



A Word of Wisdom

Part Three

Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church

Let us therefore, beloved, pray as God our Teacher has taught us. It is a loving and friendly prayer to beseech God with His own words, to come up to His ears in the prayer of Christ. Let the Father acknowledge the words of His Son when we make our prayer, and let Him also who dwells within in our breast Himself dwell in our voice.

-Cyprian of Carthage, 252 AD

Friends,

Some prayers you say. Some prayers say you.

The Lord's Prayer is one of those. Most of us have been praying it since before we could fully understand it. We learned it as children, the way we learned to ride a bike or tie our shoes — by doing it, over and over, until it became second nature. Which is exactly the point.

This summer, we are going to slow down with this prayer. Not to complicate it, but to let it open up.

Here is what I mean. There is a version of the Lord's Prayer that sits on the surface — familiar words, a steady rhythm, something we say together and feel connected by. That's real, and it matters. But underneath those familiar words is an ancient and living depth. Words that were first spoken in Aramaic, a language closer to the one Jesus actually used, a language less like a spreadsheet and more like a poem. This summer, we are going to let that depth rise up to meet us.

Each week, we will spend time with one word or phrase from the prayer. We will explore it through two lenses. First, through the Aramaic — the root language that carries older, wider meanings than our English translations can hold. Then, through the classical English tradition, there have been centuries of Christian writers and thinkers who have prayed and pondered these same words. Both lenses are worth using. Together, they help us see more than either could alone.

But I want to be honest with you about something. Some of what you'll read in the Aramaic reflections may feel unfamiliar. Maybe even a little strange. Words like vibration, cosmos, and field. Images of sweeping a floor, or the ground being prepared for planting. These are not new-age concepts dressed up in spiritual clothing. They are actually very old. Ancient, even. They come from a way of knowing the world that is whole and embodied, that listens with more than the mind. In many ways, we have lost access to this way of knowing, and rediscovering it is a gift — if we can let ourselves receive it.

So I want to invite you to stay open. Not to set aside discernment, but to practice it. Not every phrase will land with equal force. But some might open a door you didn't know was there.

In the back of this journal, you will find a collection of prayer practices — simple, portable invitations to go deeper with the words we are exploring each week. Some are contemplative. Some are

active. Some you will do alone in the quiet of an early morning; others you might share with a traveling companion or a friend over coffee. They are not assignments. Think of them as open doors. You are welcome to walk through any one of them, in whatever order calls to you.

Wherever your summer takes you — a beach, a mountain, a family reunion, a long stretch of ordinary Tuesdays — these practices are designed to travel with you. Because that is the nature of this prayer. It does not require a sanctuary. It does not need a bulletin or a pew. It lives in the body, on the breath, in the in-between moments of the day. Jesus didn't teach it as a performance. He taught it as a way of moving through the world.

This is also a summer journal, which means the whole of it is designed to meet you where you are and as you are. It can be used personally and quietly, or shared with others — a small group, a family conversation, a sacred moment with a friend.

One more thing before we begin. Notice how the prayer opens. Not my Father. Our Father. This is not by accident. From the very first word, Jesus is placing us inside a relational web. We are not lone individuals approaching God with our private requests. We are a community — a human family — approaching the same Loving Parent together. John Chrysostom preached that because we all call God our Father, we are therefore siblings to one another. That belief got him killed. It was that radical. It still is.

So whatever else this summer holds for you — wherever the road leads, whatever view you wake up to — I hope this prayer continues to do what it has always done. Draw you deeper. Into community. Into compassion. Into the very heart of God.

From heaven to forever. From the Father's name to the Father's kingdom. From daily bread to the forgiveness we both need and owe. The whole arc of the Christian life is inside this prayer.

Let's learn it again — like it's the first time.



Rev. Matthew Ruffner

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Introduction

Lord, teach us to pray. With this simple, heartfelt request, Jesus responded with a prayer that continues to form generations of disciples. This summer, we will spend time exploring the Lord's Prayer, particularly through the lens of Jesus' spoken language of Aramaic. We hope that hearing this prayer anew through an unknown tongue might help you see this well-known prayer with fresh ears and an open heart. Aramaic, like Hebrew, tends to be more poetic and symbolic than Greek and English, which lends itself to a roomier translation. These ancient languages evoked feelings more than precision, and when we come to them with an open mind and heart, we may find that we feel moved as well.

