

Meditation on the Lord's Prayer

Our Father

God -- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." "All things exist and have their being in God."

God, You choose to reveal Yourself to us, and we understand You to be omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal and unchangeable, the Creator and Preserver of the world, a morally perfect Being, righteous and loving. Your Son, Jesus, who lived in a very patriarchal society, spoke of You as Abba – Father. Moses, spoke to You face-to-face: "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face." Others have found You in nature, (as illustrated by the poem, Vestigia, by Bliss Carman), and some, hermits withdrawing from the world, claimed to have found You within their inmost souls.

The Muslim mystic, Rumi, wrote: "A seeker knocked at the door of the beloved – God – and a voice from inside asked: 'Who is it?' The seeker answered 'It is I'; and the voice said: 'In this house there is no You and I.' The door remained locked. Then the seeker went into solitude, fasted and prayed and, later, returned and again knocked at the door. Again the voice asked: 'Who is it?' Now the believer answered: 'It is You.' Then the door opened."

God, Buddhists, don't teach a personal God but, rather, a love that permeates the universe, and we remember that You are that love – our heavenly Father, Mother, Parent.

who art in heaven

In the King James translation of the bible, this is given as "which art in heaven"? In Joseph Smith's Inspired Version, this phrase is given as "who art in heaven." The New Jerusalem translation avoids the distinction, the choice between the personal "who" and the somewhat more impersonal "which," by simply saying as "Our Father in heaven."

And where is heaven? Metaphorically, it is in the heavens, up above us, as in the old saying, "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" But in another sense, it is around us and within us, just as God is omnipresent, around us and within us.

Rom 14:17 (NIV) For the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Hallowed be Thy name.

Hallowed, meaning "holy." "May your name be kept holy." By implication, "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain." Don't blunt your spiritual experience with a casual attitude toward your Heavenly Father.

Thy kingdom come

And then there is the metaphor of “kingdom,” one that we rarely use nowadays, except with respect to God’s kingdom. It is not a metaphor with which I am comfortable; although I suppose that might just be pride talking; but I feel an awe within the presence of God which does not require any kingship metaphor. On the contrary, I feel that it is anthropomorphic and somewhat demeaning to think of God as king. For me, my God has always been so much more than that.

According to Origen, one of the early church fathers, ‘The kingdom of God is within us,’ that is, on our lips and in our hearts. Luke 17:21 Therefore anyone who prays that the kingdom of God may not delay its coming is praying that it may be consolidated, extended, and reach its fullness within him. Our Lord in fact dwells in all holy people who recognize God as their king and obey his spiritual laws.

Thy will be done on Earth

In the third chapter of Genesis (IV), we read:

[Gen 3:1] And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying, That Satan whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning;

[Gen 3:2] And he came before me, saying, Behold I, send me, I will be thy Son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor.

[Gen 3:3] But behold, my beloved Son, which was my beloved and chosen from the beginning, said unto me: Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.

[Gen 3:4] Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him; and also that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten I caused that he should be cast down; and he became Satan.

[Gen 3:5] Yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive, and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice.

And from the Book of Mormon:

[2 Ne 1:111] And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed, he would not have fallen; but he would have remained in the garden of Eden.

[2 Ne 1:112] And all things which were created, must have remained in the same state which they were, after they were created; and they must have remained for ever, and had no end.

[2 Ne 1:113] And they would have had no children; wherefore, they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin.

[2 Ne 1:114] But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

[2 Ne 1:115] Adam fell, that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

[2 Ne 1:116] And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall.

as it is in heaven.

And we look forward to that time, as we sing: "And as we hope for heaven, make earth a heaven below."

Give us this day our daily bread

John 6:32-35 (NAS) Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." They said therefore to Him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

In the sixth chapter of Matthew, Jesus, speaking to his disciples, is reported to have said:

[Mat 6:25] And, again I say unto you, go ye into the world, and care not for the world; for the world will hate you, and will persecute you, and will turn you out of their synagogues.

