

OUR DAILY BREAD

Final Week of a 2-Week Series, "The Lord's Prayer"

With Rev. Richard Maraj

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A ship is sinking and the captain turns to the people on the boat and asks, *"Does anyone know how to pray?"*

A priest on board says, *"I know how to pray."*

The captain says, *"Okay, priest; you pray. Everyone else will wear a life jacket, because we're one short."*
[Congregants laugh]

So, today we're talking about prayer: The Lord's Prayer. And The Lord's Prayer is truly the foundation of all prayer. Jesus is not teaching us to follow specific words, but to follow the Spirit: to follow the consciousness behind them. It's not just the words, it's really the thought and the mindset underneath our words, which is absolutely key.

In the book of Philippians, Chapter 2, Verse 5, it says, *"Let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus be in you."* The purpose of the Lord's Prayer is to guide us and lead us into the same mind -- the Christ mind -- that Jesus entered all of his prayer with.

What Jesus gave in response to the disciples' *"Teach us how to pray,"* is some of the most beautiful, inspiring principles that teach us the truth about the nature of God, the nature of ourselves, and our relationship with God. And it also reminds us of the tremendous unlimited potential that is within each of us that we have not yet come to fully realize and utilize. It behooves us to contemplate and meditate on each of the lines of The Lord's Prayer to grow our spiritual awareness and to allow ourselves to be a greater channel for Spirit to flow through us.

So, last week, we started with the first line, *"Our Father, who art in heaven."* And right here off the bat, you feel this powerful sense of unification and oneness: Our Father. There is a oneness and a connection there, and that we are one with the Creator and all that God is. That we are connected into that. Jesus said, *"It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom."* So, praying from a mindset of "Our Father" gives us a level of confidence and comfort and reassurance, because Father -- it isn't male, necessarily, but that relationship of being a provider. You know, having the wisdom to lead and guide us.

"Hallowed be Thy name" means holy be thy name ... or, really, holy be Thy nature. That God is the wholeness, the Allness, and the goodness. And if hallowed be Thy name, God's name, then -- as children of God -- that hallowed/holiness must be our nature as well.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" is really saying that, for Thy kingdom to come, we all have to participate in it. That we all have to do our work to help manifest that and bring it forth. And Eric Butterworth says that God is trying to perfect us through these lives, and to expand into greater levels of divine expression. And so, it's our work to release the things that are not for our highest good by totally surrendering ourselves to God and better embodying the spiritual principles.

So, today we're going to look at the last three and we're going to begin with: **GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.**

And so, in Aramaic -- the language that Jesus spoke -- here's what the translation is: *"Endow us with the wisdom to produce and share what each being needs to grow and to flourish."*

And so, let me just jump in first with, *"Give us this day our daily bread."* Just like before in "Our Father," there's a collectiveness about it and a unifying principle. And so, what this is saying -- *"Give us this day our daily bread"* -- It's like, when we pray, that we pray for the well-being of others, as well. Give us this day our daily bread so that everyone has what they need to live their life in the highest and best way.

You know, it is a form of nourishment. And whether nourishment comes in the form of food or inspiration or comfort or guidance or hope or clarity, that everyone gets what they need to live this day; to have their daily bread.

You know, *"Give us this day our daily bread"* is not pleading. Eric Butterworth says it's an affirmation, and if it were worded slightly differently, it would be really clear. He said it should be worded, *"You give us this day and every day our daily bread."*

Remember in the Book of Genesis when the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness for those 40 years? God made a promise to them that they would have daily manna, manna from heaven, to provide for their needs for the day. Now, the rule was you couldn't sock it away. No, you couldn't stockpile it. You couldn't have leftovers. Because it was just for that day. It would spoil.

But still, everybody started stocking it away, and it would not be good. Because they didn't trust that there would be daily bread. And that's an important aspect in this teaching and this reading: to realize you get the daily bread, and that's all you really need.

Notice Jesus did not say, *"Give us this day all the bread I'm going to need,"* or, *"Give us this day as much bread I could get until Friday."* He's not saying that! It is saying: give us this day our daily bread.

You know, in life, we don't need to know everything, do everything or have everything. We just need to know the next step. We just need to know the next thing. So can you, in your life, trust that every day you'll get your daily bread? And you don't have to worry about the future? You don't have to regret anything of the past, but to enjoy this day? And realize this day and every day we get our daily bread. All the resources that we need, you know, are available to us.

