

Reflections on the Lord's Prayer
Lecture Notes to Accompany Video Segments
by Bishop Hockin

Highlights of Address One

Our Father in Heaven

- When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are praying for what Jesus wants to happen in the world. We live in a time, as Jesus did, in a world all too full of injustice, hunger, and malice. This prayer cries out for justice, bread, forgiveness and deliverance. If anyone thinks those are irrelevant today, just read the headlines in your newspaper, and think again.
- Dr. Timothy Keller suggests that prayer is like a big house. There are three floors and many rooms. As well, there are two kinds of people who inhabit this house. First there are boarders or tenants. They have their rooms; they pay their rent to the landlord and have a business relationship with him or her. The other people in the house are family members. They have a different relationship with the landlord. He is their father, mother or parent. They don't pay rent. Their relationship with the landlord is unconditional.
- When Jesus is baptized in the River Jordan, he hears the voice from heaven saying, "You are my son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Only a father would say these words.
- Luke 11 graphically and personally illustrates the relationship that is possible with God. Jesus uses the word "father" twelve times in telling the story of the prodigal son. Jesus doesn't say, "When you pray say, 'My father.'" As a matter of fact, the plural is used throughout the Lord's Prayer, "Give us, Forgive us, Save us, Deliver us."
- To pray "Our Father" reminds us that Christianity is fundamentally communal in nature. To this end, it would be good to reach out and touch someone close, perhaps hold hands, in this common prayer.
- The words "in heaven" give a location for God.
- When we pray to our Father, we are engaging a divinity, who wishes to be in relationship with us, not as boarders or tenants, but as members of God's family.
- When we dare to pray this prayer, we are never praying it alone. We are praying it with him, Jesus, and also with other believers, on earth as well as in heaven.

Biblical Passages Referenced:

- Matthew 6: 6-15 (Introduction and the Lord's Prayer)
- Luke 11: 1-13 (The Lord's Prayer)
- 2 Samuel 7: 14 (Reference to God as Father)
- Psalm 68: 5 (Reference to God as Father)
- Luke 15: 11:32 (The Prodigal Son)

Highlights of Address Two

Your Kingdom Come, Your Will Be Done on Earth As It Is In Heaven

- Kingdoms are entities which dictate and control our lives and our values. They seek to control how we live, think and understand what it is to be human. These kingdoms are political, economic, technological and the media. When the Bible talks about the kingdom of God, it is talking about an alternative system, an alternative influence or power.
- In Mark 1 we read, “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near.” Here Jesus is saying “I am coming to bring a new administration for the world to replace the old. The pattern, values and power of this new administration are going to be very different from what you know in the world.”
- The idea of the kingdom of God finds its roots in the Old Testament, especially in the prophet, Isaiah. It comes in three parts. First, there is to be a transformation in personal human wellness, in the human condition. Second, there will be a transformation in human community, how we get along with each other. Third, there is to be a transformation in government, administration and how the world is run. Simply put, it is about healing the hurts of our lives, about living peaceably with each other, and about Someone with compassion and mercy being in charge.
- Nothing is more obvious in Jesus’ ministry than his healings of many people.
- He also demonstrates how people need to be in a new kind of community, one of openness, equality and mutual love for the other. “Love one another as I have loved you.”
- God’s Messiah will rule like a shepherd, a shepherd who loves, leads, listens and lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10)
- The early Church reflected this kingdom by living in community, by healing people’s pain and diseases and by doing all this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- When we pray, “Father, may your kingdom come,” we pray for the sick to get well, the lonely to find a friend and the broken to be made whole. We pray for peace on earth and a new kind of human community. As well, we pray for Christ to return, and to re-establish his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Biblical Passages Referenced:

- Mark Chapter 1 (I am coming to bring a new administration to the world)
- Matthew Chapter 5 (Beatitudes - blessings)
- Luke 4: 18 (Jesus Mission in God's Kingdom Come)
- Isaiah Chapters 35; 61 (Transformation in personal human wellness - mind, body & spirit; human community at peace with each other; government & administration). The theme of a Messiah.
- Acts 2: 44; 3: 7; 3: 16 (Kingdom living)
- Revelations 21 (John the Divine: The home of God will be among humanity)

Highlights of Address Three
Daily Bread (A sign and a promise)

