

# Dorset South and West Methodist Circuit Written Service - Prepared by Rev'd Peter Clark

*[This is a version of the Daily Worship Service in the United Reformed Church's Worship Book which is based upon the Lord's Prayer]*

## **1. Focusing and centring ourselves for worship - Our Father in heaven,**

*[You might like to light a candle and spend some time simply in silence]*

Let us wait upon the Lord, God of heaven and earth, worship God in spirit and in truth.

*[Some Scripture sentences as we engage with the God who is our heavenly parent]*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you, says the LORD. (Isaiah 66:13a)

'Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.' (Psalm 46:10)

What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8b)

(Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD! (Psalm 27:14)

As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him. (Psalm 103:13)

Jesus said 'Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28:20b)

## **2. Prayer of Approach - Hallowed be your Name,**

O Lord open my lips that my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

I give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures for ever.

*[Slowly and meditatively read the following Psalm, one that always makes me think of the gentle Dorset hills and the wonder of the Creator who made such a beautiful world]*

### **Psalm 121**

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? 2 My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. 3 He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. 4 He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. 6 The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. 7 The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. 8 The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

## **3. Prayer of Preparation - Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

Let us confess our mistakes, errors and omissions to God and resolve to accept and share his forgiveness.

*[Silence]*

Lord God most merciful, I confess that we have erred, through our own fault, and in common with others, in thought, word and deed, and through what I have left undone. I ask to be forgiven and that the power of your Spirit will turn me from evil to good. Help me, too, to forgive others for all that they have done to harm me, whether deliberately or unconsciously, and keep us all in your ways of righteousness and love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Assurance of Pardon

'The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost.' (1 Timothy 1:15) Be assured that your sins are forgiven for his sake. Thanks be to God. Amen

### 4. Hymn - Be still my soul: the Lord is on my side (tune Finlandia)

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side;  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In every change He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly,  
Friend  
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.  
Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future as He has the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing  
shake;  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still  
know

His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt  
below.

Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on  
When we shall be for ever with the Lord,  
When disappointment, grief and fear are  
gone,  
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
Be still, my soul; when change and tears  
are past,  
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

*Katharina von Schlegel (b. 1697) tr. Jane Laurie  
Borthwick (1813-97)*

### 5. Give us today our daily bread - Feed us, Lord, with your Word.

#### Luke 11:1-13

1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." 2 He said to them, "When you pray, say: " 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.' " 5 Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; 6 a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' 7 And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. 9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

#### Reflection

Every now and again I find myself leading a service based upon the Lord's Prayer and indeed I once managed a whole series of sermons on the various parts that lasted some weeks. But today I just want to focus in a contemplative way on this foundational prayer of our faith, foundational firstly, as it is attributed to the founder of that faith but also because, in its simplicity and its complexity, it is so complete as a way in to prayer?

Which of course is how Luke introduces the words that are now so familiar to us, as his followers ask Jesus for guidance in how to pray. He responds by showing how the first stage is, as we have done today, simply approaching our God as we would a loving parent. For some, who have had a difficult childhood or a terrible father, that is a difficult

ask and something that those of us who have had good, loving parents need to bear in mind. But the God who gave us life and leads us in a better way, really is an amazing, perfect parent model whose arms are always open with a loving embrace, and whose ears are always ready to listen. He may seem to be distant and 'in heaven' but he is also very accessible and close at hand!

But God is also holy, special, different and so we are rightly in awe of the that amazing divinity. Hence we cannot help but to say, "Your name is highly hallowed and to be worshipped. Likewise taking the prayer out of order as I already have done in this service, we cannot but help to recognise that we are - even the best of us - distinctly imperfect.

I don't particularly want to focus on the 'S' word (i.e. sin) but I do think it is worth looking inwards, recognising where we have gone wrong, done wrong or not done the good we could have, should have or might have done? Not to castigate ourselves or to contemplate some divine punishment but, rather, to perhaps work out how we might have done better? And then seek to learn how to take that road the next time? Though it is also about honest recognition and openly admitting our mistakes to our heavenly Father in the assurance that we will be forgiven.

Just as important is the second part of that sentence i.e. 'as we forgive those who sin against us' which is possibly one of the hardest demands of Jesus? On a par with cheek-turning, actually and I would suggest a defining, again foundational, element of the Christian faith?

Incidentally, however, as was pointed out in one of the recent URC audio services, do not confuse the call to forgiveness to be 'forgive **and forget.**' Christian forgiveness is not a call to be doormats who are to repeatedly be victims of abuse. Too often those in power have used that to their advantage?

Moving onwards, or technically backwards to the bit I deliberately missed out initially, we acknowledge in this prayer that as well as being the imperfect followers of a perfect parent, by saying 'your kingdom come ... on earth as it is in heaven,' we state that we are also a people of hope. A hope in a heaven on earth and a future that is bright, godly and in the very presence of God. And of course the bit in the middle of that sentence i.e. 'your will be done,' also accepts that we are also a people of faith.

Not blind faith, mind you but, rather holding a confidence that even in the midst of uncertainty, that we are accompanied by a reliable God whose presence is sure. One who we can call out to in our deepest depths of fear and threat, 'save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil,' and have confidence that somehow and in some way, that prayer will be answered.

Sometimes indeed in a surprising and unexpected way but as Jesus indicates in his teaching following his words of prayer, why ever would our compassionate and loving God ignore our persistent pleas or give metaphorical scorpions to our requests for eggs?

Incidentally one reason I prefer the modern translation to the traditional is that replacement of 'Lead us not into temptation' with 'Save us from the time of trial.' It has always seemed perverse to even consider that God would be the source of our temptations! Hence '**and** deliver us from evil' makes so much more sense than the '**but**' in the traditional wording?

Finally, I remember being surprised the first time I read this passage and discovered that the Lord's Prayer really is not only rooted in Jesus' words but also Jesus misses out the very familiar words of praise-filled completion; 'For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Thus they are in fact a powerful human response to an even more powerful godly prayer and a worthy completion I believe. Amen

**6. Prayer - Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil for your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

*[So let us then pray, inserting our own concerns and specific needs under each section];*

God of all, your kingdom is the coming of peace and justice, the dawn of your tender mercy and compassion. Your kingdom is seen in Jesus Christ, your will for all is lived out in his teaching and healing, his dying and rising to new life, for the world.

Your kingdom is in our midst, your Spirit is at work, here and now, so we pray:

Among all who suffer ... Your kingdom come; Your will be done.

Among our families and friends .... Your kingdom come; Your will be done

In our community .... Your kingdom come; Your will be done

In our nation .... Your kingdom come; Your will be done

Among the nations of this world .... Your kingdom come; Your will be done

In the life of your Church, across the world and in this place .... Your kingdom come; Your will be done

And in our living this day .... Your kingdom come; Your will be done.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

**7. Hymn - Christ be our light**

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see

*Christ be our light!*

*Shine in our hearts,*

*Shine through the darkness.*

*Christ be our Light!*

*Shine in your church*

*gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your world alone has power to save us.

Make us your living voice.

*Christ be our light! ...*

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.

*Christ be our light! ...*

Many the gifts, many the people,

Many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.

*Christ be our light! ...*

*Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications*

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**8. The complete Lord's Prayer to complete our service and prepare us for the coming week in whichever version you prefer:**

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.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory

are yours

now and forever. Amen

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