[Mat 6:26] Nevertheless, ye shall go forth from house to house, teaching the people; and I will go before you.

[Mat 6:27] And your heavenly Father will provide for you, whatsoever things ye need for food, what ye shall eat; and for raiment, what ye shall wear or put on.

[Mat 6:28] Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for you life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your bodies, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

[Mat 6:29] Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? How much more will he not feed you?

[Mat 6:30] Wherefore take no thought for these things, but keep my commandments wherewith I have commanded you.

[Mat 6:31] For which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature.

[Mat 6:32] And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.

[Mat 6:33] And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

[Mat 6:34] Therefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he not provide for you, if ye are not of little faith.

In fact, of all God's children, we are the most fortunate:

"If you have food in the refrigerator,
clothes on your back, a roof

overhead and a place to sleep ... you
are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the
bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a
dish someplace ... you are among
the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If you woke up this morning with more health
than illness ... you are more blessed than
the million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of
battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the
agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation...
you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend a church meeting without fear
of harassment, arrest, torture, or death ... you
are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

If you hold up your head with a smile
on your face and are truly
thankful ... you are blessed because the
majority can, but most do not.

If you can hold someone's hand,
hug them or even touch them on the shoulder,
you are blessed because you can offer healing touch.

If you can read,
you are more blessed than over two billion people
in the world that cannot read at all.”

On the other hand, it behooves us to remember that “Man shall not live by bread alone, but
by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,” that we should turn to our Heavenly
Father for spiritual guidance as well as for our physical wants and needs.

and forgive us our trespasses

Do you remember The Fool's Prayer?

The royal feast was done. The king
Sought some new sport to banish care
And, to his jester, cried, “Sir, Fool,

Kneel now and make for us a prayer.”

The jester doft his cap-and-bells,
And stood, the mocking court before.
They did not see the bitter smile
Behind the painted grin he wore.

He bowed his head and bent his knee
Upon the monarch’s silken stool.
His pleading voice arose, “Oh, Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool.

These clumsy feet, still in the mire,
Go crushing blossoms without end;
These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust
Among the heartstrings of a friend.”

The unkind word we might have kept,
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?
The word we had not sense to say,
Who knows how grandly it had rung.

Our faults no tenderness should ask.
The chastening stripes must cleanse them all.
But for our follies, oh, in shame
Before the eyes of heaven we fall.”

The room was hushed. In silence
Rose the king, and sought his gardens cool.
His pleading voice arose, “Oh, Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool.”

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

[Mat 18:21] Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?

[Mat 18:22] Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven.

[Mat 18:23] Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would take account of his servants.

[Mat 18:24] And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents.

[Mat 18:25] But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

[Mat 18:26] And the servant besought him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will

pay thee all.

[Mat 18:27] Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. The servant, therefore, fell down and worshipped him.

[Mat 18:28] But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow- servants which owed him a hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

[Mat 18:29] And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

[Mat 18:30] And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

[Mat 18:31] So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

[Mat 18:32] Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt; because thou desiredst me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow- servant, even as I had pity on thee?

[Mat 18:33] And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

[Mat 18:34] So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

And lead us not into temptation

or, as Joseph Smith re-phrased it, “Suffer us not to be lead into temptation.” And I remember the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, and the fable of the Grand Inquisitor, in Dostoevsky’s novel, *The Brothers Kamarazov*. It recounts how Jesus, revisiting the world and appearing in medieval Spain, was arrested and condemned by the Grand Inquisitor because He would not use the three things by which men may be controlled – bread, authority and mystery. Men will follow one who gives them bread, obey one who rewards the obedient and punishes the disobedient, and believe in one who is wrapped in mystery. But, just as Jesus had refused these three things during his temptation in the wilderness, he also refused to use them to command the loyalty of his followers. Men were to follow him, obey him, and believe in him, out of love and devotion or not at all. This attitude the Inquisition had had to set aside or there would have been very few to accept Him. And now that he had come to repeat his great mistake and spoil all of their hard work, he was to be put to death again, burnt at the stake the very next day. When the Inquisitor had finished speaking, the Prisoner simply crossed the prison-cell and kissed the old man on his bloodless lips. The Inquisitor opened the door and bade him go. He went out into the night and was never seen again. That kiss burned in the old man’s heart although, unfortunately, it altered neither his opinion or practice.

