

Collect, Readings and Reflection for 27 July 2025, 6th Sunday after Trinity

Collect *(the Church's prayer for today):*

Creator God,
you made us all in your image:
may we discern you in all that we see,
and serve you in all that we do;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

READINGS: Colossians 2:6-15[16-19]; Luke 11: 1-13

Today's reflection is by Reader Cal Bailey

I wonder what causes you to pray? For me, it's when there's a crisis. When the car breaks down; when someone's very ill; most recently, it's when Trevor was dying. At those moments, it's good to remember the words in our gospel: "Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

But I've learned to see those words differently from the way I used to see them. I used to treat them like a transactional promise: pray and God will sort the problem – that's what he promised. And I was often disappointed! He doesn't always swoop in to save, though once or twice he did. Instead I've learned to listen more carefully to the first words of our gospel, the Lord's prayer.

I've learned that God isn't transactional so much as relational. God's not a vending machine into which we put our money; and expect the goods to pop out of the bottom. And the change isn't in God – as if my prayer causes his decision to change what's going to happen. Not so much a transaction as a transformation. Not in God; *in me*.

Why do we need to be transformed? Let me tell you a story, and since cricket is one of the sports of the hour, it's about a cricketer, who died and went to heaven.

At the pearly gates St Peter said, 'What do you really, really want?' The cricketer replied 'I'd like to be at Lord's Cricket Ground – when the capacity had been increased to five million. I'd come in off my long run, bowl a dazzling off-cutter, and see middle stump cartwheeling back toward the pavilion. I'd then put my hand to my ear and hear the adoration of the fans, all singing my name.' St Peter said 'I think we can fix that up for you.' So the cricketer found himself at Lord's cricket ground coming in off his long run, bowling a dazzling off-cutter, and seeing middle stump cartwheeling back toward the pavilion. He then put his hand to his ear and heard the adoration of the fans, all singing his name; whereupon he was back at the end of his run-up, doing the same again.

By the time lunch was due, he'd broken all known records. He looked over to St Peter in the crowd and said 'How about lunch?' 'No lunch here,' said St Peter. So the cricketer

played on, and started to get tired, and he shouted over to St Peter, 'How about a break. Surely we must get to the end of the over.' 'No breaks here, said St Peter, 'This is eternity.' 'You mean,' said the cricketer, 'I'm going to spend eternity simply cleaning out middle stump time after time?' 'Yup,' said St Peter. 'Sounds more like hell than heaven to me,' said the cricketer. 'It's what you wanted,' said St Peter.

Discipleship is about learning to want the right things. The prayer often called the Lord's Prayer trains us to ask for the right things. To begin with it trains our habits of mind.

Our Father. God isn't an ogre but a father. Or a mother. A parent; someone who doesn't hate us, but loves us. We're invited to imagine a parent hugging their child as we begin this prayer. [image]. We are being loved in this prayer.

Your Kingdom Come. The cricketer wanted *his* kingdom to come. The prayer invites us to want *God's* kingdom to come because it's better. Better for us; and for everyone else too.

Now let's turn to the 3 requests in the Lord's prayer. They begin Give Us; Forgive Us; Deliver us.

The first request is, 'Give us.' 'Give us today our daily bread.' I think it harks back to the desert when the people of God relied on daily manna; and they were told to pick enough for just one day. Someone tried to pick enough for next day and found that it went putrid and smelled horrible. "Enough for today". Moses had to remind the people what God had said. Repeatedly. They had to learn that God was trustworthy – if God had said there would be food, there would be food. And they had to learn to actively trust God – to depend on the promise, not on their hard work, or ingenuity.

God wants us to live in the present. In today. Not in the past or the future. In relationship with God. In dependence on God. That's the way we'll learn that God is a good parent. Help us live in the present. Let us not be so burdened by guilt or scarred by hurt that we live in the past.

Let us not be so anxious about the unknown or driven by a particular goal that we become prisoners of the future. God Give Enough, says the prayer. Don't give us so much that we don't know sensibly what to do with it or so little that we can't see past our own need. Make us attentive, alert, dependent, present.

'Give us.' That's a request to be given the grace to live in the present.

And then there's 'Forgive us.' In other words, take away the burden of the things we have done and the burden of the things others have done to us. Christianity means many different things to many different people, but as far as I'm concerned this is the business end of the operation: discovering forgiveness.

In my teens, I did something that I was instantly ashamed of, and had to confess and learn to feel forgiven and free. Much later, I discovered that somebody who was supposed to support me, actually hated me enough to destroy part of me; and I had to

learn to forgive them, in order to free myself from a hatred which would consume me and spoil my life.

Discovering forgiveness is a great and wonderful thing. It frees us from a burden we needn't carry. It frees us to live in the present and enjoy it. If you need to discover forgiveness, talk to someone who has discovered it. They will introduce you to Jesus' love and forgiveness and freedom.

'Forgive us.' That's a prayer to be given back the past.

And then the last request in the Lord's Prayer is about the future. 'Deliver us.' It's about offering God our fear. It's fear that causes us to pray most often. If you have received a diagnosis which frightens you, prayer is one of the things most of us turn to.

Our fear is that the future will bring challenges that are too much for us, either because we are weak or because the challenges are superhuman. This third request comes in two halves. There's our fear of ourselves: 'Lead us not into temptation'. And then there's our fear of what lies outside us 'Deliver us from evil'. However much we may present to the world a demeanour of calmness and contentment, my guess is we still have in our hearts a good deal of fear. There's a lot we don't know about ourselves, and this prayer is a plea that we won't be put in a situation that's too much for us.

God promises his followers abundant life, and this prayer shows us how to find it. It gives us the opportunity to make the past and the future our friend. It contains all of our lives before God.

For the present, Give us what we need, and the grace to recognise what matters. For the past, forgive us what we can't undo, as we forgive what others have done to us. And for the future, don't let us be taken to something that's too much for us, or face something that will destroy us. Give us, forgive us, deliver us.

Amen.

