

## **Worship**

### **Prayer/Offering/Andrew and Megan**

Pray

### **Dismiss kids K-4**

At this point I'd like to invite our ushers forward to take up our morning offering. For those of you who are visitors, we want you to know that this offering is for those who call North Shore Alliance home, so please don't feel any obligation to give.

My name is Mark, I'm one of the pastors here, and it's good to be with you again after two weeks of vacation. Now notice I said good, not great...don't take it personally, I just love vacation, I love spending time with my wife and kids. We had a great time away, with lots of sun, lots of lake time, and lots of playing together...it was wonderful.

In a few minutes I am going to kick off our Fall Teaching Series on the Lord's Prayer, but before I do, I wanted to take some time to talk with you about something that is near to my heart, and the heart of the church...and that is the world wide mission of God.

The fact that Jesus came 2000 years ago, and revealed the heart of God by taking our sin, our rebellion, and paying our debt through His death on the cross...this love, God's love compels me, compels us to go out and tell someone. This news is too good to keep to ourselves. And just like the 1st century church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we continue to go out as ambassadors of Jesus to our city, our

country, and to the four corners of the world.

As many of you know, Andrew and Megan Smith are about 6 or 7 weeks away from picking up their family and leaving the North Shore for the Philippines. It's been such a privilege having them with us this past year, it's been a blessing to have Andrew on our staff team...a part of me would love for them to stay.

And a part of them would probably be quite content to stay. Andrew and Megan are just regular people: two kids, an SUV, no dog, lots of friends. There are hundreds of reasons for them to stay in North Van...many of the people they love most live here.

But the love of God compels them...there's no question, there is plenty of need here on the North Shore. But Andrew and Megan are going to the Philippines to engage in missionary work among the unreached tribal people...people who have never heard that God loves them.

John Piper once said, "Missions exists because worship does not." It was his way of saying that the greatness of God, His love, His power, His wisdom, His healing, His kindness and mercy...He's worth knowing, He worthy of world-wide worship. His love compels us, and so we go, and we commission some of our very own to go to places where God's love is not yet known.

This last week, another set of our missionaries, Jeff and Christine Harada sent out an email update...as we speak they are living among a tribal group in the Philippines that had never heard about Jesus

before they came. A woman from the tribe recently died, a woman who had come to embrace God's love through Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us that one day, gathered around the throne of God, will be people from every tribe, every tongue, every nation. It's already happening, and Jeff and Christine are a part of the ingathering, and so are we who stand behind them and spread this good news of Jesus here on the North Shore, and pretty soon Andrew and Megan will be representing Jesus, and us, in the Philippines. It's exciting isn't it? What we do with our lives matters...eternity is before us...Christ's love compels us.

On October 17th, we will be commissioning Andrew and Megan, you're not going to want to miss that. But I did want to let you know that next Sunday night, September 12th, from 7-8:30, here at the church, Andrew and Megan are going to sharing one last time with us before they go. You'll hear some more details about what's next after they arrive in Manila, how we can make sure they have the financial support they need, and for those of you who love babies, you might even get an opportunity to hold their 3 week old Brenna.

**Message:** *living a prayed life*

At this point let me invite you to stand with me. As we set aside the next 9 weeks to immerse ourselves in the Lord's Prayer, I want to begin by asking you to join me in praying it, out loud, together. I've got it up on the screen in front of you, please join me in praying:

*"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our*

*debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."*

**You may be seated.**

The Lord's Prayer...it's just 57 words in the original Greek...the English version we recited took us about 35 seconds to get through. But if we let these words grab ahold of our lives, ahold of our praying, these words can change the world. Does that sound ambitious and grandiose? I hope so...God forbid that we make prayer any smaller...

**illus:** I grew up at a time in Canada where many people recited this prayer as a regular part of life. I grew up in a Christian family, going to church every week, but if my memory serves me correctly, I learned this prayer in public school, not in church. Every day, before class would begin, I, and all my class-mates would recite this prayer.

Now I say "recite this prayer" because it's highly unlikely that most of my class-mates were actually praying these words, we were simply speaking them out loud in unison. The question is: *were our words changing the world?* I suspect not.

