

*... May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing and of you, who are ROCK, REDEEMER, and COMFORTER of us all. Amen.*

Matthew 6:9-13 ... Each week we are visiting with a familiar biblical story which invites us to listen and respond with courage, trust, & live with hope. Today the focus is with a well-known snapshot of Jesus actually teaching a prayer. There are several prayers that Jesus prays, but this is the only example of Jesus teaching specific prayer.

The pattern of the prayer is a model for any prayer.

First honor God and the sovereignty of God: as creator, as parent, as vast as the universe and as near as the air we breathe; celebrate God's greatness and God's nearness.

Second, recognize not MY will but THY will. This is quite revolutionary... particularly in American Western culture, where MY rights are in conflict with OUR rights, all rights or equal rights. This statement, hallowed be THY name THY will kingdom, THY will be done on earth as it is in heaven requires a shift of heart. Jesus calls us to surrender the desire for power & glory to seek God's kingdom, power, glory & will. John Wesley's Covenant prayer makes this very clear... Not Mine, but Thine will and way, O Lord!

Finally, Jesus' prayer turns to the practical needs of daily life... the bread we need for today, the forgiveness for wrong doings, and protection from temptation. 1st century Palestine was just as needy in daily provision and economic supports as we are in this country and around the world. Food scarcity is real... economic hardship is real, and temptation to meet our desires at the expense of another is real. This prayer reminds us to share, so that all my have some, to forgive, and to keep ourselves in check with God's help.

This last thought, seeking God's help is often missed, I think. When we pray 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'... may not be grammatically correct... perhaps it was intended to be... 'Lead us, Lord, not into temptation as we so easily lead ourselves. Instead, deliver us from the evil one.' Our daily need to battle with temptation is aided by God leading us on the path of life.

By the beginning of the second century, Christians were praying this prayer three times a day. It calls us to trust in God as protector, as provider, and as parent. It compels us to resist our desires for power & glory and have things our way and invites us seek/follow God's way, including forgiving ourselves and others. This, friends is a prayer to shape our hearts, our souls, and our lives.

Let us join together in this communal prayer and then proceed to Baptize Adelaide Maisey Irene Carroll as our newest Child of God at Saint James.

Let's pray    ... *Our Father, which art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen.*