
Lord, Teach Us to Pray

A sermon by the Rev. Canon Salmoon Bashir
The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 12, Year C

There have been many people in my life from whom I learned how to pray. Some prayed spontaneously, some in adoration, some in silence. And like a true Anglican, some prayed with the *Book of Common Prayer*. But it was my mother who truly taught me how to pray. Not just how to pray, but how to pray without ceasing. Every day, every morning, no exceptions. Before breakfast, while she was preparing food, we were expected to go and find a quiet corner in the house, kneel and pray. And one of the first prayers I learned from her was the *Our Father* prayer. Before food for the body, we were reminded to nourish the soul. It did not feel all that special at the time, just part of the day. But looking back, it formed something deep in me. And it's interesting how that happens. We think we need some big spiritual moment, but often it's the quiet, repeated habits like prayer before breakfast, prayer in the car, prayer before bed that end up shaping our faith the most. Over time, those small prayers turn into something more – a relationship with God.

In Luke's gospel, prayer has already taken on significant importance by this stage. Jesus often goes off to pray alone. So, it's not surprising that the disciples notice this and ask him to show them how to pray. They came to him and said, '*Lord, teach us to pray.*' Now, these were men who already knew prayers from the Hebrew Scriptures. But this was something different. They didn't just want words. They wanted to pray like Jesus. And that takes humility, to admit you want to be taught again from the beginning.

So, here's my first point: The Desire to Pray Leads to Humility.

When the disciples said, "*Lord, teach us to pray,*" they were admitting they didn't have all the answers. They were saying, *Jesus, we need something from you.* That kind of honesty naturally leads to surrender. In the very act of reaching out, we're reminded of our limits and of God's strength.

So even the desire to pray opens the door to humility. That request '*Lord, teach us to pray*' was an invitation to humility and spiritual dependence. And here's the thing: just *wanting* to pray is already a sign that grace is at work in you. You wouldn't even have the desire unless something in you had already been stirred by God.^[1] The desire to pray leads to humility.

My second point is Prayer leads us to a deeper and personal relationship with God.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he didn't give them a set of theories or principles. He gave them a prayer. Simple, direct, and deeply personal. It wasn't just a formula; it was a window into how he himself spoke to God.

A prayer rooted in trust, intimacy, and dependence, a prayer grounded in his own relationship with the Father. At the start of Luke 11, Jesus reveals something profound: he calls God *Father*. That's not just a title, it's an invitation. Jesus is pulling back the curtain on his own relationship with God and inviting us into it.

The God he speaks to is not distant, cold, or indifferent. He's near. He listens. He knows what we need before we say a word. And Jesus doesn't describe just any father. He's pointing to a Father who loves us without conditions, who cares about the details of our lives, who sees us even when we feel invisible. A Father who isn't tired of us, disappointed in us, or too busy for us.

That's the kind of God Jesus reveals. Not just powerful, but personal. Not just holy, but present. A God who is truly a good Father.

So now when we say '*Our Father*' we step into that same relationship, into the mystery of God.

The prayer the disciples asked for wasn't about polished words. It was about relationship. Through the Son. With the Spirit. To the Father. Prayer leads us to a deeper and personal relationship with God.

And my third point is: Prayer shapes us to be like Jesus.

The *Our Father* is probably the most well-known and widely prayed prayer in the world. Across every continent, in countless languages and cultures, people speak these words sometimes quietly, sometimes in unison, sometimes in desperation. And chances are, most of us pray this prayer regularly too, maybe even every day.

But here's what I want to highlight today. When the disciples came to Jesus with humility and asked him to teach them how to pray, he did not just give them a generic script. The prayer Jesus gave his disciples, is not just something he taught. It's something he lived, word for word. Every line of that prayer is rooted in the way Jesus moved through the world. Jesus taught them that prayer starts with the praise first.

When he said, "**Hallowed be thy name...**" Jesus lived to honor the name of God. Everything he did from healing the sick to welcoming the broken he revealed God's character. He showed the world what holiness actually looks like: compassion, mercy, truth.

When he said **Thy kingdom come...** Jesus brought the kingdom of God near not through power, but through love. He wasn't pointing toward some far-off idea. He was saying, *The kingdom is here. It's happening now.*

When he said **Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** This line shaped his entire life. He did not just do good things. He did what the Father wanted, even when it was costly. In the garden of Gethsemane, knowing death was ahead, he prayed the most human and honest prayer: *Father, if there's another way, take this cup from me... yet not my will, but yours be done.* He did not just speak those words. He surrendered to them. That obedience is what carried him to the cross.

Then he said, **give us this day our daily bread...** Jesus lived with a deep trust in the Father's provision. He did not hoard or worry about the future. He moved through life open-handed, depending on God. And he fed others too, physically, like with the loaves and fish, and spiritually, offering words that nourished people's souls.

When he said, "**Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us...**" Forgiveness was at the heart of Jesus' life. He forgave even the ones who nailed him to the cross. *Father, forgive them,* he prayed. He did not just talk about grace, he extended it, over and over again.

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil..." Jesus knew temptation. In the wilderness, devil offered him shortcuts to power and glory. He refused. He clung to trust in the Father. And in his death and resurrection, he did not just avoid evil, he overcame it.

So when Jesus taught the *Our Father*, he was handing over his own prayer life. Not theory. Not ritual. But a pattern he lived by. Every phrase came from a place he had walked. When we pray it, we're not just repeating words, we're stepping into the life Jesus lived and the relationship he shared with the Father. Jesus lived in communion with God, so he taught his disciples to live in that same communion.

So, when we pray the *Our Father*, we're not just repeating familiar words, we're stepping into the same relationship and the same practice that Jesus lived by. Prayer is not only about results. It's about becoming like Jesus.

Loving like Jesus.

Forgiving like Jesus.

Serving like Jesus.

Welcoming like Jesus.

Healing the broken like Jesus.

Following the Father's will like Jesus.

Standing firm like Jesus in the time of trials.

And even praying like Jesus!

So, Friends, when we ask *Lord, teach us to pray*, we bring the posture of humility, and enter into the relationship with the father and in doing so, we become like Jesus. Lord, teach us to pray and teach us to be like you. **Amen!**

[\[1\]](#) Origen – Third Century Theologian

© The Cathedral of St. Philip. All rights reserved.