Prayer is not like some incantation...say the right word in the right way and poof...magic. Christian prayer is nothing like magic...first of all it's highly relational...its not about using words to manipulate spiritual power...when we try to use our words in that way, we may be reciting words, but whatever we are doing, we can be sure that we are not praying.

If you are anything like me...there are many things you might like to know about the life of Jesus. Like what He looked like...how tall He was...whether His teeth were crooked, or the size of His nose. Or, what about His favourite food? What did He like to do for fun as a kid? We're not given answers to these questions. But one thing we do know for certain is that Jesus prayed.

He prayed alone, in the company of friends, before the crowds, in the presence of His enemies...everywhere Jesus went He was praying. In fact, Jesus' life obliterates the myth many of us have grown up with in respect to prayer. *Jesus didn't have a prayer life...He lived a prayed life.* And I need to credit that clever phrase to Eugene Peterson.

Are you familiar with this question: *how's your prayer life?* I suspect you've heard the question before, and probably even asked this question of another a time or two. Well...I want to give you all permission to never ask, or answer, this question again...it's all wrong.

At the most important junctures of His life (the 40 days of testing in the desert, before He chose the 12 disciples, and in Gethsemane before the cross), we see Jesus devoting long periods of time to prayer. But most of the time, we just see Jesus living and praying: at work, at rest, in relationship, at play...Jesus was living and praying.

For too long in Western Christianity, we've bought into the myth that we finish with prayer in order to get on with living. For Jesus, prayer was never hived off from the rest of His life, prayer wasn't a sacred 15-20 minutes in the morning of an otherwise secular day...*Jesus lived a prayed life.*

And while we know for certain **that** Jesus prayed, we know very little of **what** He prayed. The Gospel writers record prayers of thanksgiving, where Jesus blesses His Father in Heaven. We have other prayers of Jesus that amount to little more than a groan or a deep sigh. We have other prayers of Jesus that declare healing, or peace, or judgement...prayers that instantly create new reality the moment He prays them.

Praying and living, living and praying...everywhere Jesus went He lived a prayed life...a life marked by peace, by power, and by God's Divine Presence. So when people tell you that prayer is boring, don't believe them...they may very well be bored...but very likely, whatever they are doing, they are not praying. Because prayer brings us into the Presence of the Living God.

So there's my little prayer-rant...I feel so much better now that I've got that off my chest. Next week we are going to dive into the first line of the Lord's Prayer, but this morning, by way of introduction, I want to address five questions, and here's the first:

*1. What is prayer?* Clement of Alexandria, a second century theologian, defines prayer as "keeping company with God". I like this definition because it gets to the heart of things. Prayer is about relationship with God, and more, it's about movement...God doesn't stand still, and neither will we when we are keeping company with Him.

*2. Second, what is the **Context** of the Lord's Prayer?*

In the Gospels, one can find two versions of this prayer. In Luke 11, we find an abridged version of the Lord's Prayer, and in Matthew 6

we find a slightly longer version. There's no mystery in why we have two different versions, Jesus taught about prayer many times and He likely He never said things exactly the same way.

In Luke 11:1, we're told that "*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.'*" And then Jesus taught them what we now call "The Lord's Prayer".

You might be interested to know that the disciples had been following Jesus for a few years, and in those few years they've seen a lot. They'd seen Jesus walk on water, they'd seen Him heal the blind and the lame, they'd seen evil spirits cower in fear before Jesus, they'd seen His compassion for people, they'd heard Him teach with such power and authority that crowds would travel for miles just to hear His words, they'd seen Jesus raise the dead...

If you are going to follow a Rabbi, who better to follow than Jesus? Who better to train and disciple you? But what's interesting is that this request, *Lord teach us to pray*, is the first time they'd asked Jesus to teach them anything. Honestly...I wonder if I would have chosen something else: *Lord, teach me to draw a crowd; teach me to speak with power and authority, teach me to heal the sick, raise the dead, walk on water...*there's a lot to choose from.

And the disciples chose wisely: *Lord, teach us to pray*. Teach us to interact with God the way you do. Teach us to listen to Him, teach us to speak to Him about what is on His heart. *We want to relate to God the way you do...Teach us pray*.

In Matthew 6, we find this Lord's Prayer set within the larger context of the Sermon On The Mount, and this prayer is preceded by some clarifying words on what counts as "true" prayer. Let me encourage you to follow along as I read Matthew 6:5-8.