You know, Psalm 118.24 says, *"This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it."* This is the day. This is the most important day. See, what happens when we trust that we'll get our daily bread: it takes that worry energy away from the future and the past, and we get to live today with more focus, with more presence, with more attention, with more diligence. And so, when we get to that place, we truly live this day in a different way -- in a better way, in a more fulfilling way -- which sets up a good tomorrow by living today and living it well. *"This is the day that the Lord has made."*

And so, this would really read, *"You give us this day, and every day, all the bread, all the nourishment, all the guidance and good that we need to handle and live this day to the best."* Give us this day our daily bread.

And the next one is to **FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US.**

A four-year-old child famously misquoted The Lord's Prayer by praying, *"And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."* [Congregants laugh] A lot of wisdom right there!

In Aramaic -- Jesus' language, again -- here is what this translates out. It says, *"Untie the tangled threads of destiny that bind us as we release others from past mistakes."*

And this is a powerful reminder of a spiritual principle: that forgiveness is a spiritual principle. Here's what it says in Mark 11: 24 and 25. It says, *"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so your Father in heaven may forgive you of your sins."*

Now, the great spiritual teacher Emmett Fox says that you can't make spiritual progress without forgiveness. He said that forgiveness is an unbreakable mental law; that we have to forgive others if we want to demonstrate overcoming difficulties and making any real spiritual progress. Unforgiveness blocks us from feeling that connection with Spirit. It blocks us from the flow of peace and joy.

And, again, it says, *"Our Father."* And what it is saying: holding negativity towards someone actually blocks our own good. It blocks our own peace. So, we need to pray for the wellness and betterment of

others. We need to forgive others, not so much for themselves, but for ourselves. And, as we release it in ourselves, that ease between us and others actually is lessened.

You know, forgiveness truly unlocks the doors and frees us from the chains of hatred, resentment, bitterness and blame. Forgiveness says: I refuse to let the past have dominion over my peace and happiness and authority over my life. *"As we forgive"* is about saying, *"I accept responsibility. I know I have the power. I know I have control in my hands. But if anybody says or does anything, I have the ability to free myself."* Forgiveness is a prerequisite to cleaning the way of the negative thoughts and energy that blocks us from the flowing good in our lives.

So, a question for all of us: Is there anyone in your life you're holding any resentment or grudge towards? And the first thing to do is: Are you willing to forgive? Are you willing to release the pain of the past? Are you willing to set yourself free to feel a sense of peace and a sense of goodness and joy again?

Remember when the disciples asked Jesus, *"How many times should we forgive? As many as seven?"*

And Jesus said, *"No; as many as 70 times seven."* That's 490, in case you're wondering. And the reason Jesus said that is: the number seven in the Bible means completion. And so, when they say seven, he takes it to the max and he says 70 times seven.

And so, what it's saying ... It's not saying, *"Hey, on 491 you cut loose."* [Congregants laugh] What it's saying is: 70 times seven completion means that you have to have a consciousness of continually releasing and letting go and not holding on to negativity or regret.

And what he's really saying is: You only have to forgive if you want to feel peace. You only have to forgive if you want to feel joy. You only have to forgive if you want to feel happiness. Which really is saying to have it continuously. It must be a continuous practice of us living. Because we're human beings; we make mistakes! We say inappropriate things. People do things. And so, forgiveness is a life skill and a spiritual practice and something we must do on the earth.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And the *"as we forgive"* means we're the ones activating it. We're the ones releasing first, because it really is within us.

Okay, the next one: **LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.**

In Aramaic, it says: *"Do not let us get lost in the illusion of separation, but free us from unripe and immature consciousness."* The fact is: we all drift and get lost and distracted. We all succumb to negative influences. We give in to our own selfishness, temptations that lead to poor decisions and some unwise choices.

And so, the whole idea to lead us not into temptation. You know, in Aramaic, it says, *"Do not let me enter into lack or negativity."* Do not let me enter into temptation. And in Unity, Charles Fillmore says -- instead of lead us not -- he says, *"leave* us not." Because he knows we're going to get there. The question is: How well are we going to get out?

And so, first of all, let's just address the idea that God tempts us. In James 1: 14 to 16, it says, *"No one, when tempted, should say, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it. And when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin."* I think we all know the word sin is an archery term that means to miss the mark. We all miss the mark.

And so, the next line is: *"Leave us not in temptation."* We miss the mark. And so, the question is: How do we get unstuck from repeating those negative thought patterns? To *"leave us not"* means: Don't let me remain asleep. Don't let me remain trapped in fear. Don't let me stay stuck in anger or resentment. Don't let me remain in a consciousness where I feel I'm powerless or a consciousness where I forget who I am. Awaken us to the truth; to the wisdom and the goodness within.

