

"Teach Us to Pray"

Luke 11:1-13

July 29, 2007

"Lord, teach us to pray!" Wow, has that request every lead the people of God into a lot of controversy. We become obsessed with the words. I can't even imagine how many books have been written in an attempt to explain each of the words that are a part of the prayer that we refer to as 'The Lord's Prayer'. Actually, even that title has been questioned by suggesting that it is not the Lord's Prayer but the disciples prayer - we pray it - Jesus didn't. - - - - I struggle to give you the page number in the bulletin because then we have to question if we us form one or form two. People pray the Lord's prayer and ask if it is supposed to be 'sins' or 'trespasses' -- are we to pray to be delivered from 'evil' or from 'the evil one' -- when we ask for God's will to be done, should there be a comma separating that request from 'on earth as in heaven'? We do get all caught up in these words as though those details are what is critical. What happens if we recite the words incorrectly?

There is a great Peanuts cartoon in which Charlie Brown is kneeling beside his bed for prayer. Suddenly he stops and says to Lucy, "I think I've made a new theological discovery, a real breakthrough. If you hold your hands upside down, you get the opposite of what you pray for." "Lord, teach us to pray!" What is it really all about?

It seems to me that part of the problem was that the disciples must not have been really good learners. Luke's version of what Jesus taught is not exactly what we read in Matthew when Jesus shares this prayer as a part of the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew we have the form that is closest to that with which we are most familiar. *Matthew 6:7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*

Still we have made changes. Archeologists have discovered ancient documents that take us back to some of the original language of the prayer in Aramaic. Translations are difficult and, apparently, in Aramaic there are several different levels at which a word can be translated.

I will give you just a little example {If you would like to read the whole translation it will be on our Web site.}

Abwûn (in the original Aramaic) "*Oh Thou, from whom the breath of life comes, d'bwasmâja who fills all realms of sound, light and vibration. Nethkâdasch schmach May Your light be experienced in my utmost holiest. Têtê malkuthach. Your Heavenly Domain approaches.* {More follows - too long for preaching context}

Or another translation of the same original Aramaic.

*O Birther! Father- Mother of the Cosmos - Focus your light within us
- make it useful. - Create your reign of unity now- through our fiery
hearts and willing hands*

*Help us love beyond our ideals – and sprout acts of compassion for all
creatures. - Animate the earth within us: we then feel the Wisdom
underneath supporting all. Untangle the knots within so that we can mend
our hearts' simple ties to each other. Don't let surface things delude us, –
But free us from what holds us back from our true purpose. – Out of you,
the astonishing fire, – Returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.*

Or this translation into Old English from the Aramaic

*Our Father-Mother Who art above and within: Hallowed be Thy Name in
twofold Trinity. In Wisdom, Love and Equity Thy Kingdom come to all. Thy
will be done, As in Heaven so in Earth. Give us day by day to partake of
Thy holy Bread, and the fruit of the living Vine. As Thou dost forgive us our
trespasses, so may we forgive others who trespass against us. Shew
upon us Thy goodness, that to others we may shew the same. In the hour
of temptation, deliver us from evil. Amun.*

I share all of this with you to say that I think that we often miss the point. Don't think for a moment that if you pray with your hands pointing down you get the opposite of what you actually pray for. The words are important, yes. But what is Jesus teaching us when He is asked to teach us to pray?

It is about a relationship! In the Gospel text, Jesus goes on to talk about a man going to his neighbor at midnight and persistently demanding some help because he has guests that have arrived late and unannounced. He has nothing to feed them. He pounds on his neighbors door until he gets the response he needs because of the relationship that he has with the neighbor. They are friends and he knows that the friendship can bear the inconvenience. {The Greek, by the way, that is translated 'persistence' can also be translated as

'boldness' or 'shamelessness'.} I believe that what Jesus is teaching us is that our relationship with God is one in which we can come with all of our needs - all of our joys and sorrows - all of our anger and disappointment - all of our peacefulness. We come to the one that the ancient Hebrews believed was so holy that you dare not even say the name and we are able to approach as a child that know he / she is loved by their father.

Someone wrote: *"Prayer is not a magical means by which we get God to do what we want. Prayer is an inner openness to God which allows his divine power to be released in us. Ultimately, the power of prayer is not that we succeed in changing God, but that God succeeds in changing us."*

"Lord, teach us to pray." We so desperately need this in our lives - lives that have become more and more consumed by the world and by a culture that is rushing away from God. We need to know that a loving God awaits us with open arms ready to give of Himself. "If a human parent knows to give the things we need - does not our Heavenly Father know as much - perhaps more. And He gives us Himself - the Holy Spirit.

One author suggested that many people believe that God is Santa Clause - or the one who write the blank check and they are disappointed when they don't get what they want. He said, "We need to pray ... to open the door of our min to the Holy Spirit. The primary purpose of prayer is not to tell God what we want, but to find out what God wants of us. Prayer is a means of receiving the will of God, the power of God, the love of God. ..."

And so we continue to come asking, Lord, teach us to pray. **AMEN**

Complete text of Pray translation mentioned above:

The Prayer To Our Father (in the original Aramaic)

Abwûn

"Oh Thou, from whom the breath of life comes,

d'bwasmâja

who fills all realms of sound, light and vibration.

Nethkâdasch schmach

May Your light be experienced in my utmost holiest.

Têtê malkuthach.

Your Heavenly Domain approaches.

Nehwê tzevjânach aikâna d'bwaschmâja af b'arha.

*Let Your will come true - in the universe (all that vibrates)
just as on earth (that is material and dense).*

Hawvlân lachma d'sûnkanân jaomâna.

Give us wisdom (understanding, assistance) for our daily need,

Waschboklân chaubên wachtahên aikâna

daf chnân schwoken l'chaijabên.

detach the fetters of faults that bind us, (karma)

like we let go the guilt of others.

Wela tachlân l'nesjuna

Let us not be lost in superficial things (materialism, common temptations),

ela patzân min bischa.

but let us be freed from that what keeps us off from our true purpose.

Metol dilachie malkutha wahaila wateschbuchta l'ahlâm almîn.

*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)

Lords Prayer, from the original Aramaic

Translation by Neil Douglas-Klotz in Prayers of the Cosmos

O Birther! Father- Mother of the Cosmos

Focus your light within us - make it useful.

Create your reign of unity now-

through our fiery hearts and willing hands

Help us love beyond our ideals

and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures.

Animate the earth within us: we then

feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all.

Untangle the knots within

so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other.

Don't let surface things delude us,

But free us from what holds us back from our true purpose.

Out of you, the astonishing fire,

Returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.

Lords Prayer, from Aramaic into Old English

Translation by G.J.R. Ouseley from The Gospel of the Holy Twelve

Our Father-Mother Who art above and within:

Hallowed be Thy Name in twofold Trinity.

In Wisdom, Love and Equity Thy Kingdom come to all.

*Thy will be done, As in Heaven so in Earth.
Give us day by day to partake of Thy holy Bread, and the fruit of the living Vine.
As Thou dost forgive us our trespasses, so may we forgive others who trespass
against us.
Shew upon us Thy goodness, that to others we may shew the same.
In the hour of temptation, deliver us from evil.*

Amun.