



## July 27 – 5 Sentences

Last Sunday, the focus was on finding balance between the busy work of hospitality and time dwelling in the Word. If we are out of balance on either side of this continuum, we start to lose our center. If you get too busy with the work of ministry without taking time to be present with God, you start to burn out or turn resentful of less committed Christians. If you fall too far into the side of dwelling in the Word, everything becomes hypothetical exercise, and you lose your grounding in the real world.

The Gospel according to St. Luke seems to be focused in prayer. This is a motif that runs through the whole of the Gospel. This gospel writer weaves together material from multiple sources, and places prayer at the center of Jesus' teachings. As the story unfolds, prayer distinguishes the communities of faith from other groups in Acts.

This example of prayer is only five sentences. That's it, at least for the Catholic church. Many others add a 6<sup>th</sup> sentence as a benediction. This prayer is simple. Easy to memorize. And has the power to change your life.

The prayer starts with "Father." Referring to God as "Father" was common practice within the Jewish faith at the time of Jesus. In the context of this narrative, it means something quite different. Jesus consistently uses familial language to describe the relationship with God, and between God and the Church. Jesus uses both Father imagery, as well as Motherly imagery when speaking of God's relationship with humanity. It is about the relationship. I recognize not everyone has a good relationship with parents. No image covers all of reality. Here, Jesus is focused on the closeness of the relationship.

The remainder of the first two sentences remind me of a scene from "Rudy." The priest tells Rudy that there are only two incontrovertible truths: "There is a God, and I am not him." God, this heavenly being who is as close to us as a parent, is also holy. God is God. We are not. Yet, God chooses to be close to us. A choice God made, and we receive the benefit. God, and even God's name itself, is holy, and in Jesus, God's kingdom has come near. The hope is that all the world would come to honor God and establish the fullness of God's love in the world.

The last three sentences center around "us." This is first person plural. That is the most important part. This is not an "us vs. them" sort of us. It is not a private and personal sort of spirituality. These sentences focus on the fact that we are part of a fallen humanity, and we do not take this journey alone. We walk with others, from every land and race. In these petitions, we do not pray for our own personal needs alone. We pray that all humanity have these necessities.

The prayer starts with daily bread, or sustenance. Our prayer is that all of humanity, in fact, all of creation, have what it needs to survive. This is not a prayer that some have lobster while others have rice and beans. This is a prayer that all may have what is needed to thrive, knowing that without the basics of life, it is impossible to even begin to understand the concept of grace.

Next, the prayer focuses on forgiveness. This is a need, not a want. Forgiveness is powerful. It starts with the forgiveness of our own sins, and THEN moves into the forgiveness of others. If you choose a path of anger, it slowly gains power over you. Forgiveness takes work. It is difficult. Yet, it is needed. The prayer Jesus teaches serves as a reminder, if God will forgive, maybe we can too.

Last, the prayer asks that we be saved from the time of trial. Some versions of the Lord's Prayer say, "lead us not into temptation." This sounds like God would intentionally lead us into peril without our begging. Instead, we pray that God would save from from trial through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Through this work of Christ we are set free from our sins, our failures, and our shortcomings. We are set free to live into the fullness of God's love and reflect that love into the world around us.

5 sentences with the power to change lives. Amen.

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