

Luke 11:1-13
Lord's Prayer
Trinity Episcopal Church
July 27, 2025

Basic Intro

Each Thursday during the school year at the Chapel we would host a dinner for students to enjoy food that wasn't cafeteria food, be together, have conversation and grow in their relationship with one another. We keep hearing that many in the college age and their peers are skeptical of the institution of the church and so I think they are a critical demographic of folks to listen to.

The task was simple, answer the following question anonymously and with as much brutal honesty as you would like:

"What would you say to the Church in America right now?"

Here are some of their responses.

The first one I read: "You guys really blow it sometimes. Sorry pastor Anders"

Others said:

"I would say that Christians should actually practice what they preach."

"I would tell them to be better advocates for communities who have historically been oppressed and treated unfairly."

"I would tell them to stop caring so much about their churches and status and start caring for God's people."

"I would tell them that they should be more focused on heaven now than heaven later."

And finally, the most straightforward of all: "Love better."

Sounds like some pretty good advice. Actually... it is almost Gospel-like isn't it?

"Love better."

"Practice what you preach."

"Be better advocates for those less fortunate."

Almost like those words are spoken and written verbatim in the Gospel.

"You guys really blow it sometimes." – Also, like something that Jesus says. Not to shame, but to challenge because he knows that his disciples can do better—and subsequently so can we.

These are some wise words from these students for us to listen to – and then allow them to guide our thoughts, prayer, but ultimately our actions moving forward as the Church that Jesus Christ calls us to be.

I need your help.

See if you can fill in the blank for me in these famous prayers.

Come Lord Jesus be our guest... and let these gifts to us be blessed

Now I lay me down to sleep.... I pray the lord my soul to keep!

A newer one to me as a Lutheran--

Eternal God, heavenly father... you have graciously accepted us as living members of your son our savior Jesus Christ and you have fed us with spiritual food...

Very good Episcopalians you are.

For our recovering Catholics in the room – Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Our Father...

This prayer for people who grew up in the church, or maybe even didn't lasts a lifetime. Even my grandmother who suffered from Alzheimer's and hardly knew where or who she was each day and numerous folks I have visited in hospitals or in their homes as they approached their final moments on earth. These words always come back. As soon as you start, Our Father...

The heart of the Gospel text today rests on this prayer that Jesus gives us and I think he answers a few questions. Why pray and how to pray.

Why?

Simply put, because Jesus told us that we should. And if we are claiming to be people who model their lives after Jesus – then we should model a life of prayer as he did. In the Gospel of Luke up to this point in chapter 11, Luke tells us about Jesus praying 5 different times before big events that happen in the Gospel. He prayed to God because he understood the relationship and trusted God. As should we. We should go to God with everything in prayer asking and seeking because doors will be opened, and sometimes closed. We should pray even knowing that sometimes the mystery of prayer feels overwhelming, but we pray because we strive to be in a deeper relationship with God. And because Jesus told us to and modeled a life that said – do it.

The second question – How?

The disciples ask the question and you can feel the desperation and confusion in the asking. "Lord teach us to pray as John taught his disciples" – as if to say -- Hey, we don't know what we are doing, but we want to know. And clearly you think it is important so can you teach us the words? Can you help give us some direction please? We want to be like you and pray but we have no idea where to start.

And so Jesus gives them these words. 'Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
³Give us each day our daily bread.
⁴And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial.' "

This prayer belongs to us. It has been given by Jesus to us, and yet it escapes us. I worry that the deeper meaning behind each phrase gets lost in the rote recitation of the Lord's Prayer each week when we gather. If I am honest I am often thinking about setting the table and serving communion as I am "praying" this prayer and not paying attention to the power that it holds.

So, what might happen if we break down this prayer... if we are honest with ourselves about the meaning of each line and treat it both as a confession and a conversation with God.

