



Sermon for Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 24, 2022

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene Kristin Keyes, Lay Preacher

[Hosea 1:2-10](#)

[Psalm 85](#)

[Colossians 2:6-15, \(16-19\)](#)

[Luke 11:1-13](#)

Jesus teaches us to pray and invites us to ask, seek and knock.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Wouldn't you love to be the one sitting with Jesus and asking — Please teach us to pray? And what a prayer we have been given. In this passage of Luke, we are given this prayer, followed by a parable about persistence in prayer and a promise of God's great gift given to those who need only ask: The Holy Spirit.

When you think about it, all of today's scriptures are about relationship with God. God uses Hosea to show just how impatient he is with his unfaithful and wandering people. It feels unseemly that God would use Hosea and Gomer as living examples of his judgement and disapproval. But actions often speak much louder than words. In Psalms we see a returning to God and His good and gracious mercy being bestowed once again.

In Colossians, Paul tells us to live our lives in Christ with thanksgiving. Don't be bamboozled by shining objects or empty promises -- Squirrel. Stay focused on Jesus and we can live a resurrected life sure in our growth that is from God.

In Luke, we are invited into relationship with God through prayer. We are invited to be persistent, to ask, to seek, to knock and it will be given, found, and opened to us.

The structure and content of the prayer Jesus gave us is a Jewish prayer, which was well established in Jesus' time. Several of the lines follows the form of Amidah, which is the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy. Today, this prayer is said by observant Jews three times per day usually standing, and includes 3 paragraphs of praise, 13 of petition and another 3 of thanksgiving.

Jesus' prayer offers two lines of praise and three petitions, some modeled after the lines of Amidah. The Luke version is written for a Gentile audience and is much shorter than the Matthew version, which is written for a Jewish audience. The Matthew version is the one we have memorized and is what we pray in our Eucharist. It is interesting to note that the addition of the doxology at the end of this prayer in Matthew, didn't start to show up in our Bibles until the 16th century at the beginning of the Reformation. Some scholars note that this is to give us a protestant prayer different from what our Catholic brothers and sisters pray.

I had an opportunity to attend a day long workshop on the Lord's Prayer when I lived in Flagstaff, Arizona. Speakers offered personal reflections on each line of the Lord's prayer. We were invited to walk a labyrinth to pray and reflect on each line moving from petal to petal while in the center. We also had an opportunity to explore the meaning of the prayer from the original ancient middle eastern Aramaic, which is likely the language that Jesus used to give this prayer to his disciples. And we were able to participate in sacred dance breathing in the words and rhythms of this ancient prayer.

Here is a brief synopsis of the learnings from that day, what we explored for each line. I know there are times when I just say the words without thinking about what I'm praying — by rote, if you will. I found these sessions to be quite helpful, providing a fresh perspective to breathe new life into these words that I know so well. Let's take a closer look:

Father, hallowed be thy name

This line is about faith, a reminder and hope that our desire is to be in a place where we completely trust in God.

Your kingdom come

This invites us to surrender — to give up our control turning it over to the power of God.

Give us each day our daily bread

This petition invites us to ask for the nourishment we need.

And forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

This petition is about forgiveness, release if you will, which is another word for forgiveness. We are invited to model God's mercy shown to each one of us to those with whom we interact. It is an invitation into community through forgiveness.

And do not bring us to the time of trial

This is our petition to God to help us to overcome adversity, to get the better of, to surmount difficulties with God's help.

Now to my favorite part of the workshop -- A translation of the Lord's Prayer from the original Aramaic. The translation comes from *Prayers of the Cosmos, Reflections on the Original Meaning of Jesus' Words*, by Neil Douglas-Klotz, a Sufi mystic and world-renowned scholar in spirituality, religious studies, and psychology.

In the tradition of the times, he says, the disciples would be breathing with, saying the words of the teacher in their common language, coming into the rhythm with the words as a living experience. Not through visualizing, he says, but feeling the rhythm of breath, the vibration of the voice, the chant in the language – this is the underlying way of prayer in the middle eastern tradition.

I am not going to try to repeat the whole prayer in Aramaic – it would be too painful to sit through. But I do want to share the first line, as it brings a whole new meaning to the largely patriarchal translations of the Greek texts found in the New Testament.

The prayer opens with Our Father, which is a translation of the word “abba.” The Aramaic transliteration is Abwoon, which is a blending of “abba” or father, and “woon” or womb, in which Jesus blends both the masculine and feminine sources of creation.

So the Aramaic for the first line [Our Father who art in heaven] is Abwoon d'Bashmaya, which means:
O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos, you create all that moves in light.

The translation of the prayer continues as follows: [Hallowed be thy name]

Focus your light within us — make it useful: as the rays of a beacon show the way.

[Thy kingdom come]

Create your reign of unity now — Your one desire then acts with ours, As in all light, so in all forms

[Give us this day our daily bread]

Grant what we need each day in bread and insight

[And forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us]

Loose the cords of mistakes binding us, as we release those strands we hold of others' guilt

[And do not bring us to the time of trial]

Don't let surface things delude — free us to walk your path with joy.

These words have certainly expanded my understanding of this prayer given to us by Jesus.

To be honest, I have sometimes struggled with the idea of prayer. In Matthew before Jesus offers his prayer, he tells us, “Not to do as the Gentiles do, who think they will be heard because of their many words. For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” If that's the case, then why go about saying prayers at all? Sometimes, I'm afraid to ask – what if I ask for the wrong thing? I'm

anxious to seek, it feels presumptuous. How can I trust that God would even care about my little concerns?

I have reconciled this struggle by thinking of prayer as more of a conversation with a trusted friend, with someone who loves me and has my best interests at heart. One who will not answer my questions and concerns with malice but with love and compassion. One who deeply desires a relationship with me and wants to hear from me, as much as I want to hear from Him. Despite the sometimes struggles, I find joy in the many forms that prayer can take, and love exploring them all.

I believe that the point of prayer is not to change God's mind about me or any of us – he is already for us, he is already our biggest advocate. Prayer, I've come to realize is to help shape us, to make us ready to live out God's love for us, and to instill in us a spirit of willingness to share this love with those around us.

Jesus invites us to ask, seek and knock. I believe that as we do this, we'll find the Spirit waiting to enliven, feed and defend us. Amen.

Sources used in this sermon are:

- Dr. Neil Douglas-Klotz, visit <https://abwoon.org/>
- Suzette Martinez Standing, author, columnist, workshop presenter and speaker (readsuzette.com)
- Working Preacher.org
- Richard Rohr, CAC.org