

The Cross Church Version of
The Lord's Prayer
with
Introduction and Notes
by
the Minister

Introduction

This modern version of the Lord's Prayer has been produced for use in worship in the Cross Church because we believe the Lord's Prayer to be an important guide for both our worship and our daily Christian living. We are convinced that, if it is to be recited by our children and young people it has to be in language that is accessible to them. They do not readily relate to words such as "hallowed", "debts" or "trespasses", which do not today convey what was originally intended.

There are many modern versions in current use, including a Millennium one, which has been used in worship at the General Assembly. They have all been produced for roughly the same reasons, but there is not one that satisfies in every respect. Most of them stay with "hallowed", probably for the very good reason that it is hard to find an exact modern equivalent. One has "sins" for "debts" or "trespasses", but that still seems to be too churchy a word for the un-churched.

The Cross Church Version is based on the translation of the Lord's Prayer as it appears in the Revised English Bible at Mathew 6. 9 -13. – the Revised English Bible being the version we use for worship in the Cross Church.

The intention is that the Cross Church Version will be used at most, but not all, of our worship services. The traditional version will be the one that our young people will encounter when they worship at school services and elsewhere, and it is important that they should be familiar with it. Our hope is that the more frequent use in our worship of the Cross Church Version will help them, and, indeed, all of us, to better understand the traditional version whenever it is used.

The Lord's Prayer — Cross Church Version

Our Father in heaven, may your name be held as holy.
May your kingdom come and your will be done,
on earth, as it is In heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
and forgive us the wrong that we have done
as we forgive those who have wronged us.
Keep us from temptation and protect us from all evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

Notes on the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer was given by Jesus to his disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray. It should therefore be a model for our prayers and our worship. It appears twice in the New Testament: in chapter six of Matthew's Gospel and in chapter eleven of Luke's. Luke's version is shorter, and it is Matthew's which has come down to us in the life of the Church.

The prayer contains six main petitions, the first three of which have to do with the things of God – his honour, his kingdom and his will being done; while the second three cover the most basic and fundamental human needs, for which we need to pray.

The important lesson for us from the placing of the first three petitions before the others is that in prayer and worship we cannot bring our own requests to God – our 'shopping list' of all the things we want to ask him for – until we have first thought and prayed ourselves into his concerns. Only then can we tell him what we want. Praying for God's concerns will shape and control the things we eventually pray for ourselves. We cannot, for instance, pray for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done and then pray for our own advantage over someone else. By using the Lord's Prayer as a model, our prayers will grow to be in tune with the values of God's kingdom.

The first three petitions are circular and inter-related, by which I mean that we can pray them in any order and each is fulfilled by the other two. Thus, when God's name is hallowed, his kingdom will have come and his will is done; or, when his kingdom comes, his will will be done and his name will be hallowed.

God is not vain that he wants his name to be hallowed. It is simply that when people acknowledge who he is they put their lives in their true context and do good – fulfilling his will. The Bible makes it clear that what God wants of us is that we should honour him and love and serve our neighbour. His kingdom is a kingdom of love, peace, justice and happiness for everyone, and it will come when people honour him and love and serve each other.

If we can pray for these three things of God, and mean it, as we start our Sunday morning worship, we will indeed be entering into the mind and the spirit of God, which will enrich, control and inspire our worship, our public and private prayers and the way we live and behave in the world.

When Jesus teaches us to pray for daily bread, he does not mean a loaf or a morning roll, not even food in general, but the basic necessities of life. These are food and drink, but also clothing, housing, healthcare and education. We are asked to pray, calling God "our Father", knowing that he wants to give us these things, but remembering too that thousands in the world today suffer and die for want of them. Daily bread for us can only mean daily bread for everyone.

The remaining petitions have to do with evil. The Bible takes the reality of evil with the utmost seriousness. Evil is all around us. Just as gravity holds us down physically, so evil pulls us down morally and spiritually. As gravity works on everyone, so does evil. Our struggle against it is the context of our lives, which in turn is the reason God sent Jesus into this world.

No-one is successful in resisting it. Individuals, groups, communities and nations are all capable of acts of greed, selfishness and violence, which get in the way of good relationships and future good living. This is clearly why Jesus puts the prayer for forgiveness before the one for help with temptation. We have to undo the damage we have done before we can hope to go forward to any better life. We first need God's forgiveness, because our behaviour is so often a denial of his glory and his will; but Jesus also showed us that we cannot pray for forgiveness for ourselves without first letting go of and forgiving every wrong that has ever been done to us.

Forgiveness granted, we now need help in our moral struggle – help to resist temptation on the one hand, or that our temptations should not be stronger than we can resist. While this petition is firstly about our personal moral struggles, with the final bit it is also about the whole of life. We need to be protected from the seductive power of evil in our moral choices, but we also need protection from its most terrible effects in terms of illnesses, accidents, broken relationships, violence, injustices, terrorism and wars.

God alone can answer this prayer; but we all need to pray it.

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