

**Devotions for the Week of February 17, 2019****LARGE-PRINT****North East United Methodist Church****Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**2019 Theme: PRAYER2019 Key Scripture: “Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.”**- I Chronicles 16:11****Sunday, February 17, 2019****Read Matthew 6:9-13.**Don Underwood, in his book, Pray Like Jesus, writes,

*They saw him out there every morning, on his knees, early, as the sun rose in the east. Until he had come along, their understanding of prayer had revolved around what they had heard from the Pharisees: loud, long, self-righteous and self-serving. But he was different. He could spend hours at a time in silence, as if he were listening more than asking. And when he rose from his prayers and joined them for the day's work, he seemed to be powerfully energized while also utterly at peace. There was an unmistakable and unique quality to this man they called Jesus, and the longer they stayed with him the more they suspected that it was rooted in his practice of daily prayer. So one day they asked him, “Teach us to pray.” And he did.*

Underwood goes on to write, “Most Christians know [this prayer] by heart and can easily recite it. In fact, that might be part of the problem: it is so well known and easily recited that most of us never even think about the words as we rattle them off silently or in a corporate worship setting.”

He continues, “In fewer than seventy words Jesus remarkably covers the breadth of the Christian message and experience: our relationship to God, our mission from God, our source of strength and power for daily living, our daily reminder of the importance of confession and forgiveness, and a hopeful refrain that commits us to the understanding that the future belongs not to us, but to God.”

Spend time tonight reading through the Lord's Prayer. Read it slowly. Read each line and STOP, reflect, ask God to speak to you through the prayer His Son taught us.

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
 Hallowed by thy name.  
 Thy kingdom come,  
 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread.  
 And forgive us our trespasses,  
 As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
 And lead us not into temptation,  
 but deliver us from evil.  
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
 and the glory forever.  
 Amen.

### **Monday, February 18, 2019**

#### **Read Matthew 6:5-9.**

Underwood writes, *"Jesus clearly draws a contrast between the superficial, boastful spirituality of the Pharisees and the kind of humble spirituality he was trying to model for his followers."*

The Lord's Prayer begins, *"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."* These first words remind us of our "smallness" and God's transcendence and holiness.

I think about the moments in my life when I have stood on the mountaintops in Shenandoah, looking out over the valley, or stood on the rim of the Grand Canyon, or looked out the window of the plane as we flew over the Andes. I think about those moments and how "small" I felt and how I realized how "awesome" God IS!

Underwood explains that as he meditated on this first line of the Lord's Prayer, he was *"seized by the thought that either God is or God isn't. If God is, then God is indeed in heaven, is the creator of all there is, and is the lover and sustainer of all there is, including me and the ones I care about. Suddenly, in a moment of powerful grace, all the anxiety drained from my spirit and my body, and I 'gave' [the] situation [I was anxious about] to God in an act of utter and complete trust."*

He goes on to say, *"I try to dwell long enough on the first phrase [of the Lord's Prayer] that my worries seem trivial, my lack of understanding feels normal, and I eventually find myself 'resting' in the confidence that there is a great big God who will one day make sense out of all the nonsense that seems to fill the world."*

As someone once said, *"If God is, God is a lot bigger than we thought."* Reflect on these first words in the Lord's Prayer. Allow the thought of a transcendent, creator God...the God who created the mountains and the Grand Canyon and the planet we reside upon that is traveling at great speeds through a vast universe...allow the thought of God's vastness, power, beauty, holiness, greatness to humble you, bring you to your knees, and remind you that no matter what you might be struggling with, worried about, *"Our Father, who art in heaven"* can handle it! Give it to Him!

## **Tuesday, February 19, 2019**

### **Read Acts 2:42-47.**

Next, Jesus teaches us to pray, *"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* Underwood writes, *"The kingdom of God in heaven is a place where justice reigns; where all people are treated and loved equally; where there is no abuse by the powerful and no patronizing of the poor; where a person's status is derived from no other fact than being a child of God...it is God's intention to make this idyllic kingdom a reality right here on earth! In this line of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus changed the conversation: not 'up there' but 'down here'!"*

Underwood goes on to ask, *"What if we could catch this vision about the kingdom of God and allow it to transform the manner in which we approach our daily lives?"*

Furthermore, Underwood states, *"I like to refer to this part of the prayer as the vision and mission statement for the Christian life...in this prayer [Jesus] makes it clear that our mission is to live life on earth in a way that reflects the kingdom of God in heaven."*

Isn't this what the disciples, the early church, did? They met in the Upper Room and prayed, and then they went out and reflected the "kingdom of God" to the world, sharing their possessions, praying and breaking bread together, taking care of one another, welcoming others into the family each day.

Write the following prayer down on a post-it note and tape it somewhere so you can see it first-thing in the morning. Tomorrow morning pray this prayer, "*Lord, what would you have me do this day to make your kingdom in heaven become your kingdom on earth?*"

### **Wednesday, February 20, 2019**

#### **Read Matthew 6:25-34.**

The next part of the Lord's Prayer lifts up the words, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" I find myself praying these words, by themselves, more and more.

