

Sunday, July 27, 2025

New St. James

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

O Lord God our Father, we gather in this place and in our homes to praise and worship you. Bless our time of worship so that our songs may rise as incense and our prayers truly seek your presence and saving power. With the prayer your Son taught us always on our lips, we ask, we seek, we knock at your door. In our every need, grant us the first and best of all your gifts, the Spirit who makes us your children. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

O Lord, we know that we have sinned against you and against our sisters and brothers. We do not love you with all that we are and have and we do not love our neighbours as we love ourselves and often, we do not even truly love ourselves. We doubt that you listen to our prayers and often do not see or understand or accept your answer.

O Lord, forgive us all our sins for we pray, for we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and our Saviour. AMEN

“Pray, seek, knock”

Prayer, an act that is part of the lives of millions of Christians. In our passage from the Gospel according to Luke, the disciples see Jesus praying and as Jews used to learning from their rabbis, they ask Jesus to teach them to pray. Apparently the disciples of John the Baptist had been taught something specific and the disciples of Jesus seemed to believe they too should have a prayer taught to them by Jesus.

We know that Jesus’ disciples were familiar with the Psalms which were used in synagogue worship. They knew that many of the Psalms were prayers of praise or laments or thanksgiving. These men were very familiar with prayer and yet wanted something more, something specific for them. Jesus complied with their request and taught them what we now call “The Lord’s Prayer”.

This prayer which most churches use every Sunday, teaches us much about Jesus’ understanding of God.

“Father, hallowed be your name”; Jesus begins by saying that God his father is holy – perhaps something that we have always assumed

-but important to establish first – God whom we call Father, is holy.

“Your kingdom come” – as Jesus’ ministry continued, he often told his disciples that the “kingdom of God is near.” When we say this prayer, we are both remembering that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God’s kingdom has come near to us -and this petition asks help so we can continue to work towards the coming of the kingdom of God.

“Give us each day our daily bread”. As I read this line, I was reminded of the parable Jesus told, about an owner of a vineyard, who at the end of the day, ensured that all his workers, no matter how short their working day had been, were paid enough for their daily food. Everyone needs daily bread, not just me, not just you and your family, all people need enough food for each day or else they will starve. Jesus understood the reality and the struggle people sometimes have, to put enough food on their table. “And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.” We all sin and if we are honest with ourselves, we will admit it. But this prayer challenges us to not only admit that we sin, but that we need to be forgiving of others who have hurt us or are indebted to us. In fact, Jesus is bold enough to say that we will – we have forgiven others, therefore we deserve the forgiveness of God. Jesus’ expectation of his disciples and us is very high indeed.

“And do not bring us to the time of trial”. Temptations are all around us, social media gives us all sorts of opportunity to indulge in questionable behaviour – we can anonymously trash people any time we want, we can gamble more than we should, we can listen to and join conspiracy theorists or extremist groups. Our tables, especially at restaurants, are often loaded with more food than we need or can consume and yet we continue to indulge ourselves. My husband Douglas often complains that when we go to a restaurant he eats far more than he usually does, far more than he really wants. Many people are in debt because they see things they want, but may not really need, and cannot afford. It is easy to be tempted. But we also know that life is full of difficulties, things that we often call ‘trials’; so this part of the prayer asks for us to be strengthened in our faith.

The Lord’s Prayer speaks to our daily needs, our daily lives including our need to put God and our ministry of working towards God’s kingdom first in our lives.

St. John Chrysostom who lived in the 4th Century A.D. was the bishop of Constantinople. He has a sermon where he speaks of prayer as the drop of water that drips on stone and wears the stone away. This thought brought to mind, something I had seen years ago while a student at the University of Toronto. I had a course at Victoria College on the second floor and as I ascended the stairs I was shocked to feel and see that much of the stone steps had been worn away by the thousands of feet that had stepped on them over the years. There were grooves in each step and the edges were getting thinner and thinner.

Perhaps you have been to Niagara Falls, a spectacular sight. Perhaps you’ve even taken a trip on the Maid of the Mist or walked on the ledge under the falls itself. If you have pictures taken over the years and look closely at them, you might notice that some things are different. We are told that the falls moves upriver a fair distance each year as the water slowly erodes the stones. As the water plunges over the edge of the cliff on its way down to Lake Ontario from Lake Erie, its continuous flow wears away the rock face year after year.