In the Book of Job, chosen by some early churchmen for inclusion in the bible because of its majestic teachings about God, it is pointed out that His purposes are beyond our understanding: God had allowed Satan to test Job; and Job’s friends sought to explain to Job why he was being afflicted, mainly in terms of justice -- God must have been punishing him because of his sins. Elihu says, for example,

[Job 36:2] Suffer me a little, and I will show thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf.

[Job 36:3] I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.

...

[Job 36:5] Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any; he is mighty in strength and wisdom.

[Job 36:6] He preserveth not the life of the wicked; but giveth right to the poor.

[Job 36:7] He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous; but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them forever, and they are exalted.

[Job 36:8] And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction;

[Job 36:9] Then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded.

[Job 36:10] He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.

[Job 36:11] If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures.

[Job 36:12] But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge.

...

[Job 38:1] Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,

[Job 38:2] Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

[Job 38:3] Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

[Job 38:4] Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

[Job 38:5] Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

[Job 38:6] Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the cornerstone thereof;

[Job 38:7] When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

[Job 38:8] Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?

[Job 38:9] When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it,

[Job 38:10] And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors,

[Job 38:11] And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

[Job 38:12] Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place;

...

[Job 38:16] Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?

[Job 38:17] Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?

[Job 38:18] Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all.

...

[Job 38:31] Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?

[Job 38:32] Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus

with his sons?

[Job 38:33] Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?

[Job 38:34] Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?

[Job 38:35] Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?

...

[Job 39:9] Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by the crib?

[Job 39:10] Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee?

...

[Job 40:1] Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said,

[Job 40:2] Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.

[Job 40:3] Then Job answered the Lord, and said,

[Job 40:4] Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

[Job 40:5] Once have I spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.

[Job 40:6] Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said,

[Job 40:7] Gird up thy loins now like a man; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

[Job 40:8] Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?

[Job 40:9] Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?

[Job 40:10] Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty.

[Job 40:11] Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath; and behold everyone that is proud, and abase him.

[Job 40:12] Look on everyone that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place.

[Job 40:13] Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret.

[Job 40:14] Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.

...

[Job 42:1] Then Job answered the Lord, and said,

[Job 42:2] I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

[Job 42:3] Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

[Job 42:4] Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

[Job 42:5] I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee;

[Job 42:6] Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

[Job 42:7] And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.

But deliver us from evil

“And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
‘Give me a light, that I may tread safely into then unknown.’
And he replied:
‘Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of the day in the lone East.

So, heart, be still:
What need our little life,
Our human life, to know,
If God hath comprehension?

Looked at from another perspective, it is we who must be the deliverers. One of my favorite hymns is #12 in Sing a New Song:

*I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in deepest sin my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?*

*I, the Lord pf snow and rain, I have borne my people’s pain.
I have wept for love of them, they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?*

*I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them, my hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?*

And the answer in each case is:

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if You lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.*

And in the process of delivering, of course, it is we who are delivered.

For thine is the kingdom

We are yours, Lord, the children of your hand as well as your hands here on earth. May we indeed make earth a heaven below. Let your kingdom come, first of all in our own souls,

that we may begin to realize it in our communities, and then throughout the world.

And the power

“O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the works Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the world displayed.

Then sings my soul, My Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.”

