

# Eight weeks of lockdown!

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6

## **Introduction:**

Eight weeks ago, who would have thought that we would be in lockdown for so long? There is a strong possibility that the current Public Health Orders are set to become more restrictive: The Delta variant seemingly has the upper hand. We know that is not true, as if we didn't have the current restrictions, our society would be in a more severe position.

## **Opening prayer:**

You LORD exists forever; your word is firmly fixed in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. As we open your word LORD, teach us we pray. Amen

I can not honestly tell you how many times I have said/prayed the LORD's prayer. It is part of the daily liturgies which I use. During one period of my life, I would close every meeting by reciting the LORD's prayer.

This morning as we mark the eighth week of lockdown, I decided to share with you all this morning the joy that comes from communing with God through prayer.

When Jesus taught the LORD's prayer, Matthew, in his Gospel, position the teaching of the LORD's prayer by Jesus under the general instruction of piety. Piety is an older term that simply stated means – how the followers of Christ expresses their love for God. The setting for Jesus teaching his disciples what we call the LORD's prayer is when he is challenging false piety.

False piety is performing almsgiving, prayers and even fasting – so others can see these activities and think more highly of the person performing these activities:

Almsgiving, praying and fasting are all good in themselves, and if done in response to the LORD faithful love, they assist the follower of God, becoming more dependant upon Him.

Jesus said his views of false piety clear:

**Beware of practising your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 6:1**

You and I know that prayer is communing with God: It is more than sitting in quiet; prayer is speaking to God the heavenly Father.

Do you ever hear the statement – if God knows what we do and say because of his omnipresent and omnipotence, why pray?

Jesus told us to pray: Jesus expects us to pray: the early disciples understood this, and this is revealed by the significant words:

**<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray constantly, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.** 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:16-18

I find the words – **this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you:** both challenging and encouraging. It is God's will that his people pray: albeit a simple statement, praying can be difficult.

In the Bulletin, I mentioned a minister I admired and was greatly encouraged by asking: **How is your prayer life?** He was well known for asking this question of all whom he visited. He was never condemning. Instead, he generally desired for everyone to cultivate an ever-growing relationship with God.

Another personal example isn't that encouraging. I was in another diocese, having a meeting with a Bishop. At the end of the meeting, I ask if I could pray for him? I was unprepared for his answer: ***do you still do that?***

The mark of our piety, our love for God, is shown quietly in our relationship with him.

Jesus taught and has the expectation his followers are people who pray: he taught what is known as the Lord's prayer:

**Our Father who art in heaven,**

Jesus revolutionised prayer by revealing that we can address Yahweh as our Father. Jesus demonstrated that by calling God our Father, we have an intimate relationship with the heavenly Father. God is our heavenly Father. He calls us his children. Personally, I hear the excitement in the apostle John's voice when he wrote:

**See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.** 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:1

As the children of God, Jesus has revealed his expectation that we would come to our heavenly Father, not in fear and trepidation but rather, with humility and gentleness: hence we say the words

**Hallowed be thy name.**

Unlike any religion in the world, we are invited to come into the presence of God through prayer. Christians are not required to appease him, as Jesus did so on the Cross.

**<sup>10</sup> Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
On earth, as it is in heaven.**

During this current lockdown, I have pondered those words more and more. I have also reflected on the men and women who struggled during the wars, such as WW2, how they all longed for their restrictions to come to an end. God was faithful.

Am I faithful in asking that our society reflect his revelation of himself? How do I make the most of this time to see His kingdom advanced?

**<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread;<sup>[a]</sup>**

This straightforward line reminds us of humanity's frailty and how dependant we are upon God. God is our provider. When I reflect on this simple line, I am constantly reminded of the words the LORD spoke through the prophet Jeremiah:

**For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (29:11)**

Our hope is in the Lord; He is our provider! His plans are to give us a future and hope: Ultimately, the forgiveness of sins and being reconciled with God.

We who are mortal have been granted immortality in the next life:

**perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. 1 Cor 15:33**

We acknowledge our individual frailty and how we can only come before the Heavenly Father through his faithful love, his grace which he has extended to each one of us

**<sup>12</sup> And forgive us our sins, As we also have forgiven those who have sinned against us;<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.**

As followers of Christ, you and I have been given the privileged position of being able to call God our Father.

During every stage of life, and whatever is happening in our lives, the reality of God being our heavenly Father does not cease.

We know it is the will of God of all his followers to come to him in prayer. Pray is communing with God the Father through talking to him.

Sadly, people can lose their way when it comes to prayer.

The temptation is to make prayer more mystical – rather than hearing Jesus works – our Father in Heaven.

Others may fall into the temptation of doubting the reality of God hearing them.

And of course, the temptation which Jesus was addressing which is the setting for him teaching his disciples the Lord's prayer: to display our prayers with the motive to impress the listeners.

**<sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. <sup>7</sup>"And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him (Matthew 6).**

I encourage you to continue to in your prayer life, and if you are struggling as God is, pray to Him to assist you. If you are doubting praying to the Heavenly Father, ask that He will give you the joy of praying.

Praying is also a discipline: and I encourage you to remember that one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is that of self-discipline.

As we know, praying to God the heavenly Father is the will of God in Christ Jesus for all Christians; how is your prayer life?

To God be glory forever.

Resources:

PNTC, The gospel according to Matthew: Leon Morris.

A Praying Life: Paul E Miller