

# 'On earth as it is in heaven'

## Churchdown Parish Weekend

### Session 5: The way of hallowing – on earth as in heaven

Matt.7 7-15 'When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 'Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

10 Your kingdom come. your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

#### 1. 'When you are praying.'

Be encouraged - Jesus affirms we are doing this!

Praying is an area we easily feel inadequacy, guilt and failure.

Praying is a verb

"I often think of the set pieces of liturgy as certain words which people have successfully addressed to God without their getting killed for it."  
Annie Dillard

#### 2. Do not heap up empty phrases – repetition, useless

Heaping up – like a pile of rubbish. 'Without effect'.

Babbling/*Babelling*

What kind of God needs approaching this way anyway?

And do we do this?

'All our religious language needs a kind of sanctifying.' ++ Rowan

If there was one just word or phrase to pray  
– what would it be for you?

*'Prayer is essentially what God does, how God addresses us, looks at us. It is not primarily something we are doing to God, something we are giving to God - but what God is doing for us, giving us the divine Self in love.'*

Ruth Burrows

#### 3. 'Your Father knows already'

This could save a lot of time .....

But Jesus still teaches us to pray: 'Our Father in heaven'

#### 4. Hallowing the name

'Hallowing of the name' is central to Hebrew life and worship

God is hallowed when he is loved *for his own sake* alone.

To hallow anyone or anything requires a radical letting go of any self-interest or gain in the relationship.

Only God can hallow ...

This petition is eternally fulfilled in Christ himself

'I knew in a moment that Jesus was praying his prayer in me'.

#### a. Hallowing and the sufferings of Job.

Satan - does Job fear God 'for nothing'. Job 1.9 Hinnam = '*as gift*'

eg gratuitously, for no purpose or gain, without cause or personal agenda ... as grace

Suffering tests this to the limit.

'Master of the universe, I know what you want – I understand what you are doing. You want me to despair to overwhelm me. You want me to cease believing in You, to cease praying to You, to cease invoking Your name to glorify and sanctify it. Well I tell you: No, no – a thousand times no! You shall not succeed! In spite of me and in spite of you, I shall shout the Kaddish, which is the song of faith, for You and against you. This song you shall not still, God of Israel.' Prayer of holocaust survivor  
cf Habakkuk 'yet I will rejoice in the Lord'.

### **b. Hallowing and the four movements in the life of faith.**

Loving ourselves for our own sake.

Loving God - but still for our own sake.

Loving God for God's own sake – as gift – hallowing.

*finally*

Loving *ourselves and each other* for God's sake.

When God's name is truly hallowed, all things find their true place, hallowed in their own name and calling – on earth as in heaven.

So we pray those ancient words once more, 'hallowed be your name'.

And, did we imagine it?

The echo of the prayer returns to us - 'hallowed be *your* name'.

### **5. On earth as it is in heaven** – so what are we praying for?

Our praying must go out of sight. 'Not as the world gives' – beyond earthly imagining

'This is about **the grace of not knowing** what is ahead for good or ill. The grace of not knowing first frees us from the compulsion to control the situation, to secure our own advantage to everything and kick ourselves – and God – when we guess wrong.'

**The grace of not worrying** for 'God makes everything'. Eccles 11.1 and see Matt 6.25

Grace beyond knowing **frees us for service** – as trusting gift – hallowing of the name for its own sake. Hallowing as rejoicing in what we do not know! (all from Ellen Davis, 2000: p218)

Back to the theme of 'in secret' again.

### **Not knowing as refining darkness**

'a place of refining darkness [is] required. One that reduces before it expands. One that darkens before it brings to light. We may have to let God lead us to a place of darkness, blindness, unknowing. And there, in the utter lostness of that place, he will turn us around, and show us his way....

There have been, and will be, moments of wretchedness and darkness, when I don't know what I'm doing and I don't know what to say, and in these moments, like in the gospel itself, where the sky blackens as Jesus hangs upon the cross, and where God raises him in the darkness before the dawn, it is in the refining emptiness of these moments that I learn to trust God and become again his voice and his hands to do his will and purpose for the world.

Let him take all the rich experiences of [our] lives and ministry; all the things that have led you to be called and chosen for this [the ministry that is yours] and let him cleanse and refine you. Be 'an instrument in God's hands' so that Christ may be known. Let him lead you into the darkness as well as into light.'

+ Stephen Cottrell Sermon at consecration of Bishop of Winchester. 2012.

**As it is in heaven.** Hallowed. Gracious, generously fore-given.

### **Sources**

Ellen Davis *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs* (Westminster 2000) & in *The art of reading scripture* (Eerdmans 2004) pp227-293. David Ford *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge: 2007)

© davidruncorn@mac.com You are very welcome to make use of the material in this handout but please do not copy it without permission.