

## Sermons at the Anglican Church of Luxembourg

### **Sermon title: The Lord's Prayer and life in the Spirit**

#### **Text: Luke 11:1-13**

One of the gifts of a liturgical Church like the Anglican Church is the way we are offered, over a 3 year cycle, a lectionary, a course of Bible reading in our Sunday services.

Linked with the church's seasons we are offered an annual cycle that tells the whole story of God's love for the world, from the first creation to the new creation at Advent, with the events of Christmas, Holy Week and Easter, Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity

We are also invited each year to follow the story of Jesus as told by a different synoptic gospel writer in these Sunday readings: this year is the year of Luke

There is great value in this approach as it leads us to parts of the Bible we ordinarily we might not read

But it also means happy reunions with familiar passages

Here in Lk 10 & 11 in just the last few weeks that's meant probably the best known the parable of all, the Good Samaritan

And this week the best-known prayer of all: the Lord's prayer, plus some mini parables around it

Reading the Bible in this way is a bit like perhaps going to an art gallery, one you know well: there are some exciting new discoveries and then the opportunity to linger with favourite and familiar paintings

The challenge of the familiar passages is to allow them to continue to speak, to remain open to God offering fresh insights from His word – not through novelty, but by going deeper

#### *Prayer*

The gospel writers share a lot of common material about Jesus. But each one has decided to order it in a particular way or give emphasis to bring out important aspects of the multifaceted truth of God

So if you compare the teaching about the Lord's prayer and the parables we've just read you'll find both in Mt and Lk but handled differently

Mt locates them early in the Sermon on the Mount  
Lk later

Mt's account of the prayer is longer  
Lk's is shorter and with a particular emphasis in the parables about prayer

How much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask, says Mt

While Lk says: READ 11:13b

Jesus' teaching on the HS is a particular emphasis in Lk and so today I'd like us to think about this passage and what it is saying to us with this emphasis in mind: how to live life in the Spirit as individuals and as a Church

And that is an initial thing to note

Not "My Father" but "Father.." (or as Mt emphasises, "Our Father") – and then all that follows is in the plural

The prayer is given in response to a particular request: READ 11:1b

Each rabbi would give a prayer for his followers to use, shaped by his theology, his understanding of God

So here we have the theology of Jesus distilled into 7 short phrases, given first and foremost to them as a group, a community

Lets get going!

"Father in heaven.."

This life in the Spirit is first and foremost about relationship not religion, not about relating to God through rule keeping but simply as Father

Think about it for a moment, this Aramaic word "Abba"  
- a word of intimacy but not sentimentality: for that name is to be hallowed (kept holy), His will done, His kingdom come in all things

In my first parish where I was a Vicar I did lots of children's work and allowed the children to call me Geoff

After a while our two children started to see this as something they were missing out on and started to join in too

I said to them: you know dozens of children can call me Geoff, but only you two can call me Papa, Abba

In this word there is such richness

And it is the ministry of the HS to bring us to the point, as it says in Romans 8:15:

*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."*

And the second aspect of life in the Spirit builds on this fact that we are called to relationship, not rule-keeping and it is this: we are called to a life of grace

Grace is the experience of God's totally undeserved goodness and love

It is being loved without an "if"

It is the natural extension of knowing Him as Father and is experienced in really concrete and practical ways

The grk word "bread" in the Lord's Prayer basically covers all the necessities of life – grace is the deep-down knowledge that we can trust God to provide.

Yes, we are called to hard work and prudence, we may face challenges: but the ultimate responsibility is not mine but His, something only the HS can convince me of

If He gives daily bread, all we need for our bodies He also promises to give daily bread for our souls, the grace of forgiveness

(For both sorts of bread we need another grace from the Spirit, namely the perspective of the long and the deep view on life)

Living in the light and experience of God's grace to us then frees us to treat others the same way: READ v4a

And also to live in a realistic but positive way in the world around us: READ v4b

In this prayer Jesus called his followers, together and as individuals, to grace as the daily starting point for life: knowing God as Father and all that flows from that

As we live life in the Spirit from this foundation, we are given a wonderful boldness and freedom in life

And to drive the point home, Jesus told the short parables and pithy sayings we have in vv5ff

In the parable of the friend who comes at midnight we are confronted with a situation for which the host is resourceless: no bread

We often get fixed on the attitude of the initially grumpy neighbor – is God like that?

But Jesus points us away from that to the freedom or boldness of the host to ask: READ v8

He pushes the point home with the invitation to ask, seek and knock

And not in the vain hope that this might release something: READ v10

Here is the outworking of grace in our daily lives – a confidence to come to the Father in the spirit of that prayer – hallowed be your name, your kingdom come – to ask for the things of life: with trust and expectation that we will receive bread for the body, bread for the soul, for ourselves and others

Life in the Spirit begins with the awareness of God as Father and it is with a parable about fathers that our reading ends: which father would give dangerous, deceptive things in a stingy way to his child when they come with simple trust to ask for a fish or an egg?

READ v13

Why the Spirit? Because it is only as we live life in the Spirit, open ourselves to His work deep within us that we can come to the Father with such child-like trust however competent or experienced we become, however young or old we may be in natural or spiritual years, however worthy or unworthy we may feel