then. Hear these words from the prophet Joel:

“And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.
New King James Version

Again and again the prophets of old such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Micah all had one thing in common: they fought for those who could not fend for themselves. They fought for justice and equality. They dreamed big dreams of what this world might look like in bringing God consciousness to earth.

The late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., sought to usher in this kingdom for freedom and equality when he said these words:

1. “I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream.”
2. “I have a dream that one day right there in Alabama little black boys and little black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”
3. “Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice.”
4. “We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”
5. “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”
6. “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed — we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”

While this dream is still unfolding, we are not there just yet. We are still dreaming this dream that ALL people will be treated equally.

We may catch glimpses of this when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law. It is interesting that the church in many parts of the country were not in favor of this bill just as the church was split back in the 1800’s over the issue of slavery.

The **Civil Rights Act of 1964** prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Provisions of this **civil rights act** forbade discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as, race in hiring, promoting, and firing.

The reign of God is not our reign. The reign of God offers full inclusion for all people to be treated equally.

“Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are.”

Earlier during the Litany you heard the commentary on *“thy will be done”* from Neil Douglas-Klotz in Prayers from the Cosmos. Again, the Aramaic is rich and full of so much more than what the English has to offer. Jesus’ native tongue speaks volumes in fleshing out the fullness of the Lord’s Prayer. I believe that if Christians from around the world truly experienced what Yeshua had intended, it would bring about revitalization, transformation and illumination to churches everywhere! I believe that if the Lord’s Prayer was taken seriously, Christians who claim to be Christian would live very different lives.

Instead, we have folks who claim to be Christian, but do not live by the Golden Rule. Instead of Christians reflecting the **light** and **love** of Christ, they reflect hatred and inequality. Instead of Christians **loving as Jesus loved**, we have Christians who are refusing to do the right thing where there is injustice.

I brought a different cup this morning which is one of my favorites and on the side of the cup are these letters: WWJD. If we want to think about bringing the kingdom of God to earth, the consciousness of God to earth, may we be mindful of WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? This would change everything, in the way that supposed Christians would treat one another. They could no longer treat each other with contempt, or hatred, or with abuse! They could no longer threaten each other with any kind of harm if we simply remembered WWJD: What Would Jesus Do? Say that with me: What Would Jesus Do?

Now we will hear the words to describe *“thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.”* The words in Aramaic are:

Nehwey tzevyanach aykanna d’bwashmaya aph b’arha
thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

I would like to invite Judy Reel back to share in this responsive reading:

Your one desire then acts with ours,

as in all light, so in all forms.

**Let all wills move together
in your vortex, as stars and planets
swirl through the sky.**

Help us love beyond our ideals
and sprout acts of compassion
for all creatures.

**As we find your love in ours,
let heaven and nature form
a new creation.**

Unite the crowd within
in a vision of passionate purpose:
light mates with form.

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

Let your heart's fervent desire
unite heaven and earth
through our harmony.

**Your one desire then acts with ours,
as in all light, so in all forms.**

Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are to us this day and everyday. Amen.