*5"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

Jesus points out that when we are more concerned with our public eloquence, than we are with the posture of our heart, our words amount to little more than a performance...And so, Jesus says, go to a private place, and then there will be no question about who you're speaking to. Jesus wasn't banning public prayer, He prayed in public all the time, He was pointing out that God sees the motivation behind our every "righteous" act.

Second, Jesus reminds us that prayer is not about manipulating God. We don't need to recite secret or special words in order for God to hear us, nor do we need to go on and on and on...God is a good listener. And more, for God, our prayers are relational not informational. We don't tell God what we need because He doesn't know, we tell Him as an expression of our trust and dependence. Remember, Jesus tells us, He is a good Father who knows what we need before we ask.

Let's move on to the third question:

### 3. What is the *Shape* of this Prayer?

Eugene Peterson points out that this prayer is brief, simple, and symmetrical.

We don't need to go on and on and on in prayer, as though by our many words God will be impressed, or see how serious we are, or give in in order to shut us up. If the pagans babble on and on, how are we to pray? In the Lord's Prayer we are given 57 words.

But the prayer is not merely brief, it's simple. We don't need a PhD in prayer in order to understand what to pray. God doesn't complicate matters by compiling complex words to recite...and He isn't looking for an otherworldly spirituality either...we can pray for our basic physical needs (for bread), for our relational needs (for forgiveness), and for deliverance from evil.

And finally, this prayer is symmetrical. The prayer begins with an opening ascription, it concludes with a final declaration, and in between we have six petitions. The 1st three petitions have to do with God: Your **Name**, Your **Kingdom**, Your **Will**. The 2nd three petitions have to do with us: our **bread**, our **forgiveness**, our **deliverance**. Your, Your, Your, our, our our.

Make no mistake, this prayer is about God...but it is also about us. You might be concerned about limiting your prayers to just these 6 petitions, but I, and many others with me would argue that this prayer has it all...it's all in here. This is a prayer that scales the heights of heaven, but equally, it is a prayer for heaven's reality to intersect our

flesh and blood world.

You'll notice that this prayer is pretty much all asking. We might be tempted to think that when we become spiritually mature, we will graduate from asking prayers and move on to pure thanksgiving or praise. Not so...God made us to be dependent on Him, and so asking is our primary stance before God. But Jesus gives shape to our asking in this prayer...He teaches us to begin by asking for God's name to be hallowed, His kingdom to come, and His will to be done.

### 4. Fourth, *how do we pray this prayer? Did Jesus give us exact words to pray, or is this prayer a model to follow?*

In nearly 2000 years of church history, the Lord's Prayer has been used in both ways: as specific words to pray and as a model to help us find our own words in prayer. And I want to commend to you, both uses of this prayer.

I suspect that if I were to poll the crowd today, I would find some of you on either "side". There are likely some here who appreciate beauty, liturgy, symmetry and there is something about Jesus' prayer that begs you to pray it just as He gave it to us. Likely there are others here who might find it a stretch to pray this prayer consistently, word for word, because it would feel "rote", impersonal, and inauthentic.

To be honest with you, I really haven't prayed the Lord's Prayer with any regularity since it was banned from my public school classroom. We rarely prayed it in the church I grew up in, and I was never taught to use it as a model for my own praying. Don't you think it's kind of

strange? Jesus disciples came to Him saying, *Lord, teach us to pray*, and the evangelical church has pretty much ignored Jesus' prayer altogether. Why is that?

I suspect, at least in part, we are suspicious about praying anything we don't feel. As evangelicals, we think of authentic prayer as being spontaneous, in our own words, and coming from the heart (in other words, what we feel, by and large, determines what we pray). As a result, for many of us, the Lord's Prayer remains His prayer, and not ours.

**illus:** By a show of hands, how many of you have either worked with kids, or have kids of your own? Okay...lots of us. So you will understand what I'm about to illustrate.

Have you ever encountered a young child that is impolite and demanding? Some of you are saying to yourself: *I know at least three, and they all live in my house*. Of course you have encountered demanding children...when kids are young, they're all demanding. So what do we do?

We train them to be inauthentic right? We make them say "please" instead of "give me!", and we make them say "thank you" instead of "did you get me anything else?"

