

Sermon: Teach Us to Pray – The Gateway to Peace

Grace and peace to you, in the name of our loving God, who is both mystery and mercy.

Last week, we explored the peace of God—that mysterious peace which surpasses all understanding. It is not earned, nor is it taken for granted. It is a gift of baptismal birthright, one that no earthly authority can strip away. And today, we're drawn deeper into the very heart of that peace: through prayer.

Let me be clear—without prayer, there is no Christian life. Prayer is not an add-on; it is our very breath. Jesus, our Lord, prayed intensely, often through the night. Prayer was the grounding note of his ministry and relationship with the Father. In today's Gospel, he's seen again in a certain place praying, when one of his disciples asks, "Lord, teach us to pray."

It's interesting, isn't it? The Lord's Prayer was given not proactively but in response to a request. And what Jesus offers isn't just words; it's a roadmap—a spiritual rhythm. Not a performance, not babble, not mere religious display. It is intimate. It is direct. And above all, it is transformative.

Exodus and the Father's Voice

Jesus begins by inviting us to say, "Our Father." This isn't mere formality—it's revolutionary. In Scripture, God is referred to as Father chiefly around the Exodus. "Out of Egypt I have called my son." That's not coincidence. The Lord's Prayer is structured like a new Exodus. It calls us out—from fear, isolation, and the oppressive spiritual forces that want to rob us of peace—into freedom and restoration.

Each petition in the prayer is a cry for transformation:

- "Hallowed be thy name" — We're asking God to make his name holy through acts that reveal his presence, just as he did at the Red Sea. May our lives, our families, and our communities be places where God's name is made holy again.
- "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done..." — We admit: not everything happening here is God's will. We live in a world suspended between forces of light and darkness. But God's will is breaking in. His kingdom is not imposed; it is invited. Because love never coerces—it waits, it woos, it heals.

Daily Bread and the Bread of the Future

Now we ask, "Give us today our daily bread." This is layered. It's not just our physical sustenance, like the manna in the wilderness. It's spiritual nourishment. In the original phrasing, it's "the bread of the future"—that which belongs to the coming Kingdom, the Bread that sustains our journey and reveals our calling.

- “Forgive us our sins...” is rooted in Jubilee—a return, a release, the cancelling of debts. Jesus proclaimed this freedom in Nazareth, and it still echoes today.
- “Lead us not into temptation” — This is no indictment of God, but a remembrance of Israel's testing in the wilderness. We ask not to fall into distrust. May we follow God's lead, not test his patience.

The True Gift: The Holy Spirit

And then, the assurance: God will not give us a stone when we ask for bread. He will not hand us a serpent when we need sustenance. What he gives—if we truly ask—is the Holy Spirit. This is the heart of all prayer. More than signs or wonders, we seek connection. We seek the Spirit who awakens joy and anchors peace.

Prayer is our response to God's invitation into real relationship—not ritual, but reality. Not obligation, but orientation. When we pray, even the smallest room can become a sanctuary. And when we ask, seek, and knock—we do so trusting that God hears, that God is near, and that peace is possible.

So, let us pray. Let us really pray. Not only with words but with lives oriented toward the Father, who leads us out of bondage, into grace, into freedom, into peace. Amen.