

Meditation: THE LORD'S PRAYER

With comments by Verna Kwiatkowski. Written for a funeral service.

OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

When death takes a loved one from us – perhaps as at no other time – we recognize that we need God. Life presents us all with challenges and can be overwhelming with its pain, sorrows, and disruptions. We need a *constant* presence in our lives – someone who will never leave us or forsake us; someone who loves us, who understands, who is there for us and is able to give us comfort. Our God – the one Jesus said we may call “Our Father” – is all of this and more. Jesus, when he was on the earth, showed us the loving heart of God: He said, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*¹

Be assured that God knows who we are, where we are and why we are here. And God cares! Hallowed be the name of the Lord.

THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

God does have a Kingdom – a spiritual realm – only part of which can be experienced here. It is the place where God rules in all his love and wisdom. In the heavenly part of the Kingdom, where those who have gone from us are residing, God’s will is always done. Jesus said we should ask for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven. And he showed us by example how this can be done. On the night before he died, knowing the agony he was facing, he prayed, *“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken away from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”*² Submitting to the will of our Father in Heaven is a way of hallowing his name, and for us it is the way of release, of freedom, of peace.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.

All of us are aware of the need for food and water to sustain our physical lives, and Jesus says we may ask our Father for these provisions. But we are more than just bodies. We also need spiritual food to nourish our spirits daily, so that we may be strengthened and prepared for whatever life brings us. Interestingly enough, Jesus said that he is the spiritual food and drink that we need so much.

One day while he was addressing a large group of people, he said, *“It is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”* “Sir,” they said, *“from now on give us this bread.”* Then Jesus declared, *“I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never go hungry, and those who believe in me will never be thirsty.”*³

Another time Jesus asked a woman from Samaria for a drink of water. She was surprised by the request, since Jews and Samaritans did not mingle with each other. Jesus said to her, *“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”* Jesus answered her further questions by saying, *“All who drink [the water in this well] will be thirsty again, but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water*

welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water...” and before the day was over, she had had the drink she requested and was forever satisfied.⁴

Me, too! Having come to Jesus years ago, I can attest that those who come to Jesus will never go hungry, and those who believe in him will never be thirsty. The living bread and water are still available for you and for anyone else who wants it. The well never runs dry.

AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US.

Or: forgive us our sins or our debts as we forgive those who sin against us or are our debtors.

What a prison we build for ourselves if we refuse to forgive! If we can admit that we ourselves are sinners, it shouldn't be so hard to forgive others who treat us imperfectly. By example, Jesus showed us we don't have to wait for an apology in order to forgive our debtors, for as he was dying, he prayed, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”*⁵

The apostle Paul instructs us to *“bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”*⁶ And how did the Lord forgive us? Completely and permanently!

Forgiving someone does not mean that we are now condoning the sin or trespass, or considering it to be trivial. Rather it means that we will not hold the sin against the person any longer; that we will not hold a grudge, which, after all, hurts us much more than it hurts the one who sinned against us. Ideally, we should all be living in an attitude of forgiveness, and that includes forgiving ourselves. Why should we continue to hold against ourselves things for which God has forgiven us?

At a time of the death of a loved one, feelings of guilt and regret often surface. If this is true in the present situation, let me give you some words of comfort. First of all, it is not too late to forgive the person who has died. That can be done at any time. And if you neglected to ask forgiveness of the one who has died, be assured that in Heaven God's people are not thinking of your offenses, either the real or the imagined. They are in another realm, where there is no condemnation of any sort. You are forgiven! Now pass it on and be free.

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

In traumatic times people often are tempted to blame God for what has happened, to become so angry with God that they want nothing to do with the Lord. Paradoxically, these same people may feel abandoned by God! Not so! But if we refuse to have anything to do with the Comforter, we cannot expect to feel his comforting arms around us. So don't fall into that temptation. God has given us the Bible to read and learn from. Many of the answers to our questions are in there. And there is much revelation of God's character – enough to keep us in a trusting relationship with him. God is good!

Also, traumatic times may bring the temptation to lash out at other people, especially at close relatives – accusing, piling on blame, causing guilt. Lifetime rifts may come as a result

of harsh words spoken in times of family sorrow. This is so sad! Lord, deliver us from this evil!

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.

I like to think of life on the earth as the prelude for the great symphony that God's people enter into at death. The kingdom has a forever – an eternal – quality to it. Jesus said, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*⁷

John, who was given glimpses of things yet to come in Heaven, wrote as follows: *"Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!'"* And the response was: *"Amen."*⁸ The kingdom, the power and the glory all belong to God, but we are allowed to be a part of it! What a privilege! Let's think on these things as we pray together the Lord's prayer (using the words "trespass" and "trespasses") –

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. 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, and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.⁹

References:

1. Matthew 11:28; 2. Matthew 26:39b; 3. From John 6:32b-35; 4. From John 4:7-15 (the full story is John 4:4-42); 5. Luke 23:34; 6. Colossians 3:13; 7. John 3:16,17; 8. Revelation 5:13,14; 9. Matthew 6:9-13.