



God's Kingdom Come
March 15, 2026
4th Sunday in Lent
Rev. Dr. Glenda Hollingshead
Matthew 6:1-18

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to do the right thing for the wrong reason? It happens more often than we like to admit. We can give generously – and quietly hope someone notices. We can volunteer – and somehow make sure people know just how busy we are. We can bow our heads in prayer – and worry more about how our words sound than about actually reaching God.

In Matthew 6, Jesus looks past our religious performances and into our hearts. He isn't calling his followers to do less – to give less, pray less, or fast less. He is calling them to do these things differently—authentically—secretly, even. He is calling them to a faith that is lived before an audience of One. And right in the center of this passage – nestled between warnings about religious performance – Jesus gives his disciples a gift. A prayer. A template. A north star for the life of faith. We call it the Lord's Prayer.

“Our Father in heaven...”

From the very first syllable, Jesus places us in community. *“Our”* Father—not *“my”* Father. The Lord’s Prayer is never solitary, never merely private. As brothers and sisters in the same family, we come to God together — or we do not truly come at all.

We are often tempted to treat prayer like a to-do list we hand over to God. But Jesus is teaching us something revolutionary: prayer is not primarily about our agenda. It is about entering God’s presence, recognizing who God is, and aligning ourselves with God before we say anything else. So, Jesus does not say first of all, “Tell God what you need.” He does not say, “Present your requests.” He begins with adoration — with the very character and holiness of God.

*Our Father...*Yes, God is our beloved Abba — the parent whose love shapes us, whose care sustains us, whose image we bear. But this same God who cradles us so tenderly, is also utterly beyond us — dwelling in heaven, radiant and mysterious.

“May your name be revered as holy” or as we learned it in the KJV, *“hallowed be your name.”*

To revere or to hallow something is to treat it as sacred, to hold it in the highest esteem. Richard Rohr notes that “Great religion is about adoration, about Someone you bow before. If you do not,” he writes, “you will soon bow before yourself.”ⁱ

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

This is the heart of the prayer — and the heart of this entire sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount: God’s kingdom come. These words are not passive—as if we are waiting on God alone to make it so. Instead, they are words of declaration and surrender. We declare that the world as it is, is not the world as God intends it to be. And we surrender our own agendas so that God’s reign might break through — in our lives, in our communities, and in this world God so loves.

When we pray, *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,”* we’re asking for something breathtaking — that the reality of heaven might begin to take root on earth. In heaven there is no injustice, no war, no grief, no broken relationships. So, when we pray these words, we aren’t escaping the world. We’re praying for its healing and transformation.

And here is the challenge: to pray this prayer sincerely is to make ourselves available to be part of the answer. We cannot ask God to feed the hungry and then close our pantry. We cannot pray for reconciliation and refuse to pick up the phone. This prayer is not a spectator sport. It’s a commitment — a willingness to let our lives become part of the way God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

“Give us today our daily bread...”

After soaring to the heights of God’s majesty, Jesus brings us back to the ordinary. Daily bread.

Not a lifetime supply. Just today's bread. This is a prayer of profound trust — the kind the Israelites learned in the wilderness when manna arrived each morning but could not be hoarded. Jesus is inviting us into that same daily dependence on God. Not Christmas and Easter. Not just when tragedy strikes. Not only when we feel like it. Daily. The life of faith is not one long leap; it's a million small steps, each one taken trusting in the One who walks with us.

So, what is your *daily bread* right now? Do you need the strength to face a difficult relationship? The wisdom to make a hard decision? The peace to sleep through the night? Jesus says: ask. Bring the ordinary to the Extraordinary. God is not too big for the small things you carry.

"Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors..."

Of all the petitions in the Lord's Prayer, this is the one Jesus returns to explain after the prayer ends. In verses 14 and 15 he is unmistakably clear: if you forgive others, your Father will forgive you. If you do not, he will not. Jesus isn't saying that forgiveness is *how* we earn grace. He's saying that a heart that has truly received forgiveness can't help but begin to extend grace.

Unforgiveness is one of the great roadblocks to spiritual maturity. It is the heavy pack that slows us down, the weight we carry that was never ours to keep. Some of us have been dragging something for years — a betrayal, a wound, a broken promise — and it's exhausting. To forgive is not to pretend that what happened was okay. It is to release the debt — not only for the sake of the other, but also for our own freedom. And even more than that, it is to live in the reality of what God has already done for us in Christ. We forgive because we've been forgiven. Rohr says it so well: The cross makes forgivers of us all.

"And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one..."

Jesus ends the prayer with a note of realism. Life is not safe; there are real forces that pull us away from God; there are real temptations; and we need real deliverance. This final petition humbly acknowledges that we cannot navigate this life on our own strength. So, we pray this part of the prayer before we need it. Before the temptation arrives, we ask God to lead us away from it. Before the enemy whispers in our ear, we ask God to fortify us in the truth. This is faith that prepares the heart — a daily returning toward the One who guides, guards, and delivers us along the way.

Regarding temptations and how we imagine evil in the world, Amy-Jill Levine offers this:

Some of us may not believe in Satan in the sense of an actual, supernatural, malevolent being who possesses people so that they act in destructive ways. "The Devil made me do it" can function as a denial of personal responsibility. Personally, I don't need a Satan to recognize those things in the world that tempt us: drugs, alcohol, gambling, and so on. But we do need resources to overcome addictions, and the prayer is precisely such a

resource.ⁱⁱ

During worship each Sunday, we recite The Lord's Prayer together. Even so, let us never forget that it's not meant to be recited on autopilot. It's meant to be a living compass. Leading us into God's presence, it begins with God's glory, moves to God's kingdom, then turns to our daily needs, our relationships, and our spiritual protection. It is a picture of the whole journey of faith. And it begins and ends in community. "Our Father." "Deliver us." We do not pray these words alone. We pray them with every believer across generations and across the world—people who, in their own language, in their own need, reach toward the same Abba Father.

Throughout this sermon series, we've reflected on God's dream for a new world — a dream we can glimpse in the shape of the Lord's Prayer. A world where God's kingdom comes to dwell among the people. A world in which we respond to God's grace and love in how we give, how we pray, how we forgive, how we wake each morning and, before the noise rushes in, bravely whisper: *"Your will be done. Your kingdom come on earth — in my home, in my work, in my neighborhood, in my own heart — as it is in heaven."* May we be a people who dare to pray like that. And then may we live like people claimed by Christ — not spectators, not bystanders—but those sent into the world, leaning into God's dream for us all. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ⁱ Richard Rohr, Jesus' Plan for a New World: The Sermon on the Mount, 165.

ⁱⁱ Amy-Jill Levine, Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven, 89.

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