

Matthew 6:5-15

Prayer

Whilst praying the Lord's Prayer, we can be a little bit like robots, can't we. Just saying the words, maybe faithfully every day, maybe like some churches sing the prayer, but without realising the true meaning behind the words.

Prayer is such a special action. An action where Jesus has provided the manual in our passage here. I'm sure we have lots of manuals in our house, and the only time they've been out of the box is when I've taken out the microwave, or the kettle, or the telly, out of the box and the manual has fallen out with it. And back in it goes without even a glance.

But there's one manual, or instructions book I never put back in the box without looking at it. Maybe you're expecting me to say the Presbyterian Church of Wales' Book of order and rules. But you'd be wrong, obviously I've looked at the important document, but the one instructions book I can't put back in the box is a **Lego Instructions book**.

Without this I wouldn't have been able to build my little friend R2D2. Without this I wouldn't even know where to start. Even though R2D2 isn't enormous, it's quite a hefty book, its size signifying how important it is to follow the instructions in case things go awry.

In our reading this morning, I purposely didn't start at verse 9 where Jesus says, *"This, then is how you should pray..."* because Jesus takes for granted that the ones listening to the Sermon on the Mount have listened to his words that came before. Jesus is teaching us how to pray, but first he assumes that we desire, yearn, want to pray in the first place.

And this is how verse 5 starts, *"and when you pray"*. And the first instruction from Jesus about prayer starts with the attitude of the heart. He takes for granted that we pray, and he corrects (if necessary) our reasons for prayer.

Firstly he says, *"do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others... they have received their reward in full."* Instead of this Jesus tells us where we should pray: *"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

It's so powerful how Jesus talks of God here: *"Your Father, who is unseen ... your Father, who sees what is done in secret"*. I remember one of my managers when I worked in the labs telling me once, the way to describe someone who has integrity is if they do the right thing even when no one sees them. It's very challenging isn't it, do we pray when only God can see us? This doesn't mean that we should never pray in front of anyone, but our prayer life should always start behind the door of our room.

And then Jesus says we shouldn't *"keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*

It's nice sometimes to really open up to someone isn't it. To tell them what's been going wrong lately in our lives, to completely vent and to lift the burden off our shoulders even for a little while. And when we pray God, our heavenly Father loves it when we open up to him. But this isn't what Jesus is referring or rebuking here. He's correcting the attitude "if i can speak more than anyone else, if my prayer is longer and more fancy, is poetic, better than anyone else's prayer, God will listen to me." Once again, this is the attitude of trying to please God and other people, to try and get the answer we want. The attitude God wants us to have is one of humility, un-prideful, not seeking attention from others, an attitude that knows that God is a Father who knows what we need before we ask him.

So we now know how we should turn to God in prayer, not flashy, not prideful. And as we read the manual a little further we read what we should say in our prayer. A concise prayer, a simple prayer, a prayer full of the inexhaustible truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom the power and the glory for ever. Amen"

This is the crux. At the start of the instructions book there are prelims, what we need before you start building, a level and smooth floor or surface needed to build something as important as R2D2. And here we have the same thing, we've been taught the type of heart we need to pray, one of the most important actions a Christian can do. And notice how the prayer is in the plural, we don't pray as individuals but as a cimmounity of people who can call God 'Father' but as importantly he is:

Our Father – a truth that shook everything when Jesus referred to God as Father! Yes he's the Divine Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. But to also include us as part of the family? That changes everything, we're not just citizens or subjects in the Kingdom of God, we are sons and daughters! If we believe in Jesus' Crucifixion and resurrection as we've been celebrating recently over Easter, we are included in God's family. I wish i could unpack this more but there are nearly 70 words in the Lord's prayer and these are only 2!

In heaven – God is on his throne in heave. In authority over everything in heaven, on earth and under the earth. And tied in with this we proclaim,

Hallowed be your name – we join with the angel's songs in Isaiah 6 when they say, '*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.*' We declare that we believe that God in his holiness is different to everything else. God is the perfect one, God is the one who is fully without sin.

