St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 27, 2025

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

Hosea 1:2-10 Psalm 85 Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19) Luke 11:1-13

Show us your mercy, O Lord, and grant us your salvation. Amen.

Good morning. The last time I was up here in February, I told you about a new breast cancer diagnosis and my struggles to keep the faith. I want to let you know that the surgery I had in April eliminated the cancer, and I didn't have to undergo any chemotherapy or radiation treatments. My oncologist has released me from his care to carry on with my life. God is indeed amazing! I am so thankful for God's healing, and I am so very grateful to you my church family for your prayers and support.

So, let's dive in. We start with 'shock and awe," in our passage from Hosea. As Rev. Holladay said in her sermon last week, the words we read in last week's passage from Amos, and this week's from Hosea, are really harsh!

Here God has his prophet Hosea take a prostitute for a wife and name his children "Not My People" and "Not Shown Mercy," all to wake the Israelites up and to convince them to repent and turn back to God.

I love what one commentator said. Imagine Hosea calling his children to dinner – "Time to come home 'Not my people' or 'Not Shown Mercy,'" a constant reminder to the Israelites that they are in breach of their covenant with God.

The good news, however, is that by the end of our reading, there is a reversal, with God showing mercy and calling Israel his children.

Our Psalm also talks of God's great mercy and love for us. And Colossians reminds us to not get side-tracked by all the trials and turmoil of our times – something I think all of us can relate to right now -- but to remember the power of our baptism and to ground ourselves in Christ.

Today's Gospel is the Lukan version of The Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus gave us. In March, we held a retreat on The Lord's Prayer. We primarily used the Matthew version of the prayer[1], rather than this shortened version from Luke. For today, I want to explore the Lord's Prayer in its entirety and to walk you through some of the teachings Jesus gave us in this prayer.[2]

The Lord's Prayer is easily the most prayed prayer in our Christian tradition. It unites Christians in all parts of the world, of all denominations and theological persuasions. It doesn't matter if we are Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Protestant, whether we belong to a mainline, Evangelical, or Pentecostal church; as soon as we hear the words "Our Father, who art in Heaven," we know what comes next.

In Luke, Jesus teaches us to pray: "Father, hallowed be your name." In Matthew, which is more familiar to us, we pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by your name."

In Jesus' first line, he is telling us that God is fully approachable – Father/provider; Mother/nurturer. "Our" in the Matthew version is plural and inclusive – we are all brothers and sisters with our one

common parent, and we are not separate from God. In Heaven – This is the beginning of bringing heaven to earth.

Hallowed Be Your Name. Hallowed means holy. Each time we invoke God's love and presence into our daily life, we are creating a sacred space in which to live.

This line of the prayer offers much to consider. Who and what is God in my life? What is the meaning of my life with God? Am I on the path of fulfilling God's purpose for my life?

One of our primary tasks is the work of discernment, of prayerful consideration of God's will for our lives and willingness to listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Our next line in Luke: "Your kingdom come." Or more familiarly from Matthew: "Your kingdom come, your will be done." This is our surrender to God, our turning over our lives to God.

In our retreat, we invited members of the congregation to offer thoughts on their personal experiences with God on each of the teachings of this prayer. For today's reflection, I asked several of those who helped with the retreat to offer a few sentences on each topic. Jill Kalberg offers these thoughts on surrender:

"From my youngest days, long before I knew anything about church, I felt the Lord nudging me to surrender to and follow the way of Love. Words were whispered to my heart directing me to always give to and care for others; to always trust that things will be ok, no matter what happens. The calls to surrender myself to the opportunities to do these things go on and on."

As you can hear from Jill, we can make the world a better place when we can surrender to what God has planned for us. When things are falling into place, it is an indication that we are aligned to what God is calling us to do. When we run into obstacles, it often means we are likely out of alignment.

What does surrender to God look like for you? A thought or prayer to consider each morning as you begin your day, "God, I am turning this day over to you. Your will, not my will be done. Please guide me to do the right thing and to stay on my path in your service, and to do so with love."[3]

God truly is much better at this thing called life than we are!

Our next line in the Matthew version of the prayer, doesn't appear in our Luke verses: "On Earth as it is in heaven." This is our commitment to service for our Lord. Ian Hicks offers these thoughts:

"As a follower of Jesus, I strive for servant/service leadership, the hallmark of Jesus' ministry. Every time I can perform an act of kindness, service or peace, I add to the 'good' side of the scales. The more this happens, the deeper the scales tip toward the light of goodness in the world. Good outweighs bad with every single positive deed that occurs on earth. This is a world made up of energy and we can impact that energy for good or ill. The choice is ours."

As Ian also noted in his presentation at the retreat, God doesn't eradicate the human and environmental damage here on earth because he didn't create it. Mankind did. It is our responsibility to put it to rights with God's help. Think of the analogy of a parent and child. God is waiting for us to clean up the mess we have made. We have work to do.

What does service to God look like for you? What you do, what you think, who you are makes a difference. Everyone matters! Despite the enormous odds, we really can save the world through our intention and our actions, one person at a time.

