



DATE: August 23, 2020 (Easter Sunday)
SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:5-13
TITLE: Your name, your will.

This week we will begin a four-part look at the Lord's Prayer. This is a powerful and concise prayer that Christians have been memorizing for centuries. The beauty of memorizing the prayer is that we can access it easily. In times of trouble or stress, when I cannot even put my feelings into words, The Lord's Prayer can work to begin my time of prayer. It is also a powerful thing to be able to say in a group of people "Our Father..." and know that the faithful who have gathered will respond in kind.

The problem with a memorized prayer is that tendency for it to become rote and mindless. How many times have I said the words of the prayer without thinking of its meaning? How long can a memorized prayer go unexamined? One person recently shared with me that as a girl she thought it really meant that she was forgiven for the times she was on a neighbor's lawn without permission (forgive us our trespasses) and she could not figure out why that mattered.

This is why we are taking four weeks to examine these five verses in the Gospel of Matthew and three verses in Luke (Luke 11:2-4).

The first two words of the prayer (as told in Matthew) are illustrative. "Our Father," reminds us that this is a communal prayer. We are to pray together. Even though Jesus just warned against showy prayer, when he gives us the model for prayer, he models a prayer of community.

Second, we are praying to a God who is in relationship with us. This is a God who yearns for a closer connection and embodies love. While "the gentiles" prayed to aloof gods who would rather not be bothered with the affairs of humanity, Jesus reminds us that God is ready to listen. We do not need a long, rambling, flowery preamble to get God's attention.

The prayer we use in worship begins, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." Most of us, if pressed to translate this into more modern language would simply say. "God in heaven, your name is holy." It feels like an introduction, or maybe a salutation of honor. It is not.

The translation of the Common English Bible helps reveal a deeper understanding of what "hallowed be thy name" really means. The CEB reads "Our Father who is in heaven, uphold the holiness of

your name." This isn't a simple address to a holy God. It is a request to God.

It is a request that God's name be defended, uplifted, and kept holy. It is a request to God to stand out—be made known. To

be holy means "to be set apart." In this prayer we are asking God to be set apart; to be noticed. It is often far too easy to ignore God. This prayer requests God to be made known to the world.

The prayer that Jesus taught us begins with a request for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is a request for God's justice to be present in the world in such a way that we cannot ignore it. It is a call to action for God and for God's followers to no longer live under the Kingdoms of this world that operate under systems of scarcity, fear, violence, and exploitation.

It is a call for a new kind of Kingdom—a Kingdom that cannot be ignored. A Kingdom of plenty, kindness, peace, and community. Thus begins a few short sentences that are packed with power. It is a short prayer, but it is not short on meaning.

Most of us, if pressed to translate the opening of the Lord's Prayer into more modern language would simply say. "God in heaven, your name is holy." It feels like an introduction, or maybe a salutation of honor. **It is not.**