

Devotions – July 12-18, 2020

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Sunday, July 12, 2020

Text: Matthew 6:9-13

“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 have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.”

I have been using a devotional guide called *A Year with Jesus – Daily Readings and Meditations*: A guide written by Eugene H. Peterson who is also known for writing a translation of the Bible called *The Message*. The guide uses the gospels of Matthew and John and in Matthew we find the Lord’s Prayer – the prayer that Jesus taught us. It is such a familiar and loved prayer, but because it is so familiar, I often find myself saying the words but not really thinking about the meaning of the words. I found this devotional/guide brought me back to the importance of the words, and I found a new level of meaning, and a new level of challenge, that Jesus was teaching us when he prayed these words. For example, the prayer teaches us about God, our Father and his holy name; Heaven; God’s Will; God’s gifts of daily bread; Forgiveness; and, Deliverance. Wow, no wonder this prayer is so important in our Christian lives.

So, using Eugene Peterson as a guide, during this upcoming week I will share my thoughts about this profound prayer. Hopefully, it will also bring a new level of meaning and challenge to your life as a Christian

Why is this prayer important to you?

Prayer Thought: *Help me to remember that when I am praying the Lord’s Prayer that I focus on the words and the meanings of the words. Also, help me to remember that the words should lead to actions that make a difference in my life and in the lives of my brothers and sisters. Amen*



Monday, July 13, 2020

Text: Matthew 6:9

“Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name.”

So, how do you picture God? The Bible has various references to the appearance of God such as with Moses and the burning bush or when God was present in the pillar of cloud, or the pillar of fire, as He led the Israelites in the wilderness. However, when I picture God, I am drawn to the familiar image of a father and I believe that Jesus also had that same image in mind with the Lord's Prayer. One of the fond memories I have as a youngster - and I won't say how long ago - was attending Sunday School. I draw my image of "Our Father" from this experience. Each Sunday, the classes would begin with a devotional led by Semer Thorsen. He carried a pocket size Bible in his pocket - I suppose it was the New Testament - and he would open it each Sunday and share a scripture with all of us. What I really remember was his hands which were stained, bruised and calloused - Semer was a farmer, woods worker and mechanic - and his hands showed it. He would open the Bible with those hands and share a word of scripture. I have to admit that I don't so much remember the scripture as I remember those loving hands. I picture God as having those loving hands extended to all of us - the hands of a loving Father.

Our society has really forgotten about the Lord's Prayer promise to Hallow His Name. I believe that if we remember and revere "Our Father" that this should lead to using his name in reverence. Our words really are important, and I pray that we all can adopt the discipline of watching our words, and using our words, to refer to God in a reverent and loving way.

By the way, Semer and his wife Elsie had 16 children so, I guess, he deserves the title of father in many ways.

How do you picture God?

Prayer Thought: *May our prayers truly recognize that God is Our Father and that we always revere his name. Also, that we attempt to emulate the actions of a loving father, and a loving mother, and try to be a model of love, kindness and acceptance to all in our midst.*



Tuesday, July 14, 2020

Text: Matthew 6:10

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

What is God's will? Eugene Peterson's devotional challenges me to consider what is my will and how does that compare with God's will? When I really, and honestly, think about this question, I have to come to the conclusion that my will frequently is not in sync with God's will. You see, my will is too often based on trivial items such as power, prestige and payroll. For instance, if I put as much thought, and effort, into how I am concerned about my image before God as compared to my concern about my image before others around me, I know that I could find more peace and a better understanding of God's kingdom here on earth. Also, if I could put

more effort into sharing with others and the church, as opposed to building my bank account, I have the assurance that “my cup would runneth over.”

I grew up in a rural area of the Upper Peninsula known as the Stonington Peninsula. My mother was known as, and called by others in the area, the “social worker” of Stonington. Why? Because she was always concerned about her neighbors and made the effort to help others. One example – she had it worked out with the elderly widow lady - Ebba - that lived across the field on the neighboring farm, an emergency warning system. Ebba would put on the yard light each evening as a signal that she was OK. My mother always looked for that light and would check it out if she didn’t see the light.

God’s will does not seek power, privilege or payroll but rather seeks sharing, humility, service, and stewardship. I’m not sure where I found this quote but I want to share it with you: “We all can create a part of the Kingdom by the acts of service and love we can do.”

How does your will differ from God’s will?

Prayer Thought: *Help me to seek out, find and follow God’s will rather than my will, for in doing so I will find Your Kingdom every day.*



Wednesday, July 15, 2020

Text: Matthew 6:11

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

“Shelter at home.” “Quarantine.” “Social Distance.” “Isolate.” “Wear a face mask.” How often have we heard these words during the past few months? And, how often have we been irritated and complained about these constraints put on our usual behaviors. How long is this going to last? I can’t stand this much longer – I have to get out. I miss restaurants; I miss church services; I miss summer VBS; I miss traveling; and the list, and complaints, goes on. What are your main belly aches or complaints?