Give us each day our daily bread. This line reminds us that God wants to give to us what we need, and to give to us abundantly. Kari Romeo offers these thoughts:

“When I think about asking God to 'give me my daily bread', the first thing that comes to mind is to say thank you for all God has already given me. The second, is that it is my responsibility to *trust* that God knows and understands what I need for daily bread. The last thing that comes to mind is that God has given me the grace to receive if only I stay in a place of acceptance and gratitude for the abundance that surrounds me in *all* its many forms.”

This lesson is so important, that Jesus continues the thought after he offers the prayer by inviting us to be persistent in our requests to God, and to ask, search and knock. Jesus tells us that if we, who are evil, can give our children what they need and ask for, how much more will God give his Holy Spirit to those who ask.

Gratitude is key. Always acknowledge what we have been given and thank God for it. We don’t know how our prayers will be answered. We must trust that God keeps his word, and he does provide.

Our next line is about forgiveness: “And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.” In the Matthew version we pray, “And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Jill Kalberg also spoke on this topic at the retreat and offers these thoughts on forgiveness:

“The Holy has gently and persistently shown me how forgiveness is a step-by-step process, like the opening of a flower, like the unclenching of a fist into a shape that can shake - or grasp - another hand. First there’s a willingness to feel the full impact of one’s anger and resentment, paving the way to calm down enough to honestly examine both the other’s frailties and their side of the story. This unlocks the ability to see clearly that both sides are equally worth considering, that some kind of hurt likely exists on each. Finally, the developing empathy allows an attempt at reconciliation. Forgiveness breaks the impasse, is the miracle that frees us.”

And I agree. Forgiveness is the great equalizer. It costs us nothing but buys us everything. Forgiving can be a very difficult thing to do because most of us are out of practice. It’s not something we are taught to do.

One way to ease into a more forgiving mindset is to consider the action of “the other.” As you feel hurt and anger towards another, consider that this person is doing the best they can with what they have.

And the final line in our Lukan prayer: “And do not bring us to the time of trial.” In Matthew we read: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Ern Warner offers these thoughts on overcoming obstacles:

“Some of the early Gnostic sects had the belief that matter was evil and the spirit was good. This duality can be understood in the context of humanity's timeless craving for resources and power, which suggests a lack of trust (or faith) in God's ability to provide for our needs. Here, perhaps, is our main obstacle: a

lack of trust in God, an illusion that we must navigate life on our own, and the fear that we are inadequate for the task at hand. Jesus advises us to seek first the Kingdom of God, and our needs will be provided for. If we trust God and stay centered in the Spirit, we may see our perceived obstacles transform into opportunities."

I think Ern sums up this section quite well!

Of course, love is the center of this entire prayer. The rest of the verses in today's Gospel make it abundantly clear that our heavenly father loves us and wants to provide for us the things we want and need. Marcia Siring offers these thoughts on love:

"Love is woven through all the concepts that Jesus put forth in the Lord's Prayer – love from our Savior God for us and love from us for our Savior God. Specifically, l have learned – actually am learning that I am enough! I am sufficient in His love. I am learning to trust Him in every situation – surrendering to Him that He knows best and will take care of me. Those times I feel inadequate or weak I know I am never alone. He is my ever present help. And finally, I have learned to thank Him always for His unfathomable love and blessings in my life."

Faith and surrender must come from our love of God, ourselves and our fellow humans. Service commitments must be carried out with love, not strictly out of a sense of duty. We will attract more abundance in all aspects of our life as we become more loving. Forgiveness comes naturally when we live in love. As we overcome temptation with God's help, we remember that we are one with God through love and forgiveness.

Most of us recite an ending phrase to The Lord's Prayer called the doxology. "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever." These words don't appear in the Luke version of the Lord's Prayer, nor in the earliest versions of the Gospel of Matthew. The doxology first appears in a manuscript from the late first century called the Didache, or the Teachings of the Apostles. In later versions of the Gospel of Matthew, from the late fifth century on, the doxology is added to the prayer in the Bible.

Prayer is our means of celebrating God while reinforcing our connection to the divine and our destinies to create a world on earth as it is in heaven. Something magical happens when we pray – we reinforce our faith, we put our energy toward God and goodness and helping others. I was at the Diocesan offices this week, and Bishop Gretchen was commenting about this passage. She said that God already knows what we need and knows our prayers. We don't pray to somehow change God, we pray to change us. Prayer, especially this prayer given to us by Jesus, transforms lives and changes the world.

[1] Matthew, 6: 9-13
[2] The retreat we did was based upon materials from the book *The Source of Miracles – 7 Steps to Transforming Your Life through the Lord's Prayer,* by Kathleen McGowan. Each chapter in *The Source of Miracles* is a guide to one of the seven steps corresponding to a primary teaching of the prayer. This retreat also draws on information from *Flourishing on the Edge of Faith*, by Andrew DeCort, PhD, as well as essays from *The Lord and His Prayer,* by New Testament theologian N.T. Wright.
[3] *The Source of Miracles – 7 Steps to Transforming Your Life through the Lord's Prayer,* by Kathleen McGowan, pg. 73.