Let me give you an example. On Friday night, Dave and Beth Pettigrew invited us over to their house for dinner...and we had a wonderful time eating, visiting, and playing. As I was getting the kids ready to leave, my three year old daughter says to me, *Are they going to give me something before I leave?*

Somehow Anna's got it in her head that everywhere house she visits is like a kids birthday party, and she's hoping for a loot bag before she leaves. *Daddy...are they going to give me something before I leave?* Ummm...you mean give you something besides the fire roasted gourmet pizza, the amazing desert, and 2 hours of non-stop entertainment in their pool and hot tub? *No*.

As we got ready to leave, I reminded Anna and Luke to say a big "thank you". Am I training my children in inauthenticity? I like to think not...we are coaching them in what to say (please, thank you, excuse me), and the hope is that one day they will be thankful, grateful human beings.

The Lord's Prayer works on us in this same way...it gives us words that feel foreign at first, and maybe even a little bit fake on our own lips. **Your name be hallowed, your kingdom come, your will be done.**

We might find ourselves in conflict praying this prayer:

- asking for God's name to be hallowed flies in the face of the desire to make a name for myself
- asking for His kingdom to come rubs up against the desire to create my own kingdom, and the wealth, power, and prestige that come with it.
- praying for His will to be done means my "right" to independence will need to die.

Without this prayer, we might never get beyond ourselves. This is a prayer that begins to mature us as we pray it. Eugene Peterson writes, "One of the threshold marks of prayer is when we get bored of

ourselves...lose interest in ourselves and finally wonder what else is going on in the world besides me.”<sup>1</sup>

### 5. Finally, *what will happen when I pray?*

a. First, *coincidences* will begin multiply in your life. William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury once joked, “When I pray, coincidences happen; when I stop praying, the coincidences stop happening.”

My mother-in-law is a pray-er...as far as she is concerned, any time, anywhere is a moment ripe for prayer. A few years ago, right after Naomi and I found out that we were going to have a girl, my mother-in-law ran out to the store to buy a helium balloon that read “*It’s a girl!*”

But when she arrived home, she got out of her car without a good grasp on the string, and up the balloon went, higher and higher...until it was gone. And mom was really upset, Naomi and I had been waiting for a long time to hear news about our adoption, and that balloon was her way of adding to the celebration. And so she prayed...*Lord, I really need that balloon...*and wouldn’t you know it, it began to rain and our balloon, weighed down by the rain drops, slowly descended into her waiting hand.

And while I’m on the subject of balloons, let me tell you another true story. Good friends of ours were in Thailand, adopting a second daughter. And they were hoping the transition was a little easier the second time around. There comes a moment in the transition process

where you take your two year old child from their care giver and the only home they have ever known and you leave. It’s emotionally traumatic for the child, for the caregiver, and for the adoptive parents.

Well, the mom was hoping for more of a celebratory experience the second time around, and what is more celebratory than balloons? She wanted to be able to give her new daughter a big, bright pink, Hello Kitty balloon. She looked everywhere and there were no Hello Kitty balloons to be found. She began to pray about finding a Hello Kitty balloons but she couldn’t find one anywhere.

And so, on the day they were to receive their daughter, they began to make the short walk from their place...as they walked the husband noticed something up in the air, high above them but he couldn’t quite make it out. As they continued to walk, this something in the air began to sink, and not more than ten feet in front of them, a bright pink, Hello Kitty balloon came to rest on the ground.

**When we pray, things happen because God is living, active, and engaged in our lives.**

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<sup>1</sup> Peterson, Jesus and Prayer, mp3 #G

b. Second, when we pray, to quote Darrell Johnson, “we participate in heaven’s invasion of earth.”<sup>2</sup>

The Christian writer, Walter Wink, once wrote, “Intercessors have an essential role to play in creating a better future for our world because intercession is spiritual defiance of **what is** in the name of what God has promised. The shape of the future will be determined by those who can survey all its various possibilities and who by faith latch on to One as inevitable. History belongs to the intercessors who thus believe the future into being.”<sup>3</sup>

God is not through with us or with our world...the Bible tells us that all things will be reconciled to His original purposes. Even now, through Christ, the father is reconciling to Himself individuals, the nations, and ultimately the cosmos.

