

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
Proper 12, Year C
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The Lord's Prayer, one of the first prayers that we teach our children; the prayer that we pray every time that we gather together to worship in community, the prayer during which we often hold hands while praying. The Lord's Prayer, a prayer that brings comfort to so many. The Lord's Prayer, a prayer that has been prayed individually and together for over 2,000 years. As one writer puts it, when we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are standing on hallowed ground.

And, so, I can't help but wonder that if we teach this prayer to our children, if this prayer is a prayer of comfort, if this prayer is included in all of our worship services, I can't help but wonder why is it that before we say this familiar and comfortable prayer, when we are in the midst of celebrating Holy Eucharist, why do we say, "and now as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are **bold** to say?" Why do we say, we are bold to say?

Now, I have heard some people respond to that question by saying that we are bold in calling God the intimate term of Abba, Father. We are bold in addressing God so intimately. Well, maybe, but I believe that the boldness goes much deeper than that. After all, through our baptisms we are adopted as children of God. Through our relationships with Jesus we are invited to address God as our Father, we are invited to this intimacy.

Bold in calling God "Father," maybe, but I believe that there is an even more significant reason why our liturgy invites us to consider ourselves to be bold each time that we say the Lord's Prayer.

Perhaps an old edition of the comic strip, "Kudzu," will help me explain why I believe that we are bold each time that we pray the Lord's Prayer. This comic strip, "Kudzu," featured a southern preacher by the name of the Rev. Will B. Dunn. I love the Rev. Will B. Dunn because he always said the most outlandish things. One time the Rev. Will B. Dunn was standing in his pulpit and he said, "Give us this day our daily carbs." He hesitated and then made a statement about how much he disliked all of these modern translations!

Give us this day our daily carbs. The comic strip was written when low-carb diets were the major diet fad so no surprise that the words “give us this day our daily bread” would have been changed in this comic strip to “give us this day our daily carbs.” It was really funny at the time but thinking about the low-carb mania of these faddish diets and applying high-carb and low-carb to the Lord’s Prayer, I have the answer to my question of why it is bold to pray the Lord’s Prayer.

The Rev. Will B. Dunn helps me understand that the reason that the word bold seems so out of place with our comfortable, familiar Lord’s Prayer is because we just might be praying the low-carb version. We just might be praying words to a prayer without really focusing on, and maybe not really meaning, the words that we pray.

If we really thought about the words, “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” would we really pray these words, or would we try the low-carb version, the version that might say something like this – thy will be done, as long as I don’t have to change, as long as I can continue to stockpile my resources even when others are in great need. Do we really want God’s will to be done in our lives, are we really willing to change?

And then how about that forgiveness part of the prayer? “Forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.” Yeah, right. I don’t know about you but I can tell you that when I think about God’s overwhelmingly generous, foolish even, forgiveness, I am nowhere near as forgiving. And do I really want to be? Or would I prefer the low-carb version, the one that says, well sure, God, please do forgive me for everything that I have already done and for those things that I have not yet done, but, gee, God, I just am not yet ready to forgive my friend, my spouse, my business associate, my child. Oh give me the low-carb version, please.

The Lord’s Prayer, words of comfort, familiar, beautiful words, yes, but also words that if we really think about them, they are words of discipleship. Words that open us up to the possibility of life transforming change. Words that when honestly prayed say that I am your disciple, God, and I will do all that I can to work for those things that you want me to work for. I will give up my very life to see that these words that I pray come to be.

When Jesus taught this prayer to his disciples the world was filled with injustice and hunger. It was a dangerous, evil world. And Jesus told his disciples to pray this prayer, not just for their comfort, but also as words that would, in a sense, be their marching orders as they went out into the world to make disciples and to make a difference. Jesus taught his disciples to pray their way into the world to fight injustice, to feed the hungry, to make the world a less dangerous, less evil world.

Jesus calls us to do the same. Jesus calls us as his disciples, to be people who will pray our way into the world to fight injustice, hunger, danger and evil. And so, if we pray this prayer, if we pray the high-carb version, we are each saying, we are each praying, as Jesus himself prayed, not my will, but your will, God. And look what happened to Jesus when he prayed those words!

The next time that you pray this prayer, and you will be given the opportunity to do so in just a few minutes, think about which version you will pray. Will it be the low-carb version that requires no boldness, or will it be the version that does indeed make us bold in praying, “thy will be done.”

Think about it and choose. One version will bring comfort and familiarity and that is a good and wonderful thing. The other version will bring life-transforming change in addition to comfort and familiarity. And that is a taste of God’s kingdom.