



# St Anne's Church Wandsworth

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

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The most obvious thing about the Lord's Prayer is that that is how Jesus told his disciples to pray. That command is still laid on us today. Virtually unchanged from Jesus' day, it is the most authentically Jewish element left in the Christian tradition. In a set of instructions from around 100AD, the *Didache*, Christians were meant to say the prayer three times a day (equivalent to the Jewish *Shema*). It seems to have carried on within private prayer for generations without any evidence that it was used in public services, but now no service is complete without it.

Every Christian knows, or should know it, and make it a centre piece of prayer and knowing God.

Two common translations are found in English today:

Our Father, who 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 trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin  
against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

The left-hand version is the one generally used in St Anne's Church, but many churches and individuals prefer the more modern one on the right. It is largely what you yourself are comfortable with.

## ***The history of the text of the Lord's Prayer***

Curiously the prayer is not found in either Mark or John (but John 17 seems to use its themes in a prayer by Jesus!), and Matthew and Luke have rather different versions. We are used to Matthew's version so take it for granted as the 'proper' one.

*Matthew 6.9-13*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven  
our debtors.  
And do not bring us to the time  
of trial,  
but rescue us from the evil one.

*Luke 11.2-4*

Father,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
  
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.

So the gospel writers seem to have felt free to adapt the prayer come down to them from Jesus – perhaps Jesus himself had used different versions. He would have prayed in Aramaic; later the prayer was translated into the Greek of the Gospels. Scholars looking at the two versions reckon that Matthew has expanded the earlier prayer, but Luke, while keeping the simpler shape, has changed the wording slightly. So neither can claim to be the 'authentic original'!

Neither version has the now traditional ending ('for thine is the glory...') known as the doxology. This was a conventional way of finishing a prayer in Jesus' day, so a doxology of some form would have been expected.

The context of the prayer might have shifted slightly. It is likely that 'temptation' referred to the 'time of trial' when God's people would be tested before the end of the world, expected imminently in Jesus' day. ('Lead us not into temptation' is a Hebrew way of saying 'save us from temptation'.) And 'evil' can mean 'the evil one' – the devil. So the prayer could have been shaped by a sense of crisis: may the end of the age and God's kingdom come soon. But even Luke's version has lost that edge, and in later use the prayer is more 'everyday' and less crisis-led.

## **Praying the Lord's Prayer: uniting ourselves with Jesus Christ**

The Lord's Prayer takes us to the heart of Jesus' teaching and his personal behaviour. As we say this prayer we are invited to come close to the reality of his life.

### **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name;**

*At his baptism the voice from heaven: 'You are my beloved son.' (Mt 3.17; Luke 3.22)*

*Jesus prays: 'Abba, Father.' (Mark 14.36)*

### **your kingdom come; your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.**

*Jesus begins his preaching with: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' (Mt.4.17)*

*In very many parables: 'The kingdom of heaven is like ...'*

*In Gethsemane: 'Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.' (Mt.26.39)*

### **Give us this day our daily bread.**

*The parables of the birds of the air and the flowers of the field (Mt 6.25-34): do not worry about tomorrow ...*

*Feeding the crowds; breaking bread at the Last Supper...*

### **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

*Forgiveness at the heart of Jesus' ministry: Mt 9.2-13;*

*The Parable of the two servants (Matthew 18.23-35): if you wish to be forgiven you cannot refuse to forgive others!*

*Of those crucifying him: 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' (Luke 23.34)*

### **And do not bring us to the time of trial; but rescue us from the evil one.**

*In Gethsemane to the disciples: 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial [or: into temptation] (Luke 22.40)*

In Romans 8.15 and Galatians 4.6 Paul says that when we pray, 'Abba, Father' we are united through the Holy Spirit with Jesus the Son of God, and show ourselves to be God's children.

### ***Praying the Lord's Prayer: a pattern for daily prayer***

Prayer does not have to be complicated. But it should not be gabbled either. Below is a pattern of what to think about as you say the Lord's Prayer leisurely in your own time.

Our Father, who art in heaven,	<i>Focus your thoughts on God as your Father</i>
hallowed be thy name;	<i>Pray for God's truth and love to be known: in your own heart, in the hearts of family and friends. Pray for the Church of God and Christians everywhere</i>
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.	<i>Pray for the world: our nation and government the nations of the world for God's peace and justice to reign everywhere</i>
Give us this day our daily bread.	<i>Now time to think about you and yours!  Pray for yourself and your loved ones. Pray for real needs (not trivial wants) Thank God for what you have and enjoy</i>
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.	<i>Reflect on your life and on how you could live more closely to the life of Jesus. Ask for forgiveness for others, and for yourself.</i>
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.	<i>Pray for God's help in the difficulties of life</i>
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.	<i>Finish by praising God and imagining the world united in his love.</i>