Your kingdom come – as we film this sermon we are preparing for the election, we're about to choose who reigns over our country, who makes the big and small choices, the ones who represent us in our government. But we need to remember, even if the person you voted for gets in, God is still head over them. And if the person we didn't want to get in does get voted in, we have the massive encouragement that we can say with absolute certainty that there is a higher authority over them. We pray that God reigns in our hearts, in our lives. But also we pray more than anything else, that his kingdom will come in all its fullness

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven – as we pray we of course believe that God listens and answers our prayers, be it yes or no. but in all things we pray humbly, knowing that we live under God's will. We praise him because he has willed us to be saved, that we wake up with breath in our lungs. We pray to see his will clearer, so that we may partner in his work.

Give us this day our daily bread – in Exodus 16 the Jews are grumbling in the desert because they have nothing to eat. And God provides them with Manna to eat every day they're in the wilderness. And Jesus describes himself as the Bread of Life after feeding over 5000 people: *"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live for ever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."* To be satisfied spiritually we need to believe in Jesus Christ, and be fed every day by reading his word that he's given us, the Bible.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors – of course we need to remember the way Jesus' body was broken on the cross so that we may receive forgiveness from God for every sin we have committed. Instead of receiving God's wrath in hell, we are brought into a close relationship with him, so close we can call our Creator, Father. God's loves to forgive. And there is the assumption that we ourselves are forgiving those who have sinned against us, showing the same love shown to us to others, even when they don't deserve it, especially if they don't deserve it.

Ac nac arwain ni i brofedigaeth; eithr gwared ni rhag drwg – mae'r weddi nad ydyn ni'n cael ein profi yn un agos at galon rhywun yndydy. Does yna ddim un ohona ni isho cael ein profi, isho ein ffydd ni gael ei destio. A mae Iesu yn rhoi y caniatad, yn rhoi yr annogaeth, y gorchymun i weddio y frawddeg anhygoel yma. A'i gymal hefyd, "yn lle prawf, wnei di wared ni rhag drwg". Yr un drwg, y diafol, ond hefyd drygioni yn fwy cyffredinol. Mae Salm 91 yn dod i'n meddwl wrth ddarllen y cymal yma.

*Y mae'r sawl sy'n byw yn lloches y Goruchaf,
ac yn aros yng nghysgod yr Hollalluog,*

*yn dweud wrth yr ARGLWYDD, “Fy noddfa a'm caer,
fy Nuw, yr un yr ymddiriedaf ynddo.”*

Mae Duw yn loches, yn gysgod i'r rhai sy'n trystio ynddo fo, ac fel mae'n caru maddau, mae'n caru gwarchod ei ddefaid, ei braidd, ei bobl.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one – this prayer that we aren't led into temptation is one that is close to our hearts isn't it. None of us want to be tempted, to have our faith tested. And Jesus gives us permission, encouragement, the commandment to pray this amazing sentence. And its second clause “instead of temptation, deliver us from the evil one”. The evil one, the devil, but also more generally. Psalm 91 comes to mind whilst reading this:

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.’”*

And we end with:

Canys eiddot ti yw'r deyrnas, a'r nerth, a'r gogoniant, yn oes oesoedd. Amen. – yn dod yn ôl i'r cychwyn o gyhoeddi i ni'n hunain, i ni'n gilydd, i'r byd pwy sydd go iawn in charge. Duw sydd bia'r deyrnas, Duw ydy'r un sy'n hollbwerus, Duw ydy'r un sydd bia'r gogoniant i gyd. Am byth! Amen

For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever. Amen. – coming back to how we started by proclaiming to ourselves, to each other, to everyone around us, who's really in charge. God owns the kingdom, God is the all-powerful one, God owns all the glory. For all eternity!