

**“Praying in Jesus’ Presence”**  
by Greg Smith-Young (Elora-Bethany Pastoral Charge)  
*A series on Practicing God’s Presence*

Luke 11:1-4; Philippians 4:1-9

September 10, 2017

See the Scripture by clicking [here \(Luke 11:1-4\)](#) and [here \(Philippians 4:1-9\)](#).

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Shortly, we’ll be praying again as a community of Jesus people. We’ll bring together the things that are on our mind — people, families, communities, a world in need. We’ll bring together good things and with one another we’ll give our thanks to God. We’ll bring together tough things and with one another we’ll cry out to God.

We’ll finish with the Lord’s Prayer. It is the knot that will tie all our prayers together.

Imagine something happening like in that skit.<sup>1</sup> God interrupts your flawless recitation of the Lord’s Prayer. As you fly through it quickly, God instead makes you land and perch on each phrase.

*“What does that mean?”*

*“Oh! Did you really mean that?”*

*“Hey! What are you doing about what you prayed for?”*

Would you be perturbed?

Would you be grateful?

Today, next week, and the next, we’ll perch on Jesus’ prayer. We’ll see how Jesus is with us as we pray it. When we know he is with us, we can give what we are praying for to him with more trust.

II

As Phil read of one of the times Jesus taught his prayer, I noticed something obvious: Jesus taught it. This prayer didn’t come naturally to Jesus’ disciples. They needed to learn from Jesus.

Those first disciples knew how to pray. They were Jews, and all observant Jews, then and now, know how to pray. The practice of prayer punctuates their day-to-day lives. Yet these first disciples, and all disciples ever since, need to learn how to pray with Jesus. Even if we are life-long prayers, we need to learn to pray with Jesus.

Jesus is our prayer-Master. I mean that in the sense that a master is someone whom a student comes alongside to learn. My daughter Rachel is learning to knit, from my mother. Rachel sits beside Grandma. She watches how Grandma knits. Rachel learns by imitating.

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<sup>1</sup> “Our Father” by Heather Leffler. It was presented at the 2017 Annual Meeting of Hamilton Conference.

Then Rachel tries. Sometimes Grandma will put her hands over Rachel's to guide the needles. Grandma will look at what Rachel has done, compliment it, critique it, and encourage her to keep trying. Grandma is the master, Rachel her apprentice.

Why did Rachel start learning from Grandma? She saw Grandma knitting. And she said to herself, "I want to learn that!"

Jesus' first disciples — experienced pray-ers! — saw Jesus praying. They watched him. They realized something was different about his praying. They said, "Teach us!"

Who taught you the Lord's Prayer? Was it a parent? Grandparent? Sunday school teacher? School teacher? Whoever taught you, it was really Jesus teaching you. What they were doing was passing on what Jesus taught. When you learned to pray Jesus' prayer, and when you pray it now, it is Jesus teaching you to pray. When we pray together here, he is coming alongside us, his apprentices. He is teaching us prayer with his prayer, our Master's prayer.

### III

What is our Master teaching us to pray for?

His kingdom. The kingdom of God.

The prayer asks for other things too: food, forgiveness, freedom from temptation. (We're using Luke's account. Matthew's Gospel tells of another time Jesus taught it, and then he filled it in more. Still, the outlines are the same.) All of these still come under the umbrella of God's kingdom.

"Thy kingdom come!" we pray. "Bring your kingdom," we ask.

What is a kingdom? There aren't many kingdoms around of the sort that were commonplace when Jesus first taught this. Still, we can come up with a basic definition.<sup>2</sup>

A kingdom is

- a people
- in a place
- under the rule
- of a king.

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<sup>2</sup> See Scot McKnight, Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the radical Mission of the Local Church (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014).

So God's kingdom is

- a people: the people whom God the Spirit has gathered;
- in a place: wherever we gather as the church, and where we live as the church into our many neighbourhoods;
- under the rule: the rule of the One who serves with love
- of a king: God, through God the Son, King Jesus.

That's what we are praying for, when we pray the Lords Prayer. That God

- will establish through Jesus,
- God's rule of self-giving love,
- over us together whom God the Spirit has gathered,
- and in those many neighbourhoods where Jesus our Master sends us.

That is what Jesus teaches us to pray for.

We pray for it, yet Jesus is already doing it. That's what Jesus' is all about.

Before anyone even knew our Master's Prayer, Jesus was doing it. When he first burst onto the scene, he was announcing: *"Get ready! Turn yourselves around! The Kingdom is here!"*<sup>8</sup>

With Jesus' arrival, the Kingdom came. Wherever Jesus was present, the Kingdom was coming. Everywhere Jesus is present now, his Kingdom is coming.

Praying Jesus' Kingdom prayer, and letting it shape us, brings us into Jesus' presence. When we are together, learning the Prayer, we are praying into Jesus' presence.

#### IV

Want to know why Grandma could not teach me to knit?

I was stubborn.

I said I wanted to learn. She tried. But I would not let her tell me how to do it. I resisted her teaching. I'd try it my way, and it wouldn't work out right, and I'd get frustrated. "Stupid knitting!"

I would not submit my knitting to her.

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 4:17 (also in Mark 1:15)

“Submit.” That’s a hard word for us. It has a very ugly history of people — especially women and people of colour — being forced to submit. So we need to be careful. Still, I can only be a student, an apprentice of a master teacher, if I am able to submit myself to their teaching.<sup>4</sup>

Our second reading came from the teacher Paul’s letter to a community of fellow-disciples. We heard him start to wrap up the letter. He encouraged them to stand strong in Jesus. Then he touched on a conflict between two important leaders in the community. Then he called them to joy, gentleness . . .

. . . and away from anxiety. *“Don’t be anxious about anything. Rather, bring up all your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks.”*

Life is full of uncertainty — health, money, family, future. We get anxious. We can find ourselves endlessly striving to gain some measure of control.

Praying with Jesus is about giving up control. Instead, we submit all things to God. Whatever we pray for is already in God’s hands. When we pray, we are taking our controlling hands off it.

That doesn’t mean we’re done with it.

If I were to submit my knitting to Grandma, I wouldn’t give it to her and say, “You do it!” Rather, I would be allowing her to teach me to do it, with her.

God often answers prayer through God’s praying people. Submitting to God opens us to what God will do through us, about that for which we have prayed. Submitting to our Master is about opening space for Jesus to teach us how to act as God’s people.

So when you pray the Master’s prayer, attentive to Jesus, be prepared. He might interrupt you.

*“What do you mean by that?”*

*“Here’s what I’m already doing.”*

*“Let me show you how.”*

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<sup>4</sup> See David E. Fitch, Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 2016), chapter 9.