

It can be difficult to pray in troubling times. Many are struggling with the isolation, not able to mix with others even in church as yet. And young people are dreading the future if their results are lower than expected. The Lord's prayer can be useful; there's no need to pray for hours and hours – our Lord told his disciples not to keep rattling on!

The disciples saw Jesus praying and asked him to teach them, just as other leaders taught their disciples. This is what he said:

When you pray, say:
Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation.

Surprising? It's different from our version; Luke's gospel gives this, which is from the majority of manuscripts; a few have the additions that we use; and the last part, about the power and the glory, was added later by the developing church.

Yet knowing it, I find that I can say the whole thing by rote and not concentrate on any of it! So here is a suggestion:

Just say, "Father". He has brought us into close relationship with him. Enjoy, trust his faithful love, even though we are imperfect. This is enough prayer on its own. Stop here if you wish.

"Hallowed be your name". Holy, the Lord of creation, of beauty, of the wonder of sunlight; the awe of a God who cares for each one of us. Praise and glory to him.

"Your kingdom come"; every Christian is a part of heaven on earth, spreading the love of God in their circles, offering the most precious gift – that of relationship; to the lonely, the bereaved, the poorly, and the wayward, giving them a taste of heaven.

"Give us this each day our daily bread." Food, earthly and spiritual.

"Forgive as we forgive." That's a good exchange. Who shall I forgive today? Jesus held no grudges, no debts.

"Lead us not into temptation." How easy to give up about Covid, Beirut, loss, illness. The Father's will or mine? Hold tight, for the Father's judgment of us is that he loves us.

Matthew 6 has a fuller version; the version above is from Luke 11, which encourages this simple prayer.

Returning to the simplicity of prayer
can unlock our prayers
and turn them into joy.

Notices:

There's no service this Sunday in any of our churches.
Thurs 13th, 10am Morning Prayer will be in W'by Memorial Garden
Thurs 13th, 11.30am Holy Communion in Broadwell C of G Shepherd
On Sun 23rd Aug at G'bo 9am there will be Holy Communion
Services on TV are at the normal times
For 'Summer Soaring Services' online:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuWeQd6g5n-J1FUSQQZ_XJQ

Masks. We are required to wear masks in church, **BUT**, if you are unable to wear one, for any reason, eg, asthma /breathing difficulties, then don't feel you have to, it's ok. Just keep your distance constantly (I call it the Covid-dance!)

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If you'd like a Bible study, read Romans 10: 1-15.

Some thoughts:

"The word is near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart."

Paul, as a Christian, was deeply concerned for the Jewish people, God's beloved, who had not turned to Christ Jesus.

The last chapters of the old book of Deuteronomy foretold that the Hebrew people, when they arrived in Canaan, would turn away to idols; would rebel against the Lord. But it also foretold that one day salvation would come through a Messiah. Paul quotes this, and adds, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame". And those who confess Jesus as Lord will be saved, if they believe that God raised him from the dead.

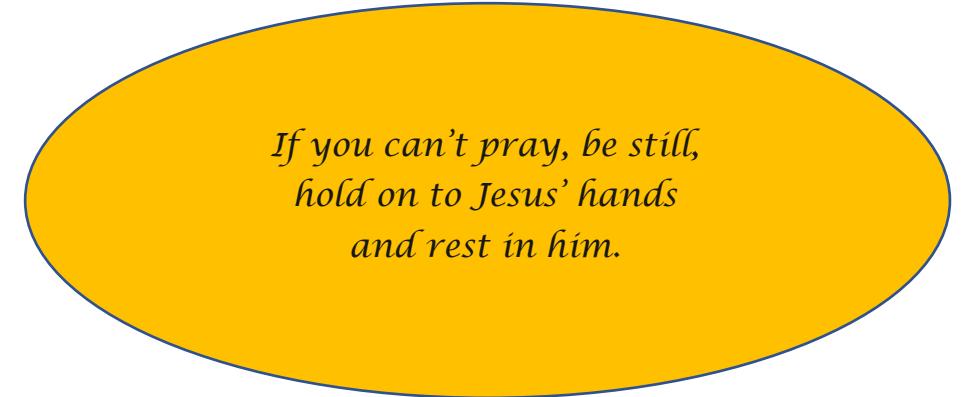
Is that 'conditional salvation'? And what does it mean to 'believe'? It's all about who is trusted, relied on. In those days, 'Lord' meant Caesar. To turn away from Caesar cost many their lives. Even so, people did turn to Jesus as Lord, and confessed him publicly at their baptism.

But what about those who haven't heard, or can't believe? It's not for us to judge, only God knows the truth in all of us. Only he can assess a person's upbringing, their genetic inheritance, their experiences in life. Some people are so broken they cannot believe. Our heavenly Father understands and has compassion.

So, what does it mean to be saved? Suppose you are drowning, and need to be saved; someone comes to rescue you and lifts you into a boat; so you are *being saved*; not yet fully saved and in your home, but getting there; so you will be saved; eventually you arrive back home and you *are saved!* It's a process.

Some evangelicals believe you are saved if you make a 3-step prayer. As though you pass an unseen barrier! How can we judge? Only God knows the state of a person's heart, and he is working to save us all. Many people believe that God can still save people even after death. He can bring people to repentance in his own way.

"Saved by faith" Paul says in his writings. Whose faith? It is Christ's faith, his faithfulness to us. We cannot make ourselves faith-full; it's a gift. Christ is the Lord of faith; he gives himself to us and we receive his faith. And he predicts that one day the Jewish people will believe too.



*If you can't pray, be still,
hold on to Jesus' hands
and rest in him.*