**10 Pentecost, July 28 2013, Hosea 1: 2-10, Ps 85, Col 2:6-15, Luke 11:1-13; Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

***Jesus was praying, and after he had finished, one of his disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray."*** All of us have prayed. We know something about prayer, as did the disciples who asked this question of Jesus. Why did they ask it then? Because to have a sense of really connecting to God through prayer takes practice, experience, and teaching. We all, no matter how long we have been Christian, have something to learn from Jesus about prayer. Prayer is the ongoing love dialogue between God and us; He talks, we listen and we talk and He listens, and we can be together in silence too. Prayer gets better with practice, and learning. In today's Gospel, Jesus taught the disciples about prayer with the Lord's prayer as an example. The Lord's prayer is a complete prayer, an example prayer, as it says on page 856 in the Book of Common Prayer. Look at p. 856 now, and at the question at the bottom of the page: "**What are the principal kinds of prayer"...the answer is: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession, and petition.** The Lord's prayer has them all, and you it takes only 20 seconds to say it! Once memorized, it sticks to you -- you can recite it no matter what is going on in your life, no matter how young or old you are. So, let's take a close look at the richness of the Lord's prayer, one part at a time. Don't be in a hurry here, because it is jam-packed and will take a while to unpack it all.

It begins with: "***Father, hallowed be your name***." The first step in prayer is to address God with humility. When we humbly come before God we are acknowledging that He is the divine creator, and that we are blessed to be His adopted children. If we come with an attitude of pride *(like the world teaches us to be: acting tough, like we know everything),* then we are taking God's place -- and the connection with won't happen. In saying, "***Father***" we begin by acknowledging God as God. Some people, because of issues with their earthly fathers or with the gender of God, struggle with addressing God as "Father." If this is an issue for you, say "God" or "Abba" instead when you begin praying. "***Hallowed***" means that we honor and trust God. Then we pray, "***Your kingdom come."*** This is in reference to the Kingdom of God, the realm in which God is sovereign.

## This past week, we thought about kings with the birth of Prince George Alexander Louis of Canterbury, son of Kate and William. The British really enjoy the pomp associated with their monarchs; having the third to the throne be born is a big deal for them! We can understand the kingdom ruled by the British Empire easier than we can understand the Kingdom of God. Anglican scholar [Graeme Goldsworthy](http://www.theopedia.com/Graeme_Goldsworthy) defines the Kingdom of God as "God's people in God's place under God's rule." So, when we pray "*Your kingdom come*" we are acknowledging God as our judge and our future, as well as our present. In Romans 14:17 Paul says, "*For the kingdom of God is ...righteousness and peace and joy, in the Holy Spirit."* It is a state of being filled with joy and peace, more than a place -- and here we are saying "yes" to the Kingdom of God!

Jesus went on, ***"Give us each day our daily bread."*** In this part of the prayer, we move on from praise to petition. We ask for life sustenance -- bread is the basic food of life, and without food we die. Bread is made from wheat seeds, grown in the soil and watered by the rains; all from God's creation! Have you ever gone through a grocery store with someone from a city, teaching them where all the food on the shelves comes from? I have. This is a really interesting experience, because they just think that the food comes from the store! When they learn about how each of the foods are grown locally and from around the world, they are amazed! And when they learn about the complex process from field to harvest to processing to transportation to packaging to the shelf they are stunned! They should be! God is there every step of the way. We are dependent upon God for bringing us here in the first place, and then for helping sustain us daily with the food and water we need to live.

Next, the Lord's prayer gets into the difficult stuff: sin. We pray, "***And forgive us our sins."*** Here we acknowledge before God that we have sinned; we don't say "if we sin"- no, we ask God to forgive us of our sins. Sin is when we separate ourselves from God by our poor decisions of what we say, think, or do. We try not to sin, and God strengthens us -- but we all sin; so we need to ask for forgiveness and turn away from sinning again. Forgiveness is big, and it is something we don't do very well. It begins with us recognizing that we have sinned (this can be as small as hurting someone's feelings), and then we take that sin to God to forgive and go say we are sorry. After this, we have to forgive ourselves -- because God forgave us; this is really difficult for us! The prayer goes on: " ***for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us."*** We don't accept God's forgiveness enough, and we don't forgive others very well either -- but this is what God expects of us. So, we pray for help with forgiveness. And, each time we think about or see a person we have not forgiven we need to be reminded that God expects us to forgive. Forgiveness does not mean condoning bad behavior of someone who hurt us; it is rather the letting go of the hurt, because it holds us back and causes us not to be able to live full Christian lives serving God.

The Lord's prayer in Luke ends with, "***And do not bring us to the time of trial."*** Here we petition God, now that our sins are forgiven, to bless us with strength to avoid temptation. Some people have incorrectly interpreted this part, "***And do not bring us to.."*** for they think that God intentionally sends us misfortune if we have been bad. God is not like that. God has plans for us, and they are plans for good (Jeremiah 29:11). Here we pray for strength. Jesus now teaches about how to pray persistently. We are to keep knocking, keep asking God for what we need and God **will** answer: "***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."*** Maybe we won't get exactly what we ask for, but know it--God hears us, and answers. Did you see the movie called, "Bruce Almighty"? Jim Carey gets to be God for a while, and is overwhelmed with the challenge of answering prayer -- he doesn't have a clue about what is good for others. God knows what is best for you and me. So, pray - pray the Lord's prayer, pray your own prayers; you don't have to use good grammar or be eloquent -- just talk to God and listen to God and be with God. God will hear you and respond. Amen.