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Luke 11:1-13

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Colossians 2:6-19

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set

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this aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.

Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths.

These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.

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He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

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Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.” And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’ And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. “So I say to you, 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. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to

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give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

In their small but profound book, *Lord, Teach us to Pray: The Lord's Prayer and the Christian Life*, William Willimon and Stanley Hauerwas make this unusual claim: “The Christian faith is not a set of beliefs but rather a prayer that you must learn to pray.” To live as a Christian is to live the Lord's Prayer. I don't know about you, but I have never considered our lives as followers of Christ to be the embodiment of the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is just something we say every week. We all know it by heart, it just rolls off our lips like, “How you doing today?” We're not really asking a question, were just being friendly. And we certainly don't want an answer, we could be there for a while and we've got more important things to do than too listen to how to someone is actually doing. And besides, that knowledge would make us feel, well - odd.

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Willimon and Hauerwas claim that “We pray this prayer - like this - because, in Jesus of Nazareth, God has intruded among us in a spectacular weird and peculiarly wonderful way. Like most wonderful things in our lives, God being with us creates an oddness - indeed we become odd as we respond to Jesus because, in the world’s eyes, Jesus is odd. Don’t pray this prayer if you don’t want to be odd.”

Okay, how many of you came to church this morning wanting to become odd - to confirm your oddness or reenforce the oddness you already are? Most of us didn’t expect to be told that to pray the Lord’s Prayer is to be odd, but I guess if we take it seriously, if we pray it seriously, by the standards of the world today, we would be oddities.

To pray this prayer is to bend towards God - to lean into God - to submit one’s life to God’s way in this world. And submission is an odd idea today isn’t it - kind of quaint. We are encouraged to be strong, to be individuals, to question

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authority, to be unique, to be our own man or our own woman - but we are not encouraged to be submissive. We are not taught to work well with others, at least not as adults. We are taught to go it alone. But when we pray this prayer we are reminded that life is just too tough to go alone. That not only do we need a group of people we can depend on, a community of support, we also need something - someone - to depend on. After all, being a Christian is too tough to go alone.

“Father” Jesus begins. Its a bit surprising, isn't it? Daddy. Prayer is an intimate exercise. It is recognition that we are God's children. That God is as close to us as a father or a mother. That we have done absolutely nothing to deserve being God's children. And that when we begin with “Our Father” we are admitting that we can not pray this prayer - cannot be Christian by ourselves - we need to pray this life with our friends.

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“In heaven.” But God is not simply like a parent, nearby or a phone call away. God is the one who rules the cosmos. And don’t we need a God like this? Things are cosmically out of hand. Evil is not just the nasty little things we do to one another. Evil is organized, massive, subtle, deep. Evil is cosmic and to battle the forces of evil in the world today, we need a God of the heavens. We don’t need little god’s, the gods of our wishful projections. We need a great God, above all and over all. Not just a God for Frankfort or Kentucky, not even for the United States, but for all.

“Hallowed.” To acknowledge that God is holy, is to also recognize that we are not. It is an act of praise and thanksgiving. It is an act of submission. For many, God is an oddity, so to believe in God makes us odd. For to claim that something is holy is the oddest thing we can do, isn’t it? We are invited to worship all kinds of little gods in our culture today. Hedonism. Idolatry. Self. Country. To say that God is holy, to submit to the One who is holy is to be

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odd, to be an alien - to be in exile or a refugee. Our culture has a way of driving out those who do not bow to its altars and gods. Drive them to the sideline, belittle them as weak, feeble-minded, and unworthy of inclusion. But it is only when we name God's holiness, that not only do we discover who God is, but also who we are.

“Kingdom.” Isn't kingdom a political word? Doesn't it imply allegiance to something? Aren't we moving from the sublime to the ordinary? Jesus came proclaiming that God's reign has come. Still he instructs us to pray for it. Not to pray for his country - Israel, our country - America, or even the world, but to pray for God's Kingdom. To pray, “Your kingdom come,” is to acknowledge that faith in Jesus is not simply an idea or an emotion. Faith in Jesus is both a pledge of allegiance to Jesus and his teachings, but also to God's kingdom. To pray, “Your kingdom come” is to pray that this kingdom - this country - this world pass away. C.S. Lewis has said that Jesus acted in such an odd way, praying

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an odd kingdom, that one either had to follow him or decide that he was crazy and that God's kingdom was absurd.

“Today.” Bread for today. That's not very much, is it? A bit odd to only be concerned about having enough for today. We live our lives planning for the future, saving for the future, dreaming for the future. We don't want enough for today, we want enough for retirement, for that bigger house, for that new car. Today. And when we finally have enough, when we retire, when we get the new house, suddenly the bar is raised and we want more - more bread, more cash. In a world where overconsumption is the norm, when we pray “bread for today” we are saying “no” to the enticements of desire and greed. We are praying forgive me for my overconsumption and hoarding. We are asking for help to learn when enough is enough. But more than learning when enough is enough, we are asking to learn how to share.

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“Forgive.” Its been pretty easy up to here hasn’t it. God is like a father, but God rules the cosmos. God is holy and we are not. God demands ultimate allegiance to God’s reign, God’s kingdom, God’s way of life. That God’s way is a daily way - a moment by moment submission to equality and equity and humility. Easy! Right? But now, now we get to the crux of the matter. Now Jesus moves from preaching to meddling. Oh, we readily admit to God that we have debts, that we have trespassed, that we have sinned, and that we need God’s forgiveness. We’ve known that since we admitted that God was holy and we are not. But here, here for the first time, the only time we make a promise, we make a commitment. Here we say, that we will be forgivers. In fact, we do more that, we base our reception of God’s forgiveness on our practice of forgiveness. We wish the prayer said, “Forgive us and then we will forgive others.” But it doesn’t. It is “forgive us AS” or “forgive us BECAUSE” we forgive others. In other words, our forgiveness is somehow dependent on our being forgivers.

To forgive is not natural, that's why we have to pray.

After the bombing of the Murrell Building in Oklahoma City, there was a city-wide memorial service. Billy Graham spoke. He began by saying, "We are here with you to let the healing begin. We are here to show you that a nation stands beside you in your grief. We are here to forgive." While the Attorney General spoke of retribution, the President promised the death penalty. Dr. Graham spoke of forgiveness. Peculiar, even a bit odd.

"Save." Save us from trial - from the powers of the day. Here we return to the beginning. It takes a cosmic God to save us from the cosmic chaos of the day - the principalities and powers. The Economy. Racism. Genderism. Addiction. Freedom. Nationalism. Anger. Fear. Hatred. Arrogance. Consumerism. Waste. Violence. Powers

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whose webs are lethal. Powers who seek domination. Powers who deny God. Unholy powers. Powers opposed to God's kingdom. Powers who are always promising more tomorrow. Powers of retribution. Powers who demand submission.

John Dominic Crossan says, "This prayer is a radical manifesto and a hymn of hope for all humanity!" So we pray. We pray together. We pray as God's children. We pray, not for me, but for us. We pray so that all can live.