

Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 20, 2012

The Lord's Prayer – Cry for the Kingdom

“Lead us not into temptation; Deliver us from evil”

Our focus over these past weeks have been on the Lord's Prayer – and now we are at its end – there is no “For yours is the kingdom and the power and glory forever and ever” – that was added later in some manuscripts as a liturgical end to the prayer, but it is not found in the earliest manuscripts.

And we end this prayer praying, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

Why do we pray this? Seems odd to end this prayer in this way – *does God lead us into temptation or times of testing* (for that is what this can mean as well)?

James writes that God does not tempt us! But Matthew writes that Jesus was led into the desert after his baptism to be tested by Satan.

What is going on?

Why do we need to pray: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

– **because in praying the Lord's Prayer we are placing ourselves in harms way!**

This prayer shapes us – not just as something we merely do routinely in worship – but as a praying community we are “crying out for God's reign to be manifest in us and through us.”

In praying this prayer we are confessing that we are on God's side, working and cheering for what God is bringing about, participating with God in God's redemptive mission of bringing about God's purpose in human lives, human relationships, human communities, in all the world.

Our praying the Lord's Prayer is in direct contrast to the principalities and the powers – the same principalities and powers which Jesus disarmed and made a public spectacle of them (uncovering them, revealing them) when he was crucified.

Cf. Colossians 2:15: “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, having triumphed over them by the cross.”

What are these principalities and powers?

Jesus faced them after his baptism – tested by Satan – to compromise, align himself with the powers in order to dissuade him from his redemptive mission.

Eph 6:12, “Our struggle, our warring is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the principalities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil.”

For example, CPT is very aware of the presence of principalities and powers – placing themselves in the way of violence perpetrated by the principalities and powers.

They are the economic, political, and educational institutions, structures and bureaucracies in the world which God meant to serve humanity – but they no longer do.

Jim Wallis speaks about the “principalities and the powers” in *Agenda for Biblical People*, stating:

“Institutions, rather than functioning to serve and edify human life in the world have become distorted, usurping, dominating, and even demonic in character and function” (p. 63).

“For example, [Wallis expresses], economic institutions acts to make profit, accumulate wealth, and exploit the poor, workers, and consumers, while ravaging the environment instead of providing for the equitable distribution of goods and services.

Political institutions become the domain of the ruling classes and parties, seek to consolidate and expand their powers and control, demand conformity and acquiescence, and easily become idolatrous in their totalitarian pretensions instead of serving as forums for dialogue and participatory decision making over questions of public justice and welfare.

Educational institutions function to propagandize and socialize to prescribed social roles, grant status and credentials, and prostitute themselves to the purposes of wealth and power instead of serving as centers of learning and maturation” (p, 63).

These powers were originally created by God for the well being of human community,

They were part of God’s good creation – meant to reflect God’s creative love and will for all human society.

“However, [as Wallis states], we do not know the powers in their intended and created role. We know them in their dominion over us.

The structures of the world which were intended to be our servants have instead become our masters and our oppressors. . . .

No longer instruments of God’s love, they are in diametric opposition and rebellion to God’s will and purposes.

In fact, they have made themselves into gods (Gal. 4:8) and demand worship and absolute allegiance as objects of ultimate value and worth.

No longer agents that bind God and humanity together, they now separate and divide, standing as barriers between God and creation and between God and humanity” (p. 64-65).

Jesus came to disempower these principalities and powers – which he did by exposing them on the cross, and conquering over them through being raised from the dead.

And our praying the Lord’s Prayer, in the spirit of Jesus, is an act of confronting these powers in all of life. – which more often than not, serve purposes that are in opposition to the purposes of God;

Serving the purposes of evil, rather than the purposes of God;

We are placing ourselves in opposition to the unimpeded practice of these powers in the world – and as a result we become targets of those living under the lordship of these principalities and powers.

We become targets of the powers, targets of the purposes of evil, because we are praying – “your kingdom come, your will be done, one earth just as it is in heaven.”

And that is why we pray – *Lead us out of the time of trial and testing when we are being confronted by the temptations of the principalities and the powers; deliver us from the purposes of the evil one.*”

We ask for deliverance, to be rescued, to be saved (salvation) – not just from our sins and foibles, but for these powers not to overcome us; for us not to confront these powers alone.

We end this prayer, the way we begin it – expressing our need for God and our relationship with God.

Being in relationship with God – are the bookends of the Lord’s Prayer – we express our relationship with God, who is above all and the Creator of the universe, personally and communally.

We acknowledge our relationship with God praying, “*Our Father who is in heaven*”

And now we pray for God to be with us, to be with us *who are on earth* as we are confronted with temptations and struggles, as we struggle against the evils inherent within the principalities and powers.

We pray – for God to be with us!

Lead us not into temptation . . . is as relational as praying, “Our Father in heaven.”

We pray for God to be with us, to rescue us, and to deliver us in these times of being confronted – *Lead us not into temptation; deliver us from evil.*

The writers of Scripture knew and expressed that life has the ability to be inundated with evil, tempting us to compromise – for us to be seduced by evil, and to align ourselves with purposes contrary to God’s purposes.

And so

We pray!

We pray for God to be with us

– we who are on earth, seeking to do the will of God who is in heaven.

We pray!

We pray for protection, and we pray for deliverance, for rescue, for salvation – when we stumble.

We pray!

We pray that we might live displaying the presence of God’s reign.

We pray!

We pray for God to be with us

– for God to be with us in our times of struggling with being tempted to seek other purposes contrary to God’s

– for God to be with us when our faith is tested

– relying on God

– for God to lead us through these times of struggle, of living in opposition to the principalities and powers and those who serve them, and away from the Evil One.

We pray to bring about the reality of God's reign in all of life

– and we pray because we recognize that somehow God is bringing about God's reign in all of life **through us, God's people**

– because we are a community called to be a sign, a foretaste, and an instrument of God's present and coming reign

We pray the Lord's Prayer because we want to live this way, because in our living we are demonstrating the reality of God's reign having influence in our lives, for God's purposes to have influence in the lives of others, in the life of a community, and for God's reign to re-create the principalities and powers in order to serve humanity.

**This is why we pray – not to manipulate God,
– but we confess with God that we seek God's purpose for all creation!**

We pray because we are saying, we want to participate with God in making all things new!