I like to think of Jesus as God’s love and power incarnate:

“Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of His divine manhood.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying -- and that was His coat. When He was dead, He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader in the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One solitary life.” Here was a man or, as my Jewish friends would say, a true mensch.

And I think of that hymn, Freely, freely.”

“God forgave my sin in Jesus’ name;
I’ve been born again in Jesus’ name;
And in Jesus’ name I come to you
To share his love as he told me to.
All power is given in Jesus’ name,

In earth and heaven in Jesus’;
And in Jesus’ name I come to you
To share his power as he told me to.”

And the glory

“The heavens herald your glory, O God, and the skies display your handiwork.
Day after day they tell their story, and night after night they reveal the depth of their understanding.
Without speech, without words, without even an audible voice,
Their cries echo through all the world, and their message reaches the ends of the earth.
Your law, Adonai, is perfect; it refreshes the soul.
Your rule is to be trusted; it gives wisdom to the naive.
Your purposes, God, are right; they gladden the heart.
Your command is clear; it gives light to the eyes.
Holding you in awe, Adonai, is purifying; it endures.
Your decrees are steadfast, and all of them are just.”

Forever,

Yes, forever; time without end.

Amen.

Yes, so be it; amen.

"Teach us how to pray," the disciples said to Jesus. (Luke 11, 1) He answered by teaching them the prayer we call the Our Father or The Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is a basic Christian prayer. As a model of prayer, every Christian learns it by heart. It appears everywhere in the church's life: in its liturgy and sacraments, in public and private prayer. It 's a prayer Christians treasure.

Though we memorize it as a set formula, the Lord's Prayer shouldn't be repeated mechanically or without thought. Its purpose is to awaken and stimulate our faith. Through this prayer Jesus invites us to approach God as Father. Indeed, the Lord's Prayer has been called a summary of the gospel. Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.

When Moses approached God on Mount Sinai, he heard a voice saying, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." An infinite chasm separates us from the transcendent God.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus invites us to draw near to God who is beyond human understanding, who dwells in mystery, who is all holy. We can call God "our Father".

Calling God "Father" does not mean that God is masculine. God is beyond the categories of gender, of masculine or feminine. None of our descriptions of God is adequate. God, who is "in heaven", whose name is holy, cannot be fully known by us.

By calling God "Father" we are more rightly describing ourselves and our relationship with God. Jesus teaches that we have a filial relationship with God; God sees us as if we were a daughter or a son. And we, on our part, can approach God in the familiar confident way a child approaches a loving parent. What is more, we approach God through God's only Son, Jesus Christ, who unites us to himself .

Thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

God's kingdom. Jesus often said that God's power would appear and renew all creation. God like a mighty king would rule over the earth according to a plan that unfolds from the beginning of the world. God's kingdom would be marked by peace and justice. Good would be rewarded and evil punished. The kingdom, according to Jesus, is not far off, but already present in our midst, though not yet revealed.

In the Lord's prayer we pray that God's kingdom come, that God's will, which is for our good, be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

We are God's children. What can be more childlike than this petition in which we pray for our daily bread, a word that describes all those physical, human and spiritual gifts we need to live. With the confidence of children we say: "Give us this day what we need."

Forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

This petition of the Lord's Prayer is a demanding one. Not only do we ask God's forgiveness for our daily offenses, but we link God's forgiveness of us with our forgiveness of others. Forgiving others is not always easy to do. We need God's help to do it. But it must be done or we ourselves cannot receive God's mercy.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Life is not easy. It is a daily battle. Trials like sickness and failure can crush our spirits. False values and easy promises can entice us and even destroy our souls. And so we ask God to keep us from failing when we are tested, to help us to know the right thing to do, to deliver us from the evil which awaits us in life.

The Lord's Prayer sums up the teaching of Jesus. It is also a prayer that offers the grace of Jesus: his reverence for God, his childlike confidence in his Father, and his power to go bravely through life no matter what comes. When we pray his prayer, his spirit becomes our own.