Do you remember in Genesis when Moses was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, and they were at the Red Sea, and they're stuck? And Pharaoh's men are gaining on them, and they're feeling like there's nowhere to go. And they're moaning and whining. They say, *"Oh, we should have stayed in Egypt instead of being buried out here in watery graves!"*

And then Moses says, *"Stand firm and see the deliverance God will give you! For today, the Egyptians that you see; you will not see them tomorrow."*

Deliver us from evil. Deliver us and help us awaken from not living in alignment with God, who is the power of all deliverance from all negativity and limitation. To "leave us not" and "deliver us from" is about overcoming. It's about transforming. It is about healing. It is about the resurrecting power that can lift us out of any darkness or difficult situation.

Deliver us from the part of ourselves that forgets to be compassionate and thoughtful towards others. You know, deliver me from hatred. Deliver us from the consciousness that produces any harm to ourselves or others. You know, God is our light and our deliverance. The One Presence and One Power. "Deliver us from evil" means: turn to God, who is the power of deliverance from all evil and negativity, and allow God to lift us, open us and transform us to our highest and best.

A man goes to the Vatican to see the Pope. *"Your Holiness,"* the man says, *"I work for KFC, and we want to offer you \$10 million if you will change the Lord's Prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' to, 'Give us this day our daily chicken.'"*

The Pope is shocked. *"Absolutely not! I cannot change the Word of God for money."*

And then the man returns a week later and he says, *"You know, we're desperate. We are about to offer you \$50 million. Think of all the good the church could do with that kind of money!"*

And then the Pope refuses again. *"No! It's absolutely out of the question!"*

Finally, the man returns the last time and says, *"Your Holiness, this is our final offer. We will donate \$100 million to Catholic charities if you make the switch."*

The Pope pauses for a second, thinks of all the global poverty, all the things in the world that could use some help. This money would do so much good. He says, *"Very well. I accept."*

The next day, the Pope calls an emergency meeting with the College of Cardinals and says, *"Gentlemen, we have some good news and some bad news. And the good news is that we officially have raised \$100 million for Catholic charities."*

The room erupts. They're clapping. They're cheering loud. They're whooping. And then the Pope says when they all settle down, *"And now for the bad news. We just lost the Wonder Bread account."* [Congregants laugh] Okay. All right. [One congregant applauds] One person ... Oh, spreading around.

And so, the ending of The Lord's Prayer actually was not the real ending. There was no ending, and the ending was put for liturgical reasons. And because the ending actually was as smooth and positive and affirming as the rest of it, and it was added, and we all know it: **FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.**

In Aramaic, it says, *"from you comes all the generating power, the life energy, and the song that beautifies all."*

And "Amen" means *"a deep, personal commitment to this truth."* A deep, personal commitment to live, believe, and act as this is the truth.

And so, I think this is a really powerful way to end. Because what it's saying is: "Thy kingdom, Thy power, and Thy glory forever" is really saying our kingdom, our power, and the glory is always within us. We will always be connected to that power and that glory, and it will never, never, ever shake.

This is a powerful way to affirm the Presence and Power of God within our lives, and our connection to that Presence and Power.

You know, this prayer isn't the prayer to end all prayers. It's actually the prayer to begin all prayers. Can you imagine in all your prayers you begin with **Our Father** -- of realizing I'm connected to God, the very source that makes all things possible? And that every person is also a child of God; that we are all brothers and sisters spiritually.

Hallowed be thy name: the holiness and abundance and goodness of God that is God's nature is also our nature, as well.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven: says you have a responsibility. It's all our jobs to help make the kingdom come. And that we need to embody the spiritual principles, but we also need to surrender; to allow the will and the work of God to move through us.

Give us this day our daily bread: Absolutely trust that every day you'll have all the resources you need. The question is, are you living it to the fullest?

And **forgive us our trespasses:** It says that we have the power to free us. No matter what anybody says or does, we all have the power to free and liberate ourselves through forgiveness.

And **lead us not into temptation:** is really saying turn to God for deliverance. There is no situation that we cannot overcome, that cannot be transformed; cannot be uplifted and changed for the better.

For thine is the kingdom. and the power and the glory: that the kingdom of God, the power of God, and the glory of God is always available with us forever.

And so this week, let us all pray in the consciousness of The Lord's Prayer.

God bless you all.