When we pray for God’s name to be hallowed, we are imploring God to turn the world right-side-up...where His glory and majesty are seen and celebrated by all. When we pray for His kingdom to come, we are asking God to topple evil regimes and empires that stand in the way of peace. When we pray for bread, we get caught up in the world of God’s provision and we begin to see the needs all around us and the part we have to play in meeting those needs.

When we pray this prayer we are asking God to align our world and our lives with the life of heaven, with the values of heaven. The

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<sup>2</sup> Darrell Johnson, *Fifty Seven Words That Change The World*, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Wink, *Sojourner’s Magazine*.

<sup>4</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *Our Heavenly Father*, 15.

German Theologian, Helmut Thielicke once wrote, “The whole world rests in the hands of the Lord...And it also rests in our hands when we lift it to God in prayer.”<sup>4</sup>

c. And finally, when we pray, we are transformed.

In prayer we keep company with God...and we are ushered into a love deeper than we could have imagined. In His presence we find He’s stronger than we imagined, less angry and more forgiving than we had dared to hope, He’s more creative, less stingy, and so much more alive than anyone we’ve ever experienced.

And that’s why **it’s less important what we pray and more important that we pray**...we need to just get there, into His presence where He can rub off on us, bless us, love us, and transform us.

If I had to choose between you learning more about prayer in these next 9 weeks, or you simply praying more, I would choose the praying...and there will be plenty of opportunity in the weeks to come to dive into the practice of prayer, both corporately and individually.

If you picked up a bulletin on the way in, you’ve probably already found the prayer card we inserted. We’ve broken up the Lord’s Prayer into seven segments, one for every day of the week. And

every day for the next 9 weeks I want to encourage you to use these words to kick start your praying.

And for the readers among us, I've purchased a number of copies of Darrell Johnson's book on the Lord's Prayer...it's a great read, and will prime the pump for you as you pray, and follow along with our teaching. You can pick one up at the info desk for \$11 following the service.

As the summer fades and a new Fall season begins, I have a sense that God has something new in store for our church. Over the last 5-6 months, the words that God continues to impress upon me are: *Now is the time, now is the time, now is the time.* And I believe that prayer will be the key to unlocking what God has planned for us.

I want to invite Linda and the worship team to come, and I want to invite you to prayer. Now is the time brothers and sisters...now is the time to plunge into God's presence for we are welcomed with open arms. Now is the time to practice listening to Him, for He has much to say. Now is the time to pour out your heart before Him and find in Him a willing and engaged listener. Now is the time to take His prayer and begin to mature in our praying.

Linda is going to play quietly for a few moments and I want to invite you to be still in God's presence...if you want to commit to a renewed focus on prayer, so be it. If you want to reaffirm your submission to living for His name, His Kingdom, His will, so be it. If you want to cry out for bread from heaven...then so be it. But let's pray...and in a few minutes Linda will lead us in a few songs of response.

### **Guide congregation in prayer**

### **Worship (Oh How I need You Lord)**

Psalm 84 tells us that one day spent in God's dwelling place is better than a thousand elsewhere. Why? In God's presence there is fullness of joy, there is rest for the weary and heavy laden, there is peace for the anxious heart, there is healing for the broken...and in God's presence there is an enormous tidal wave of love that is higher and wider and longer and deeper than anything this world has ever seen.

That's why, when it comes to prayer, we all need to just get there, and enter His presence. And we don't have to be timid, Jesus has made the way open to us, we can enter God's presence with confidence, knowing that we are loved.

On our vacation in Whistler, we ended up spending a fair bit of time at Alta Lake...it's a small, reasonably warm, beautiful lake. As soon as I got to the beach I wanted to jump in but my kids...they weren't so sure. *Dad, are there any sharks in the water dad?* No. *Dad, are there any weeds?* Not many. *Dad, will it be cold?* Not really.

Well...my son tends to be a stick-your-toe-in-the-water-first kind of boy, and he did that first day and even went in a time or two. But by the next day, he realized this lake was just begging to be jumped into. So he backed up on the dock and then he lept...

Brothers and sisters, when it comes to prayer, when it comes to entering God's presence, we can content ourselves with sticking our toe in the water...but we are invited to leap, to dive, to cannon ball into the love God has for us. **Let's continue to worship...**