As we make our way into the more relaxed rhythms of the summer, we want to provide you with a portable experience of the Lord's Prayer that can be your companion wherever you roam. To that end, the second half of this journal offers various practices, reflections, and exercises that will allow you to encounter the Lord's Prayer in a number of ways, whenever it is convenient for you. May they offer you innovative ways to be present to the great gift of this prayer Jesus has shared with us.

-Danielle Shroyer

Oldest Versions of the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer can be found in Matthew, Luke, and the early church document called the Didache. Each of these versions dates back to the first century. Their slightly differing versions are likely due to the oral tradition, but ancient Christian writers most commonly use Matthew's version in their writings, so this is the one that has become standardized.

Here are each of those texts:

Matthew 6:5-14

And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever 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.

"When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

"Pray then in this way:

'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
 but rescue us from the evil one.'

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Luke 11:1-4

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. 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,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation.'

The Didache

Chapter 8. Concerning Fasting and Prayer (the Lord's Prayer)

But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; Matthew 6:16 for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week; but fast on the fourth day and the Preparation (Friday). Neither pray as the hypocrites; but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, thus pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us today our daily (needful) bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or, evil); for Yours is the power and the glory forever. Thrice in the day thus pray.

The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic

You can hear this prayer spoken here:



Abwoon d'bwashmaya,

(Our Father in heaven)

Nethqadash shmakh

(Hallowed be thy name)

Teytey malkuthakh

(Thy kingdom come)

Nehwey sebyanach aykanna d'bwashmaya aph b'arha.

(Thy will be done on earth as in heaven)

Hawlan lachma d'sunqanan yaomana.

(Give us this day our daily bread)

Washboqlan khaubayn (wakhtahayn) aykana daph khnan shbwoqan l'khayyabayn.

(And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors)

Wela tahlan l'nesyuna

(And lead us not into temptation)

Ela patsan min bisha.

(But deliver us from evil)

Metol dilakhie malkutha wahayla wateshbukhta l'ahlam almin.

(For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.)

Ameyn.

Aramaic Translation of the Lord's Prayer (Rocco Errico)

Our Father who is everywhere,

Holy be Your name.

Let your kingdom (counsel) come.

Let Your will (desire) be

As in the universe, even so on the earth.

Provide us with our needful bread from day to day,

And forgive us our offenses,

Even as we have forgiven our offenders.

And do not let us enter into temptation

But free us from error.

Because Yours are the kingdom,

And the power, and the glory

From all ages, throughout all the ages.

Amen.

Weekly Reflections on the Word of Wisdom



Practices



A Daily Practice

What if you committed to praying the Lord's Prayer every morning or every night (or both!) for a week, a month, or the whole summer? Write your commitment here.

Guided Journaling

"In the Lord's Prayer one not only asks for those things that ought to be desired, but also does so in the order in which they ought to be desired. Thus the Lord's prayer is not only a rule for our petitions, but also a guide for all our sentiments."

-Thomas Aquinas

The prompts below offer a structure for a guided journaling based on each phrase of the Lord's Prayer. Use the space provided, or a separate journal or paper if more room is needed.

"Our Father in heaven"

How do I currently view God?

Are there places I do not recognize God?

"Hallowed be thy name"

How do I honor or dishonor God's name?

"Your kingdom come"

Where can I pray for God's Kingdom to come?

Where am I called to action to be God's hands and feet in the world?

"Your will be done"

Where am I resisting God's will in my life?

When did I feel my heart aligned with God's heart?

"Forgive us our sins"

What conversations or apologies do I need to make?

Where does repair need to happen?

"Lead us not into temptation"

Where am I struggling to be faithful these days?

How can I call upon God for help?

"Deliver us from evil"

What habits, people, situations, might be keeping me stuck?

Where can I ask God for release, unbinding, and freedom?

"Kingdom, power, glory"

Where do I place my allegiance?

What power do I follow, support, and honor?

To what do I give glory?

The Lord's Prayer as a Guide for Intercessory Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

Pray for all people to honor God and revere the holy, starting with you.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Pray for places where God's will is being thwarted or disregarded, that God's ways might be followed instead.

