

ST MARY'S, HAILSHAM
Autumn Sermon Series 2007

THE LORD'S PRAYER

One day Jesus was praying. When he finished, one of his disciples said to Him, ' Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples. He said to them, 'when you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name'. So Jesus introduced what has become the most well known of all prayers. However, despite our familiarity and regular use I wonder how far we actually understand this prayer and what Jesus was teaching us.

I suspect that for most of us prayer rates as perhaps the most consistently difficult aspect of the Christian life. On the one hand we feel it ought to be far more 'natural' to us yet on the other it quite obviously requires a good deal of hard work. As a result our prayer can be reduced to a "going through the motions", " a spasmodic outburst of enthusiasm" or sadly even to a "given up as too difficult". The aim of this series is to help us to pray by helping us to see what Jesus was doing in giving us this prayer.

Perhaps the most obvious thing to notice was that the disciples request came from seeing Jesus himself at prayer. He himself was the model, his own relationship with his Father was the basis of what he would teach them. This in turn makes prayer for us also an expression of our relationship with God. For that reason the Lord's Prayer is not a prayer to be repeated parrot fashion - Jesus makes that clear in the way he introduces it in Matthew (6: 5-8) - but a pattern of prayer that describes how we should relate to God. It actually gives us a framework for developing that relationship in which our attitudes, thoughts, desires, requests are to be framed by its pattern rather than our own.

So in a strange way this prayer is all about God leading us, shaping our conversation with Him. The writer Jim Packer puts it like this, seeing the prayer as an answer to God's questioning of us,

"Who do you take me for and what am I to you?" (*Our/my Father in heaven*)

"That being so, what is it you really want most?" (*hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, you will be done*)

"So what are you asking for right now as a means to that end?"

(*give us today ...forgive us our sins....lead us not.....provision, pardon, protection*)

"But how can you be so bold to ask for these things?"

(*because yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory*)

That's the kind of conversation to sort out our thinking and our praying. God is asking us and wanting us to tell Him honestly how we think of Him and what we want from Him and why. The Lord's Prayer gives us the framework to answer, to respond to God, to enrich our relationship with our heavenly Father.

Please pray that that may be exactly the result of this series, that through prayer we may come to know God in a richer and deeper way.

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| Sept | 23 | Our Father in heaven - Trusting Children |
| | 30 | Hallowed be your name - Reverent Worshippers |
| Oct | 14 | Your kingdom come - Loyal Citizens |
| | 21 | Your will be done - Obedient Servants |
| | 28 | Give us today - Unashamed Dependents |
| Nov | 11 | Forgive us our sins - Forgiven Sinners |
| | 18 | Lead us not - Guided Travellers |
| | 25 | Yours is the Kingdom - A great treasure |