A few years ago, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Nadia Bolz Weber, a Lutheran pastor and writer, wrote an "Extended Dance Version" of the Lord's prayer. In it this extended version she responded to each line with a mix of confession and touch of our current reality as 21st century Christians in America.

It was brilliant and so I thought I would try to do the same mixing her words, and Jesus' words, and mine, to perhaps bring forth some of the hopes, the doubts, the uncertainties and anxieties, and cold hard truths about the world that we live in.

At this point, I'm going to pray, unfiltered through the Lord's prayer and my hope is that it might make us all think more deeply about the words we say when we join together to say it corporately in a few minutes and maybe we all reflect on how and why this prayer is so vital to our relationship with the divine.

Our Father, Our Mother, Our Holy Parent, The Source of All Being from whom we came and to whom we return, You who knows us better than we know ourselves. Jesus called you Father and so shall we, even as we may have a complicated relationship with parenthood - Be to us our Holy Parent, the one who loves without condition.

Who art in heaven, Our Father who art in everything. Our Father who art in orphanages and neonatal units, and jail cells and luxury high-rises, who art in law offices, and the halls of our governments. Our father who art in the people locked in Alligator Alcatraz and in the neighborhoods of the poorest of the poor, the downtrodden, neglected, and in the homes of the most powerful in the world and everywhere in between...

Hallowed be thy name. Holy is your name. Ever since the beginning we have attributed our own ego and wishful thinking and greed and malice and racism and homophobia and ambition and manipulations of others to you and to your name –

and yet your name remains holy. We print “In God we trust” on the US dollar and then worship that dollar and the power that dollar brings us, and yet still, somehow, some way, despite our best efforts, your name remains holy.

Thy kingdom come, Help us. God, right now we beg you to bring more than just a small measure of heaven to earth because, if you haven’t noticed, people are angry, Gaza is starving, nations continue to wage war and drop bombs, our political system is a box of tinder edging closer and closer to a bonfire, and many of our neighborhoods and systems that look nothing like the world that you intended for us. It’s a mess down here, Lord. We need wise leaders, and just systems and an extra dose of compassion for all of us.

Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Thy will and not ours be done. Forgive us when we use prayer as a self-help technique by which we can get all the cash and prizes we want out of your divine vending machine if we just kind of bug you to death through ceaseless prayer, because when it comes down to it, we know better. You are our Father whose name is holy and whose love is boundless and who - as our holy Parent – wants to hear our prayers.

Give us today our daily bread. If I’m honest, God. It feels ridiculous to ask for this when millions are starving. When the world watches children across the world waste away online and seemingly does nothing to stop it. But today give us the gift of enough-ness. May our response to perceived scarcity always be increased generosity for we are your children and from you we receive everything. Give us today our desire for the neighbor to be fed. Give us today a desire for a good - a good for others and a good for us.

And forgive us our sins. As we forgive those who sin against us. Forgive us when we hate what you love. Forgive us when we would rather numb ourselves than feel anything. Forgive us for how much we resent in others the same things we hate in ourselves. And this one is hard, but please forgive us for thinking we know the hearts of our enemies.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Deliver us from the inclination that we too do not have evil in our hearts. Deliver us from religious and national exceptionalism. Deliver us from the temptation to lob meaningless thoughts and prayers instead of offering action and personal sacrifice. Deliver us from self-loathing and self- righteousness. Deliver us from a complete lack of imagination about where you are in our lives and how you might already be showing up. Deliver us from complacency. Deliver us from complicity to systems that demean and dehumanize, the people whom you have created in your image.

So, as Jesus taught us today, we are throwing this bag of prayers at your door. Some of us are holding your feet to the fire, some of us don’t know if we believe

in you, some of us are distracted and just going through the motions, some are hopeful that the world is changing for the good, and others are doubtful that things will ever, ever get better... but all of us are your children. This morning, we throw these prayers and all of the prayers of your children at your feet because we trust in you and your promise of love to your people.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

And all God's children said, **AMEN.**