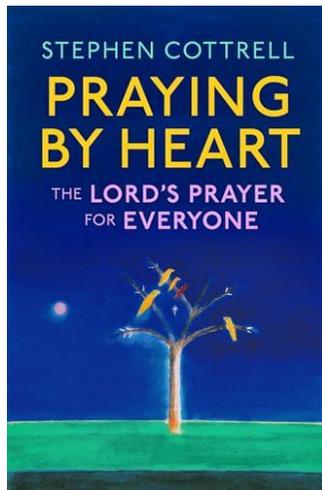


Week Two

Part Two - 'Three Hearty Praises'



Introductory Comments

- The Roman Catholic theologian John Dominic Crossan remarks how the Lord's Prayer as written in Greek is poetic in nature. The first three partitions as transliterated read:
Be hallowed the name of you
Be come the kingdom of you
Be done the will of you

In each case the verb comes first - *be hallowed*, *be come*, *be done*. They, in fact, sound like commands.

- To whom are they directed? To God - this is after all, a prayer. But also, to us. We are called ***into a collaborative relationship with God.***

Hallowed be your Name

- After having established the absolute heart of things, that God is 'Our Father', thus addressing God *intimately and lovingly*, the very next thing we say is '***a solemn acknowledgement of God's greatness and majesty***'.

'We address God with intimacy and adoration.'

- We approach God as a child approaches its parents. At the same time, we say that God's name is holy. Which means we affirm the goodness, beauty and perfection of God. This is in continuity with the Jewish tradition which knows God as the holy one, but did not and could not know the name of God.
- The name revealed to Moses - 'I am who I am' or 'I will be what I will be' speaks of the unknowability of God. We cannot 'domesticate' or define God. God is beyond definition.
- Hence the Lord's Prayer sits between two traditions: we need both intimacy and adoration.

Right relationship with God

- We don't call God 'holy', or address God as 'almighty' because God needs it. It's because it helps us. We put ourselves in perspective. We put ourselves in a right relationship with God. We hallow God.
- Hallowing God is *'to allow God to take God's proper place at the heart of things - and in our hearts as well.'*
- Praise is good for us!

God is not our equal...

God is not our
possession.

God is our creator.

God is the one who is
the source and origin
of everything.

'This is more than just putting a halo around God's name. It is the acknowledgement of who God is and of who we are. It also changes us and expands our hearts. It puts us in right relationship with God – and with everything else that God has created.'

Your Kingdom Come

- What is meant by the kingdom of God? It's not a place. It's an attitude, a way of living that permeates from our hearts conformed to Christ and his values summed up in the Beatitudes.

'It is a kingdom where the standards and protocols of the world are turned upside down. The poor, the disadvantaged and the lame are given the best seats in the house...Moreover it is a kingdom without a king.'

- 'Therefore, when we pray 'your kingdom come', we are praying that we too might be part of this upside-down kingdom, live as servants to others after the example of Jesus, and demonstrate to the world a different set of attitudes and a different set of values to live to.'

'We believe that Jesus is a king. But he is a servant king, and his kingdom of justice, mercy and peace is to be established in human hearts, so that it overflows into the shaping and transforming of the kingdoms of the world.'

- The Beatitudes encompass the attributes and values of being 'Christ-like'. They are *vocational* in that these are the qualities required to be a genuine disciple of Jesus and 'bringing heaven on earth'. We need to live as 'a child of the kingdom'.
- The key Beatitude unlocking the other values/qualities is that of being 'poor in spirit':

'To be poor in spirit must mean to be rich in the mercy and goodness of God, which only comes from knowing God and living in relationship with God, brooding upon God's word and being part of the worship of God's Church. And seeking...to align our will with the will and purposes of God.'

- If we say this prayer, and if we utter the astonishing three words 'your kingdom come', then we are committing ourselves to being part of this just and peaceful revolution. We are praying for 'a right-way-up world'.
- Jesus' ideas about the concept of God's kingdom find their roots in two Jewish prayers, the *sh'ma* and the *Qaddish* (prayed in Aramaic). The Lord's Prayer is different in that Jesus teaches us to pray that the kingdom is not exclusively a future reality; he prays the kingdom breaks in **now; tomorrow's life today**.

Your will be done

- Stephen Cottrell uses the analogy of tuning a musical instrument or the harmonious tuning of an orchestra to describe how we need 'to be in tune with God's will'.
- Our lives only find their full meaning and purpose, and we only find the fulfilment we long for, when we are in tune with God, playing our lives in tune and in time with God's life.
- Unlike other aspects of creation, we can make moral choices, we can choose because of free will to be in tune with God's will and rhythm, or we can break away, often with disastrous consequences.
- We need to learn to tune our hearts to the heart of God. When we say 'your kingdom come, your will be done', **we are committing ourselves to listening out and learning from the will of God: the heart of God speaks to our heart and shapes our will.**

God's universal tune

'The will of God, the good purposes of a good and loving God, God's purposes for the whole creation, for this earth and for everything in it, is like a single, beautiful, clarifying note played and resonating throughout the universe. Everything else is tuned to it. Or at least it can be, and it should be. Making it so is the missionary challenge of the gospel and the invitation of God's kingdom.'

- The first ‘command’ of the Rule of St. Benedict is expressed in the word ‘*listen*’. This is at the heart of the monastic life, of contemplative prayer. The Latin word is *audire*, from which we get our words *audible*, *aural* and *obey*.

*‘This tells us something vitally important for **all** prayer. Something about which we often muddled. Prayer is not an attempt to change God’s mind. Listening in to some people’s prayers, you could be forgiven for thinking this is what we are doing – trying to persuade God about something – because so much of our prayer is asking for stuff. In fact for many, many Christians, their prayer never gets much beyond this...*

*Therefore, like words that run through a stick of rock so that whenever you break it open it says the same thing, the words ‘**your will be done**’ run through the whole of Christian prayer.*



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- Therefore, when we pray, we are not trying to change God’s mind. We are not trying to persuade God to do things God might not want to do. We are not trying to impose our will upon the will of God. Rather, we are placing ourselves in right relationship

with God as those who are children of God, and those who would have nothing without God - and we let God change our mind.

- **We should not be neutral about God's will...we should make it our own.**

'Prayer is not what we say to God...but what God says to us.'

On Earth as in Heaven

- Revelation 11.15: *'The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our God and his Christ.'*
- In Christ, everything about heaven comes to fill the earth, like light flooding a darkened room. This light reveals and illuminates everything. Thus, everything earthly is transformed so as to be heavenly, so as to bear the currency of the kingdom of God.
- Earth as a realm or sphere of activity has its own creaturely integrity. The kingdom of Christ come to fill it (like light fills a room) so that it retains the dignity of its character while also being transformed and suffused by the indwelling presence of God.

'God's kingdom has been launched on earth as in heaven, and the way it will happen is by God working through people like us' N.T. Wright

Next Session: Thurs 12th March, CoGS, Hamstreet @ 7pm

