

Proper 12C, July 24, 2022

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St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Albuquerque, NM

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“Our Father”: Luke 11: 2-4, 9-10

(NRSV, New Revised Standard Version)

Jesus said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father,

hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial."

..."So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.

For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened...

(FNV, First Nations Version)

Creator Sets Free smiled and said to them, "When you send your voice to the Great Spirit, here is what you should pray:

O Great Father,
the one who lives above us all,
your name is sacred and holy.

Bring your Good Road to us,
where the beauty of your ways in the 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 good things we need every day
to feed our families.

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

And guide us away from the things that tempt us to stray from your Good Road.

...So keep dancing your prayers,
and the way will open before you.
Search for the ancient pathways,
and you will find them. Keep sending up your prayers, and they will be heard.

Answers will come to the ones who ask, good things will be found by the ones who search for them, and the way will open before the ones who keep dancing their prayers."

Prayer is one of those things that many people feel insecure about. I often hear from people who worry that they aren't praying hard enough, or often enough, or well enough...as if there's some sort of secret rubric for getting an "A" in prayer...no one knows exactly what the rubric is, but everyone suspects that they're probably failing at it.

Lord, teach us to pray...the disciples implore Jesus.

And Jesus responds with the words that we have come to know as "The Lord's Prayer" or "The Our Father." It is a prayer that we repeat every week when we gather for worship. Some of us repeat the prayers on a daily basis, as part of the Daily Office, or the Rosary, or our personal prayers and devotions. Many of us learned this prayer as a child, and have been repeating it for years, for decades, some of us for nearly a century!

Repetition can be a tremendous gift. Repetition can be that tool that engraves a prayer in our hearts, in our minds, in our bones so that we can pray almost automatically, without thinking, in times of acute stress or trouble. This same gift can also, at times, be a danger. As the saying "familiarity breeds contempt." A prayer can begin to feel rote and we might find ourselves repeating a prayer automatically when we really want to pray mindfully.

Lord, teach us to pray...

Sometimes praying a familiar prayer in a new way temporarily—perhaps in song, or with movement, or in a different language or an unfamiliar English translation—serves to reawaken us to the beauty and depth of the prayer and enables us to re-engage the prayer more mindfully and meaningfully, then to bring our newly enlivened relationship with that familiar prayer back into our regular, everyday practice.

This past winter and spring our Thursday afternoon Bible Study group read through the Gospel of Luke, from beginning to end, reading aloud from a new English translation of the bible, the First Nations Version, which was created by a group of indigenous theologians and biblical scholars. Week after week, we found that hearing familiar biblical passages told in unfamiliar words and phrases awakened us to fresh, life-giving insights nestled in these sacred texts.

The 11th Chapter of Luke especially caught our attention. So, I'm going to invite you to join me in a sort of "Lectio Divina" or meditative reading of today's Gospel, using the translation of the text found in the First Nations Version. We'll read it through 3x.

1. Close your eyes and just LISTEN. Notice if any words or phrases jump out at you, or capture your imagination.
2. Find the insert in your OOW, this time using a pen or pencil (if you have one handy) to underline or circle the words or phrases that jump out at you, or capture your heart or imagination

3. Join me in reading the text a third time. This time I invite you to read aloud—but only those words or phrases that you’ve underlined...As you read, try to listen closely to the rise and fall of the voices around you.

What did you notice? (Potential time for a little reflection/sharing)

Brief reflection on the closing lines of the passage:

*For everyone who asks receives,
and everyone who searches finds,
and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened...*

***Answers will come to the ones who ask,
good things will be found by the ones who search for them,
and the way will open before the ones who keep dancing their prayers.***

Answers will come to the ones who ask,

- ***Reflections***

good things will be found by the ones who search for them,

- ***Reflections***

and the way will open before the ones who keep dancing their prayers.

- ***Reflections***

Conclusion:

Pray the text together one last time (welcoming improvisation).

Amen.