

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Seventeenth Sunday of Ordinary Time Gospel Word
Luke 11:1–13

Besides the need to learn about the words and actions of Jesus, we also need guidance in learning how to pray. Prayer closes the space between God and us. It makes our relationship “up close and personal.” When Jesus’ disciples asked for advice on how to pray, Jesus did not direct them to go to a certain place nor does he recommend a certain time for prayer. Prayer according to Jesus can take place anytime and anywhere. We can even pray while on the run or in our cars. One study concluded that women do much of their praying in the bathroom. The reason is obvious. It’s private. Busy moms know this. Disciples are called to pray, just as much as they are called to do good by responding to the needs of others.

There are two versions of “the Lord’s Prayer” in the Gospels. The longer one is in the Gospel according to Matthew and the shorter one, which we hear this week, is in the Gospel according to Luke. While Matthew’s version is the one commonly used today, you might use Luke’s version for meditation or private prayer. Luke’s is a good one to say in private. It’s shorter and because it is not as familiar, you will attend more consciously to the words. The theme is the same. We address God with the intimate familial name of “father” (which is more like “dad” in the original), align ourselves with God’s ways (hallowed be *your* name or ways), and then we ask for our “daily bread.” Bread is symbolic for what we need to survive each day. Let’s explore that idea some more.

Living the Word

The Bible often uses parent images of God. Jesus was especially intent on addressing God as Father. The names or nicknames we use of those closest to us become symbolic. They mean a lot more than the name. Imagine Jesus walking down a dusty road simply repeating over and over again, *Father, Father, Father*. He was connecting with the source of his life, to the energy that carried him to his next step, to the presence that accompanied him wherever he went.

Acknowledging our dependence on God is not an expression of weakness, but of truth. We’ve seen young children crawl into the lap of their parents and sink into a feeling of blessed dependence. They want the care and protection of their parent and they trust they will receive it. We are God’s children, the work of his hands. Whatever our age, when we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we put into words the simple prayer of our brother Jesus. Take care of us, our loving Father, Holy God, we want your Kingdom to come, we want you to forgive us as we forgive others. That’s one big prayer.

Pray this prayer from your heart during the week in your spare moments (however rare they might be). Imagine yourself in God’s lap. Imagine God smiling at you as you cuddle up close and take delight trusting that God cares for you as one of his own – which you are. Don’t be shy about asking for God’s care. God has lots of daily bread to dispense. Open your hands and be grateful.

One-line Prayer

Lord, open my heart to trust you and pray often. Amen.

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Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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A Gospel Word for the Home

Luke 11:1–13

First of all, it is helpful to reflect on the meaning of ordinary bread. If we enter a well-stocked supermarket these days, we will notice that the bread section overflows with dozens of different breads. There’s enough bread there to feed the masses. Bread shortages are not part of our experience but that is not always the case for many of our sisters and brothers. Certainly, in Jesus’ time, possessing bread in any form was necessary to insure daily survival. Bread was their primary source of nourishment. Back then bread would last for a while, but eventually it would become stale and useless. It was best to get a fresh loaf of bread each day. They called that bread, you guessed it, daily bread. So when we ask God for *daily bread*, we are requesting from God what we need for that day. What we *needed!*

So many ideas are contained in the Lord’s Prayer. Here we focus on our need for help and nourishment. And we are asking not just anyone or a stranger, but our God who loves and cares for us more than we can imagine. This prayer positions us in relationship to God and to ourselves. We are needy. We forget about how much we rely on God for everything. Should God withdraw from us for even a second, we would disappear into the nothingness from which we came. Forgetting about that fact doesn’t mean it’s not true. We can easily be deceived. Still, the prayer is a good reminder not to forget that we are God’s and that God, having brought us into life in the beginning, will continue to do so, even after we have left this life.

Parent Survival

The Bible uses parent images of God quite often. Jesus seemed especially intent on addressing God as father. Names or titles are symbols of deeper ideas especially those that are closest to our hearts. We might imagine Jesus walking down a dusty road simply repeating over and over again, *Father, Father, Father*. He was connecting with the source of his life, to the energy that carried him to his next step, to the presence that accompanied him wherever he went.

He delighted in being the Father's son. He delighted in being brother to us. We can do something similar as parents. Our society is not particularly enthused about the roles we play in our families. If we are introduced to others as a father or mother, it's no big deal. If we are introduced under the title "CEO" or former All-American or beauty queen, eyes light up. So if we are to take comfort and satisfaction in our familial roles, we will have to do this for ourselves. God recognizes our greatness in these roles. The question remains, "Do we?"

Car or Meal Talk

Slowly go through the words of the Lord's Prayer and talk about each line and what it means.

One-Line Prayer

Lord, open my heart to trust you and pray often. Amen.