Give us this day our daily bread

Pray for all those who hunger, all whose daily needs go unmet. Pray for the systems in place that keep necessities at arm's length from those who most need them. Pray for God's wisdom for all people.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors

Pray for places, relationships, and people who need forgiveness, and ask God to bring redemption and healing in its place.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

Pray for all the ways that the image of God's goodness within us is blocked, thwarted, or hidden from us. Pray for God to protect us and guide us that we may walk God's way.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Pray for all the kingdoms, powers, and glories that are self-seeking, sinful, and propped up by injustice to be brought into the realm of God's shalom.

New Zealand Prayer Book

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.

Translation by Quaker author and teacher Parker Palmer

Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother,
Holy and blessed is your true name.
We pray for your reign of peace to come,
We pray that your good will be done,
Let heaven and earth become one.
Give us this day the bread we need,
Give it to those who have none.
Let forgiveness flow like a river between us,
From each one to each one.
Lead us to holy innocence
Beyond the evil of our days —
Come swiftly Mother, Father, come.
For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy:
Forever your name is All in One.

The Message Version

Our Father in heaven,
Reveal who you are.
Set the world right;
Do what's best— as above, so below.
Keep us alive with three square meals.
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.
Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.
You're in charge!
You can do anything you want!
You're ablaze in beauty!
Yes. Yes. Yes.

God's Word Translation

Our Father in heaven,
let your name be kept holy.
Let your kingdom come.
Let your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.
Give us our daily bread today.
Forgive us as we forgive others.
Don't allow us to be tempted.
Instead, rescue us from the evil one, Amen.

Another version of the Aramaic Translation

Oh Thou, from whom the breath of life comes,
who fills all realms of sound, light and vibration.
May Your light be experienced in my utmost holiest.
Your Heavenly Domain approaches.
Let Your will come true - in the universe (all that vibrates)
just as on earth (that is material and dense).
Give us wisdom (understanding, assistance) for our daily need.
Detach the fetters of faults that bind us, like we let go the guilt of
others.
Let us not be lost in superficial things (materialism, common
temptations),
but let us be freed from that what keeps us off from our true purpose.
From You comes the all-working will, the lively strength to act, the
song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age.
Amên. Sealed in trust, faith and truth. (I confirm with my entire being)

Prayer Beads

Many find that prayer beads are a helpful way to stay attentive during prayer and to encounter prayer differently. You can find packets to make your own prayer beads for the Lord's Prayer available in the church office.

Write your own translation of the Lord's Prayer

As you've learned this summer about the Aramaic words and pondered the deeper meaning of this prayer, spend some time writing out what you have come to believe as you have prayed it. Take the time to look back over your notes and find the words and phrases that most resonate with you at this time. You will also find below a few different versions of the Lord's Prayer that can serve as inspiration. Conclude by writing your own version of this prayer.

First Nations Version

O Great Spirit, our Father from above,
we honor your name as sacred and holy.

Bring your good road to us,
where the beauty of your ways in the spirit-world above
is reflected in the earth below.

Provide for us day by day--
the elk, the buffalo, and the salmon.
The corn, the squash, and the wild rice.
All the things we need for each day.

Release us from the things we have done wrong,
in the same way we release others for the things done wrong to us.

Guide us away from the things that tempt us to stray from your good
road,
and set us free from the evil one and his worthless ways.

Aho! May it be so!

QR Code Offerings

Body Prayer

We access something different when we pray with our bodies, setting our words to motion. It allows us to embody the prayer, literally. If you'd like to try, we have two different versions of how to pray the Lord's Prayer this way.

The first is simple, expansive, repetitive, and contemplative, which you can find here:



The second has more hand movements for each phrase, which in particular might be more applicable for children and youth. It is here:



Better yet, try them both and see what works for you, or come up with your own movements.

Listen to the Aramaic Lord's Prayer

Hear the Lord's Prayer in ancient Aramaic as taught by Neil Douglas-Klotz:



Hear it chanted in Byzantine Orthodox style by Aramean singer Sarah Ego. (Note the pronunciation differs slightly as it is modern Aramaic languages change!)



You can hear a more modern version of this prayer (in Aramaic, but by a native Arabic speaker) here:





***Trusting That All Belong to God,
Living Like We Belong to One Another.***