In our reading from the Gospel of Luke, Jesus continues to teach his disciples about prayer. He emphasises the need for persistence using the example of a man who is

demanding his neighbour give him a loaf of bread to feed his just arrived guest even though the neighbour is already in bed and the door barred.

You need to see in your mind a pioneer log cabin. It had one room with possibly a loft for storing grain. Everything was done in that one room, eating, sewing, knitting, mending harness, even cooking and sleeping. The man banging of the door was disturbing everyone, so getting up was not something the neighbour wanted to do. But we know what happened. The neighbour got up, got the bread, unbarred the door and gave the man the bread so that he and his family could go back to sleep. We have a saying, “The squeaky wheel gets the grease”.

Persistence in prayer, we’ve heard that throughout our lives of faith and in this passage Jesus seems to tell us that God expects and responds to persistent prayer.

In the 1970’s a student minister told of visiting a parishioner, a man who was confined to his bed and had been for a number of years. He enjoyed visiting this man who read widely and who loved nothing more than a good discussion or argument. The student felt that he learned so much from this intelligent man who always welcomed visitors to his home.

On one visit the man confided to the student that he longed to have the use of his body again; he longed to get on with the work he believed God wanted him to do. He spoke of the many prayer meetings that had been held over the years in his home asking for God’s healing and he himself had prayed often for healing. He truly believed in miracles and he wanted the miracle of his healing to be part of his ministry. But it had not happened.

We all know what it feels like to pray and search or wait for God’s answer to our prayer. We all know what it feels like to believe God does not want to or won’t answer our prayer. Often it feels like God isn’t even listening to us.

This passage in the Gospel according to Luke, this teaching of Jesus tells us to “ask and it will be given you” and “search and you will find” and “knock and the door will be opened for you”. It’s there in black and white. The passage goes on to say; “For everyone who asks, receives; and everyone who searches, finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened”.

But Jesus is not finished. He ends with these words; “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

We began with “our Father” and we end with “the heavenly Father”, who gives us the Holy Spirit, if we ask and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit, dwelling in us that we are able to live in God’s strength, and go out in joy to share God’s Good News with our world.

The story the student minister told is not finished. We do not always know how to respond to difficult situations, and this was the case with the student. How do you respond to a man of deep faith who truly felt his prayers and the prayers of others on his behalf had not been answered?

The student reflected on his visits with this articulate and intelligent man. He thought about how much he valued these visits, how much he had learned, how much he had been given. He realized that when he phoned to see if a visit was possible, he would always be given a time to come within a day or two. And as he thought about the ministry this man had shared with him, he realized that God had answered this man's prayer. Yes, he was confined to his bed, but he was far more present to those who visited than he would have been had he been able to freely leave his home. Because of his physical limitations he read widely, he listened to the radio and television and he was more than welcoming and willing to visit and share his faith with those who asked to come.

The power of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Father, the gift of everlasting life through the resurrection of Jesus. This is the greatest gift, so let us ask, and let us seek, so we may receive.

AMEN

Prayer of Thanksgiving, Intercession and Lord's Prayer

We come before you in thanksgiving, full of joy that worship with others is possible, filled with a sense of your presence once more. We thank you for the rain that has replenished the water table. We thank you for the fresh fruit and vegetables we are able to grow or buy at this time of year. Our tables are laden with the bounty of your love for us.

We thank you O God for all whom we love and all who love us. We need their strength when times are difficult and their joy to remind us, that life in you brings joy in the morning.

We thank you for your church, for its perseverance even in the face of turmoil and persecution. It is through the saints and their faithfulness, that we have received the opportunity to read your word, hear your word and study your word. Through the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of your beloved Son, Jesus, we receive the gift of eternal life. We thank you the gift of life.

Hear us now as we pray for others

O Lord we would remember all who are grieving for someone they loved; may your compassion surround and strengthen them. We pray for those who are ill, O great physician may your power bring healing to their body, their mind and their souls.

We know that many people are still fighting forest fires and others are dealing with the reality of being evacuated. May your patience and wisdom guide them in the days, weeks even months to come.

O Lord, our world is full of turmoil, persecution, war and the desire for power. May you so equip us that we may find our way to trust, truth, sharing and peace.

O Lord, hear our prayers, bless each one of us and teach us to do your will. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour who taught us to pray together saying ...Our Father