

- Good morning, may this be the best day of our faith journey,
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SCRIPTURE:

Luke 11:1 (CEB) – Larger reading: Luke 11:1-1

“Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’”

STORY & REFLECTION:

While serving my first church I came away one Sunday disturbed that the congregation was just going through the ritualistic process of praying The Lord’s Prayer with very little thought or feeling ... so, I determined that we wouldn’t pray the prayer again until someone mentioned that they missed it. Interesting experiment. A lady came up to me about 5 months later saying, “I’m really upset with you pastor.” “Why,” I asked. “Well, we didn’t pray The Lord’s Prayer this morning,” she declared. “Really, you just now missed it?” I said. “Because we haven’t prayed it for the last 5 months.” She looked at me with astonishment and shared, as she walked away, “Well, maybe I need to be more thoughtful in my spiritual walk.”

Too often we just recite the Lord’s Prayer instead of really, honestly praying it from the depth of our spirit. Here is a made up dialogue that can cause some contemplation concerning the sincerity of praying The Lord’s Prayer ...

THE LORDS PRAYER (author unknown)

In a two part dialogue between the prayer and *GOD (in Italics)* in response.

Our Father Who Art In Heaven.

“Yes?”

Don't interrupt me. I'm praying.

“But -- you called ME!”

Called You? No, I didn't call You. I'm praying. Our Father who art in Heaven.

“There -- you did it again!”

Did what?

“Called ME. You said, “Our Father who art in Heaven.” Well, here I am. What’s on your mind?”

But I didn't mean anything by it. I was, you know, just saying my prayers for the day. I always say the Lord's Prayer. It makes me feel good, kind of like fulfilling a duty.

"Well, all right. Go on."

Okay, Hallowed be Thy name.

"Hold it right there. What do you mean by that?"

By what?

"By 'Hallowed be thy name'?"

It means, it means. . . good grief, I don't know what it means. How in the world should I know? It's just a part of the prayer. By the way, what does it mean?

"It means honored, holy, wonderful."

Hey, that makes sense. I never thought about what 'hallowed' meant before.

"Thanks."

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.

"Do you really mean that?"

Sure, why not?

"What are you doing about it?"

Doing? Why, nothing, I guess. I just think it would be kind of neat if You got control of everything down here like You have up there. We're kind of in a mess down here, you know.

"Yes, I know, but have I got control of you?"

Well, I go to church.

"That isn't what I asked you. What about your bad temper? You've really got a problem there, you know. And then there's the way you spend your money -- on yourself. And what about the kind of books you read?"

Now hold on just a minute! Stop picking on me! I'm just as good as some of the rest of those people at church!

“Excuse ME. I thought you were praying for my will to be done. If that is to happen, it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. . . like you. . . for example.”

Oh, all right. I guess I do have some hang-ups. Now that You mention it, I could probably name some others.

“So could I.”

I haven't thought about it very much until now, but I really would like to cut out some of those things. I would like to, you know, be really free.

“Good. Now we're getting somewhere. We'll work together -- You and ME. I'm proud of You.”

Look, Lord, if You don't mind, I need to finish up here. This is taking a lot longer than it usually does. Give us this day, our daily bread.

“You need to cut out the bread. You're overweight as it is.”

Hey, wait a minute! What is this? Here I was doing my religious duty, and all of a sudden You break in and remind me of all my hang-ups.

“Praying is a dangerous thing. You just might get what you ask for. Remember, you called ME -- and here I am. It's too late to stop now. Keep praying.”

(pause)

“Well, go on.”

I'm scared to.

“Scared? Of what?”

I know what You'll say.

“Try ME.”

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

“What about Ann?”

See? I knew it! I knew You would bring her up! Why, Lord, she's told lies about me, spread stories. She never paid back the money she owes me. I've sworn to get even with her!

“But -- your prayer -- What about your prayer?”

I didn't mean it.

“Well, at least you're honest. But it's quite a load carrying around all that bitterness and resentment isn't it?”

Yes, but I'll feel better as soon as I get even with her. Boy, have I got some plans for her. She'll wish she had never been born.

“No, you won't feel any better. You'll feel worse. Revenge isn't sweet. You know how unhappy you are -- well, I can change that.”

You can? How?

“Forgive Ann. Then, I'll forgive you; And the hate and the sin, will be Ann's problem -- not yours. You will have settled the problem as far as you are concerned.”

Oh, you know, You're right. You always are. And more than I want revenge, I want to be right with You. . (sigh). All right . . . all right . . . I forgive her.

“There now! Wonderful! How do you feel?”

Hmmmm. Well, not bad. Not bad at all! In fact, I feel pretty great! You know, I don't think I'll go to bed uptight tonight. I haven't been getting much rest, you know.

“Yeah, I know. But, you're not through with your prayer are you? Go on.”

Oh, all right. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

“Good! Good! I'll do that. Just don't put yourself in a place where you can be tempted.”

What do You mean by that?

“You know what I mean.”

Yeah. I know.

“Okay. Go ahead. Finish your prayer.”

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

“Do you know what would bring me glory --What would really make me happy?”

No, but I'd like to know. I want to please You now. I've really made a mess of things. I want to truly follow You. I can see now how great that would be. So, tell me . . . how do I make You happy?

“YOU just did.”

QUOTE:

“When thou prayest, rather let thy heart be without words than thy words without heart.” ~ John Bunyon

PRAYER:

Help me, Lord, to be truly real and honest when I pray.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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Make sure that you are prayed up before worship this Sunday. It makes the experience of worship much more real. And by the way, let the church office know that you would like to be on the PRAYER REQUEST list. Thank you.

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