

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 27 July 2025 - The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Genesis 18.20-32; Psalm 138; Colossians 2.6-15 [16-19]; Luke 11.1-13

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Jennifer Totney, Director of Contextual Training, Westcott House

I wonder how you most naturally picture God? In the film *Bruce Almighty*, Morgan Freeman plays God who appears in many guises - a cleaner mopping the floor, an electrician, a homeless man, and at one point emerges in a crisp white suit as 'the boss.' This is all in response to the news reporter Bruce Nolan's complaints to God after he loses his job. Bruce regards God as a failure, for not helping him when he needs it, by stepping in to stop him from losing his job. God is characterised by Bruce as being "*like a mean kid on an anthill, burning ants with a magnifying glass. And I'm the ant.*"

We might dismiss Bruce's crude portrayal of God, but I wonder how often if we are honest, we carry with us this underlying image of an all-powerful God subjecting us to his whims and fancies. We can see a similar idea in the story Jesus tells his disciples. Here God is not a mean child, but a grumpy neighbour. One who won't respond to a request for help and hospitality to a visitor out of friendship, being too comfortable and settled in bed with his family. He has to be persuaded by persistent knocking to get out of bed to help his friend. Is God someone we have to cajole into giving us what we want? Is God someone we have to keep approaching with our requests and petitions until eventually he might give in?

Is this the reason Jesus tells this story? Or is it rather, as I suspect, that he is inviting us to overturn our expectations? Is Jesus challenging our underlying assumption so that God is neither cantankerous, or someone we can manipulate or influence by trying to gain his favour?

To help us change our perspective, instead of acting like the grumpy neighbour, Jesus gives us the image of a parent, responding to requests from a beloved child. These seem to be reasonable requests for sustenance - a fish or an egg. The alternatives are bizarre and even threatening - a snake and scorpion. Jesus exposes the absurdity of thinking that God might behave by giving us a snake or scorpion in any guise. If as human beings, in all our weaknesses and failings, such a suggestion is almost unthinkable, how can we portray God in this way?

Just as God opens Bruce's eyes in the film to see things from a different perspective, Jesus asks us to open our hearts and minds. Instead of our instinctive blaming of God when our

prayers do not seem to be answered, as Bruce does, we are invited into a relationship of love and trust.

The foundation of this relationship is not a logic of scarcity - as if there is only so much care and resources to go around and we must persuade God to give them to us. But rather, the focus is on a logic of generosity which revolves around giving regardless of reciprocation, and for our benefit, 'ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened.' This is an invitation to us, to trust God. The underlying image of God is now of one who longs to open the door and pour out the gift of the Holy Spirit on us.

How does Jesus suggest that we enter into this transformed way of seeing God? Through prayer, and specifically the way of praying that we have come to call the 'Lord's Prayer.' Not that this prayer is a magic formula to solve everything, but rather, it offers us a way of praying that draws us into relationship with God.

Here are just a few suggestions about how this prayer can transform our image of God. First, it invites us into a relationship of love and trust without question of need to prove ourselves. When the disciples ask him to teach them how to pray, he invites them into his own experience of prayer. "Pray in this way" he says, "Father". With this one word, Jesus welcomes his disciples into the close relationship with God that he experiences. He is suggesting, 'You too can know that intimate relationship of love and connection'. The portrayal of Fatherhood here is not absent, abusive, or patriarchal, but rather loving in a way that reflects the close bond between Jesus the son, and the one who sent him into the world, God.

A second phrase to think about today is, "give us each day our daily bread". There is something obvious about these words which we often don't even notice. It assumes this is a prayer that is offered every day. It invites us into a rhythm of prayer - a regular entering into relationship with God as the one who provides. This transforms the persistence of prayer from a continual knocking at the door until we get an answer, to a regular asking that reminds us that all that we have comes from God. We rely on God for our sustenance each and every day.

Interestingly, the phrase "daily bread" may also be interpreted as "tomorrow's bread," signifying a request for sufficient provision for the coming day. Alternatively, this interpretation may extend to a broader spiritual understanding of "tomorrow." Not just bread for today and the next day, but the bread of the future, or the bread of heaven.

This frames the consideration of how God responds to prayers within a broader context. Requests such as asking for bread can be viewed from the perspective of the longer timeframe of eternity. God cares both about our physical and spiritual present sustenance now and our future flourishing. We could even read this phrase as meaning, 'Give us each day what we need to flourish in your future kingdom.'

When we pray this prayer that Jesus taught us, we are invited into God's kingdom. This is a kingdom of generosity and intimacy where the hungry are fed, those who are seeking find what they are looking for, and the door is opened to those who knock.

In the end, through this prayer and his teaching, Jesus invites us into a relationship that transforms our understanding of who God is. In the film, Bruce Nolan goes on a journey

which involves re-evaluating his self-understanding and his interactions with others and this changes him. Similarly, for us, there is transformation when we pray the Lord's prayer. We are no longer focused on ourselves and blaming God when things go wrong but meeting God and finding his 'bread' to resource us now and we are opening up with generosity to give and receive from others in love.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?
- I wonder what is your favourite line in the Lord's prayer?
- I wonder how you would draw a picture of God?
- I wonder what you most want to ask God for?

Suggested intercessions

Father God, we thank you that you invite us into a relationship of love and mercy.
We pray for all those who struggle with unhealthy pictures of you, all who have had difficult or damaged relationships with their parents, and all who are searching for you.
Surround them with your love.

Be with all who teach and lead in your church that we may invite people into a relationship of flourishing.

Your kingdom come;

Your will be done.

Father God, we pray for your world,
especially for places where your kingdom of peace and justice feels far away.
We pray for places of war and conflict.....
places of oppression and uncertainty.....
places facing natural disaster and the effects of climate change.

Strengthen and encourage those who are bringing hope and peace into troubled places.

Your kingdom come;

Your will be done.

Father God, we pray for our communities.

May they be places of flourishing for all, especially the vulnerable.

May they be places of friendship and hospitality.

May they be places where your boundless generosity is lived out.

Your kingdom come;

Your will be done.

Father God, we pray for those in need

For those who have asked for our prayers

For those on our hearts today.

We pray for the sick in body, mind and spirit.

Draw near to them and provide for them what they most need.

Your kingdom come;

Your will be done.

Father God, we give thanks for those who have gone before us
in loving relationship with you.

We pray for all who have died recently, and for those who mourn

Bring us with all the saints to your heavenly kingdom.

Your kingdom come;

Your will be done.

Suggested hymns/songs

Guide me O thou great redeemer

Bless the Lord O my soul (10,000 reasons)

Thy kingdom come O God

Father, hear the prayer we offer

Blessed be your name in the land that is plentiful

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Father of heaven whose love profound

Lord teach us how to pray aright

Bread of heaven on thee we feed

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)