Underwood writes, "*From the moment in the twelfth chapter of Genesis when God called Abram and Sarai to undertake a journey, the biblical understanding of faith has involved a commitment to trust God one day at a time. In fact, one of the most insightful ways to read the Bible is as God's call to a journey, and this theme can be found throughout the Old Testament in the stories of the patriarchs, the kings, and the prophets. It is continued in the New Testament with the story of Mary and Joseph, and then with the call by Jesus for his disciples to follow him. The third part of the Lord's Prayer articulates the Christian understanding that God does, indeed, give each of us what we need for the journey, but only one day at a time.*"

I certainly struggle with "*give us this day,*" as I lay in bed at night, unable to fall asleep, trying to plan out the future, wondering how it will work out, how this and that will get paid or done. I have found myself praying these words of the Lord's prayer throughout the day to remind myself to stop my thoughts from running to tomorrow and next week and next year, to remind myself that God will provide what is needed today. I just need to trust.

What is it that keeps you up at night? What is it that you find yourself worrying about when it comes to the future? Are you feeling frustrated as you attempt to plan out, step-by-step, what the future looks like, what is next in your life, how the years ahead will unfold? Pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread...Give [me] this day [my] daily bread*" and trust God to

provide what you need, trust God to take care of tomorrow when tomorrow comes. Remember His promise to “*never leave nor forsake you.*”

### **Thursday, February 21, 2019**

#### **Read Exodus 16.**

God promised the Israelites daily bread that would cover the ground every morning and quail that would fly into camp every night, but God said there is one condition. That condition was that they could gather as much as they wanted to eat but they could not save or store any of it. They had to trust God to provide for them again the next day.

Underwood writes, “*God had devised a plan by which the people were forced, literally, to trust God on a daily basis.*” He continues, “*If we face our problems and challenges one day at a time, we will always find the strength to endure - as our days, so shall our strength be. But most of us, fallible as we are, are tempted to pile up the weight of many burdens all at once. We will think and worry not just about the challenges awaiting us this day, but also about the failures of the past and the worries of the future... Like the strongest bridge in the world, not even the strongest person in the world can endure the weight of so many thoughts and worries... We [cannot] forget that God gives us the strength to face nearly any crisis, but only one day at a time.*”

Again, this is one of the major things I struggle with daily as I look ahead and wonder what God has in store for me, what He wants me to do next, and how I can prepare. I worry about finances, retirement, and where my children will end up. The worries of the future are endless because the future is unknown. I must learn to put my trust in God daily, trusting Him to take care of tomorrow when tomorrow comes. Like the Israelites went out each day to collect the manna, I must do my part and go out each day, working hard, preparing, serving, accomplishing what God puts before me.

Again, lay your future before God. Give it to Him. Simply awake tomorrow and ask God to show you what He wants you to do “today”! Pray that God will give you what you need “today” and trust that God will provide, not only for today, but God will provide for tomorrow. He can be trusted.

## **Friday, February 22, 2019**

### **Read Matthew 18:3; Luke 11:1-13.**

Jesus reminds us that prayer is a little like children coming to their parents. Richard J. Foster, in his book, *Prayer*, writes, *“Our children come to us with the craziest requests at times! Often we are grieved by the meanness and selfishness in their requests, but we would be all the more grieved if they never came to us even with their meanness and selfishness. We are simply glad they do come - mixed motives and all. This is precisely how it is with prayer. We will never have pure enough motives, or be good enough, or know enough in order to pray rightly. We simply must set all these things aside and begin praying.”*

Foster talks about “Simple Prayer.” He writes, *“Simple Prayer involves ordinary people bringing ordinary concerns to a loving and compassionate Father. There is no pretense in Simple Prayer. We do not pretend to be more holy, more pure, or more saintly than we actually are... We are the focus of Simple Prayer. Our needs, our wants, our concerns dominate our prayers experience...”* Foster states that this “Simple Prayer,” this self-centered prayer, is where we start for it is where we are, and by praying we learn to pray.

Foster continues, *“In the beginning we are indeed the subject and the center of our prayers. But in God’s time and in God’s way a Copernican revolution takes place in our heart. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, there is a shift in our center of gravity. We pass from thinking of God as part of our life to the realization that we are part of his life. Wondrously and mysteriously God moves from the periphery of our prayer experience to the center.”*

Don’t feel like you need the right words? Don’t feel that your prayers are too selfish, self-centered? Don’t analyze your prayers, how you should pray, JUST PRAY! Share everything about your day, your family, your church, your community, your worries, your fears, your anger, your shortcomings, your failures. Share it all and watch God begin to work in and through your honesty, your vulnerability, your “being real” with Him.

## **Saturday, February 23, 2019**

### **Read Matthew 6:6.**

In the movie, *War Room*, Ms. Clara has a closet that she has cleaned out in her home. She uses this closet as a prayer room, a place where she goes, shuts the door, and focuses all her thoughts and heart on God. She hangs up scriptures, journals prayers, spends time separated from the

world, focused on her relationship with God, praying for strength and blessings for herself and for others. When she enters this prayer room/ closet, she removes herself from the distractions of the world and allows herself the ability to focus on the One she is crying out to and whose voice she is listening for.

Find a place this weekend to pray. It may be a room off the “beaten path” in your home or a place you can drive to and sit in the car, away from the distractions of home. Find a place and spend time this weekend in prayer. Share your heart, everything, with God. If you have trouble focusing, trouble listening, trouble sharing your heart, simply pray that God would help you learn to pray. Remember, we learn how to pray by praying!

**And Don't Forget  
To Invite Someone To Church Tomorrow!!!**

