

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost/August 4, 2019
Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21;
Rev. Joel M. Krueger

"Thy Kingdom Come"

Last Sunday, Kate spoke to us about the Lord's Prayer and how reading and listening to it in Aramaic, Jesus' native language, can give us a very different understanding, and experience of this central and most significant prayer of our faith.

She explained that Aramaic is different from western European languages like the Greek our New Testament was written in, and certainly different than the English we speak today. Ancient Aramaic, she said, *"allowed a wider mode of communication than the Greek"* meaning that it did not seek to be as specific or literal but could be understood in broader, more expansive ways. She quoted Dr. Neil Douglas-Klotz, world-renowned scholar in religious studies and psychology, as saying Aramaic is rich in *"sound meaning"*, that sacred words *"resonate in the body."*

So when Kate invited us to hear and then to speak the Aramaic words of the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, she hoped we might get a small taste of how Jesus may have spoken these words.

"Ab-woon d'bwash-maya" - *Our Father who is in heaven*
"nethqadash sh-makh" - *hallowed be your name.*

The disciples had asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, and so Jesus, being a mystic as he was, begins with an invitation. It is an invitation to God, a God known as "Father" but in the Aramaic tradition, an expansive understanding would have included the concepts of a "divine parent", "mother-father of the cosmos", "birther." It is the picture of the generative, creative energies of the universe. It is an invitation to that God, ***"Ab-woon"*** or ***"Abba"*** who is in heaven, who resides within the universe, in all nature and creation, to come and enter into our own nature.

But it is more so an invitation to us, to open ourselves, to make room, to break away from our dualistic way of being, to free ourselves from our self-centered worlds, and to get out of our heads. Jesus begins this prayer, and would have begun all prayer, by telling his disciples to begin by opening themselves up, putting the self aside, and making way for the breath of God to enter in. To make space in themselves for the sacred, the holy, to bow themselves down before our God, who is beyond our knowing. This is how we begin.

Once a place has been prepared inside ourselves, we then speak our most fervent wish, *"Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven."* The first words in Aramaic are ***"Teytey malkuthakh"*** - *Your Kingdom come.* *Mulkuthakh* can be interpreted as *Kingdom* or even as *Queendom* but as Douglas-Klotz states, it can also refer to *"the counsel by which anything is ruled, the collective ideals of a nation, or the planet."* (*Prayers of the Cosmos, p.20*). This is a prayer that God's deepest desires, for the unity and harmony of all creation, be achieved on earth, as it is within God's own self. Kate and I reflect that same sentiment, when we drop the "g" from Kingdom and make it ***"Kin-dom"*** a domain or realm where all are related and cared for equally as family.

This is a prayer that asks for ***God's*** desire and will to come to fruition on the **earth**, where we live. The implication is that it is not ***our*** desires and will that we should seek, but ***God's***.

John Dominic Crossan, in his book *"The Greatest Prayer - Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of The Lord's Prayer"* speaks about the Lord's Prayer as following in the tradition of the Hebrew scriptures, of

the Psalms and the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew prophets. But while the Psalms are prayers of *request* and *gratitude* that speak **to** God, the biblical prophets spoke words **for** God. Crossan states, "*Firmly grounded in the divine dream of Israel's Torah, the Bible's prophetic vision insists that **God demands the fair and equitable sharing** of God's world among all of God's people. In Israel's Torah, God says, 'The land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants' (Lev. 25:23). We are all tenant farmers and resident aliens in a land and on an earth not our own.*" (p.13).

Jesus passed on that divine dream of Israel's Torah in the Lord's Prayer. Crossan continues, "**Justice and righteousness**" is how the Bible, as if in a slogan, summarizes the character and spirit of God the Creator and, therefore, the destiny and future of God's created earth. It points to **distributive justice** as the Bible's radical vision of God. "Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field," mourns the prophet Isaiah, "until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land." (Is. 5:8).

In today's gospel lesson, we hear Jesus speaking in that same vein: "*Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.*" (Lk. 12:15). The parable Jesus then tells of the man, who upon an abundant harvest, decides to build larger barns to store it all in, thinking only of himself, suggests he is clearly far from the will and desire of God and the divine dream of Israel's Torah. Instead of sharing his new found wealth, he hordes it but ends up dead before he can enjoy any of it. Not unlike Isaiah's condemnation of those who think only of themselves but end up alone.

Paul's words today add to this as well. He says, "*So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*" As in the Lord's Prayer, we are called to turn from our own desires and will and take on the ways of our heavenly God, the ways of Christ. Paul then illustrates what he means, "*But now you must get rid of all such things - anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.*" (Col. 3:8-11).

The lesson for us is clear. We are not to live our lives for ourselves. Personal greed and desires for self gain and promotion are not what we are called to. The world does not belong to us, but rather, we worship a God who graciously gives us life and this planet to call our home, and thus it is something we are to care for, appreciate, love and live in harmony with, not destroy, consume or exploit for our personal satisfaction.

Finally, when we pray as Jesus would have us pray, opening within ourselves that space where the sacred and holy can come in, **we give ourselves over** to the will and desires of our God, the God of unity and harmony within all creation. Imagine how powerful our experience of prayer could become if we just did that. And when we do that, if we seriously do that, we must expect to be changed, to be moved, to be called. John Dominic Crossan says it this way, "*We pray to the God of justice to be empowered by that God for justice.*" (p. 24).

In a world and time when we are repeatedly being told to fear the stranger, to hold tight to what is "ours", to close our doors to the needy, the lost, the frightened, to think only of ourselves and our own prosperity, we must not only **pray**, but we must **act out** the prayer that we Christians say, all around this globe every single Sunday in worship, as we invite God into our presence, into our lives, into our souls, to make **God's will**, God's **Kin-dom**, our own. Amen.