During the middle of this pandemic – in April – I volunteered to work a night shift at the Hope at the Inn (HATI) program in Delta County. HATI is a program where a number of churches come together and provide a homeless shelter for those who are in this need – many areas in the UP, and the country, have similar programs. During my shift, as we sheltered about one dozen individuals, in two not very large sleeping areas and everyone dined together, I also realized that many of the places where the homeless usually went during the day were now closed. I realized that my complaints were insignificant compared to the homeless in the area. You see, I had a home where I could shelter, and I could choose what activities were safe and allowed me social

distance. Many of the homeless in our area do not have these options and they are very vulnerable to catching the virus. By the way, when one person becomes infected, they can inadvertently infect many others. When one person is hungry, or homeless, we are all challenged to provide food and shelter and we are all better off when we do that.

Jesus reminded us in his prayer that we should be thankful for all that we have and that we are to share the plenty that we have with those who are not as fortunate. Children going hungry is not acceptable. God depends on us to provide the daily bread to those around us who are in need.

What physical needs will you pray for today?

Prayer Thought: I pray that I will be satisfied with the plenty that I have and that I will recognize the difference between what I need and what I just want. And, I pray that I will be God's generous hands with my neighbors near and far.



Thursday, July 16, 2020

Text: Matthew 6:12

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Forgiveness is an easy word to say but not such an easy act to accomplish. It is my family's practice, as I am sure it is true for many other families, to sit in the same place in church each Sunday. Another family would routinely sit in front of us each Sunday so we got to know each other, and I also got to know their children as I had them in my Sunday School classes. One Sunday, the family was no longer present and soon the rumor came that the father had been accused of child sexual misconduct and, after that, it was soon verified in the local newspaper when the father's name was included in a list of those accused and/or arrested for crimes in the area. Subsequently, the father was found guilty and spent time in jail and/or prison. Unfortunately, the family no longer felt comfortable attending our church even though contact was made to the family inviting them to continue to attend. The father served his time and then returned to live with his family. What more as a congregation could we have done to forgive and safely invite the father, and the family, to return to our church?

Forgiveness is something that we all face at times in our lives. Either that we need forgiveness or that we need to forgive others. Eugene Peterson tells us in his devotional that “forgiveness is the basic need of the spirit.” Next Sunday note how often during the service that we are asked to forgive including during the Lord's Prayer. Jesus understood that forgiveness is a cleansing – a true gift – that we are invited to both give and to receive. Let's begin with asking for forgiveness for our many prejudices, jealousies, greed, hates, and we all can add many more to this list

Who can you forgive as you have been forgiven?”

Prayer Thought: *First of all, I pray that I can confess my sins and ask for forgiveness. Also, I pray for the strength to forgive others.*



Friday, July 17, 2020

Text: Matthew 6:13

“And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.”

What/who is the evil one? We can picture the devil dressed in black, but I think we need to take a closer look at the temptations we face on a daily basis that often seem so innocent but really are evil. As children, the temptations that we face are probably found in parts of the Ten Commandments such as do not steal; do not lie; honor your mother and father; and do not swear. Luther reminds us that God does not tempt anyone but that we face, along with temptations from the devil, temptations in the world and in our flesh. As adults we certainly are not immune to many temptations that face us each day. I know that I have fallen into prejudices, jealousies, doubts, flesh and even hate. So often, it can be like a “slippery slope” where we find ourselves inadvertently falling into sin even before we realize it is happening. For example, I like to consider myself as not holding prejudices towards others but one day I found myself laughing about a joke with others that poked ridicule towards our gay brothers and sisters. Afterwards, I realized that my actions were not appropriate and that I needed to increase my alertness in recognizing this prejudicial sin, among many others, and to work towards Christ’s example of acceptance and love for others. Temptations are very insidious and the devil loves to use them to trap us and draw us away from Christ.

How have you seen the workings of the devil and how have you used the power of prayer to protect you from temptation?

Prayer Thought: *I pray for discernment to guide me each day and to protect me from the “slippery slope” of sin. Give me the tools to address the world, and its temptations, using Christ as the example.*



Saturday, July 18, 2020

Text: Matthew 6:14-15

“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.”

It is interesting, and reinforcing of God's grace and promise of peace, that Jesus ends this version of his prayer (The Lord's Prayer) by returning to the theme of forgiveness. I believe that he did that in order to reiterate the importance of forgiveness in our lives as Christians. The gift of forgiveness we receive for our sins; the gift of forgiveness that we are commanded to give to others; and the gift of forgiveness that we need to extend to ourselves. You see, when you have the gift of being forgiven, and forgiving others, you are then able to enter the kingdom of peace that passes all understanding. One example of when we have this forgiveness and peace is with the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Communion uses the common elements of bread and wine, combined with the truly extraordinary words of Jesus, to provide us a miraculous feast of forgiveness and the promise of peace.

“May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.”

The Lord's Prayer is not just some words that sound good, but it is a call to us to action. As we say the words of the prayer may it lead us to action to:

- Keep his name holy.
- Look for his presence around us each day.
- Recognize his will and work hard to follow his will.
- Be thankful and generous with his bounty.
- Seek and extend forgiveness.
- Resist the work of the devil; and
- Always remember that God is in control. Amen

How and when do you pray?

Prayer Thought: *Jesus, you taught us how to pray. Help us to be diligent in our prayer life and in living out the words of Your Prayer.*

The Lord's
Prayer