- At this point in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus invites us to be a little more focused on the needs of ourselves and others. This means asking for the needs of regular human beings: bread, energy, and the strength to get through the day.
- Only hungry people pray. In Jesus' ministry, he invites people to pray for daily bread. In Matthew 7 we read, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened."
- Four points: First, only hungry people ask for bread. Second, all desires are known. Third, we do not negotiate; we just ask. Fourth, it is a prayer with limits - 24-hours.
- When we pray this prayer, it is not only for ourselves, but also for those millions of our sisters and brothers, who are without the essentials of life.
- Charles Taylor, the Canadian philosopher, speaks of self-authentication.
- Timothy Keller, warns us of the pitfalls of this way of life. When we try to "authenticate ourselves or validate ourselves, we place ourselves in an infinite loop of delusion, that will lead us to either narcissism, or self loathing."
- Anne Lamott, in her book on prayer, observes, "In prayer we take ourselves off the hook and put God on. It's where God belongs."
- We pray to a God who knows our needs before we ask. This prayer also invites us pray for ourselves, which many people find difficult to do.
- We do not negotiate with God, we simply ask.
- St. Basil the Great, in one of his sermons admonished, "The bread that is spoiling in your house belongs to the hungry. The shoes that are mildewed under your bread belong to those who have none. The clothes stored up in your trunk belong to those who are naked."

Biblical Passages Referenced:

- Psalm 104 (You give them Bread to strengthen the human heart)
- Matthew 7 (Ask, Search, Knock)

Highlights of Address Four
Forgiveness

- To better understand this petition in the Lord's Prayer, we need first to remind ourselves of the image the Father's house, and ask again whether we are boarders or family.
- Why do we need to ask for God's forgiveness?
- How do we know God will forgive us?
- What does God's forgiveness feel like?
- What are the social implications of being forgiven?

- What God’s forgiveness does is to make space in my heart and mind so that I might grow as a better human being. Forgiveness makes room for personal growth and a more authentic humble self. Frederick Buechner writes, “When life is filled with grace, sleep is forgiveness, the night absolves, darkness wipes the slate clean, not spotless to be sure, but clean enough for another days chalking.”
- Bishop Tom Wright writes, “It is our birthright, as the followers of Jesus, to breathe in true divine forgiveness, day by day, clean air which our spiritual lungs need desperately instead of the grimy germ laden air of regret and recrimination that the world comes out at this from all sides.”
- I have often heard that this second part of the forgiveness prayer is a condition for the first. This is not true. God always asks first. Out of his grace, he has assured for us on the cross that he forgives and wipes the slate clean. Rather than a condition, this prayer is an obligation for those who are forgiven, that we might forgive others.
- C. S. Lewis declares, “The only way that anyone can forgive the inexcusable in others is the knowledge that God has forgiven the inexcusable in us.”

Biblical Passages Referenced:

- Matthew 18 (Servant is forgiven who owes a debt)
- Mark 2 (Paralyzed man)
- Psalm 32 (David's Confession of Transgressions)
- 1 John: 1: 9 (If we confess our sins)
- Psalm 51 (Describes the forgiveness experience)

Highlights of Address Five

Save Us and Deliver Us

- Here the temperature in the Lord’s Prayer rises. This is about finding resilience when we experience pushback from a world that resists God’s kingdom from coming. A world that resists working for daily bread for everyone and the need to forgive and be reconciled with others.
- When we pray, “Save us from the time of trial”, we are not asking be protected from this pushback but instead that we might be saved from being overwhelmed by it all. Saved from being caught in the undertow in all of this. Help us to keep our heads above water.
- St. Augustine of Hippo says that the “Save Us” petition is focused on enemies within the human heart, while the prayer “Deliver Us” is about the enemy outside.
- Bishop Tom Wright, suggests that the prayer is best translated, “Save us *in* the time of trial”, rather than saving us *from* it.

Biblical Passages Referenced:

- Psalm 23 (Comfort)
- Matthew 4 (Temptations of Jesus)
- Deuteronomy 8 (When you have all you need do not forget the Lord Your God)
- Luke 12 (Parable of the Rich Man)
- Psalm 91 (Reference to Temptation & Refuge in God)
- Deuteronomy 6:13 (Worship the Lord your God and Serve Him only)
- Galatians 5 (Forces of destruction)

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