

Rogation Sunday (Easter V) Sermon by Bishop Michael Hawkins

By the Right Reverend Michael W. Hawkins

Bishop of Saskatchewan

The Father himself loveth you. +

The Church embraces the season of growth, with Rogationtide on one side and Harvest Thanksgiving on the other. And we are taught in this that every endeavour is to be held together by prayer and thanksgiving to God.

We think of Prayer at this time of year ,for we are soon to remember the Ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father, where he lives to make intercession for us. We think of our farmers and of our agricultural enterprises in the spring of the year. These two come together in the various traditions of Rogationtide. Part of the true delight and the full joy of Thanksgiving is to have asked and received. That is the joy of seeing “how thy entreaties

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have been granted in what he ordaineth.” “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” That pattern of Prayer and Thanksgiving, which belongs to our Christian Year, is meant to belong to every Christian Day. Jesus taught and commanded us to pray for our daily bread. That prayer is a daily prayer, and it is one of the first steps in any Christian discipline to make the Lord’s Prayer our daily prayer. By his frequent example, Jesus taught us to give thanks for our daily bread as well, and it is most basic to godliness that we acknowledge and thank the Giver of our Daily Bread. The daily prayer life of every Christian must centre around the prayer Jesus taught, and the breaking of bread with glad and generous hearts. The Lord’s Prayer and Grace at Meals are the centre of a Christian home, and I commend them both to you in the name of Jesus, and with the full authority of his own words and example.

It is the Prayer of asking or of intercession or petition or supplication that we think of at this time of year. Our prayer as

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Christians is normally offered up to the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. That is, we are led to prayer and in prayer by the Holy Spirit, and it is through Jesus, for Jesus' sake and trusting in his merits, that we pray to God the Father. In Christian prayer, we are taken up into the life of God himself. Christian prayer is the expression in words of our being sons and daughters of God. Christian prayer is supremely the Lord's Prayer. It is the prayer of those who, by the Holy Spirit and through Jesus Christ, know the Father, our Father, and come to Father and seek the Father's honour and will and bread and forgiveness and kingdom and glory.

Christian Prayer is also the Lord's Prayer, for whenever we pray, it is Jesus praying in us. The head is one with the body. We do not separate the head from the body. We always say, "Our Father" with him, "thy will be done," with him, "forgive," with him. And when we pray, we pray to Jesus, for we do not separate the Son

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from the Father. He is God of God. And when we pray, we pray through Jesus, who is our only and true high Priest.

1. Jesus prays for us. 2. Jesus prays in us. 3. Jesus prays with us.
4. We pray to Jesus. 5. And we pray through Jesus.

The call to prayer today from Jesus is perfectly matched by James' call to action: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." James points out the difficulty we have in taking God's word to heart and fulfilling it in our lives. There is this chasm between what we hear and what we do. There is this scandalous discord between the nobility of our Creed and the depravity of our Deed. Prayer, and the grace of God which comes by it, is the bridge by which these two may be powerfully connected. Saint James says that the problem with you and me is that we are forgetful hearers. If you look for a definition of prayer in that Epistle, what is it? Prayer is remembering. And isn't this exactly how we commonly speak?

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We say, “I will remember you in my prayers.” We are the forgetful ones. We forget, God doesn’t forget. We forget our own faults. We forget the needy and the poor and the neglected. We forget the love of God and the Cross of Christ.

There are two common misunderstandings about prayer, which we must face. 1. Prayer is not about letting God know what’s going on in the world, in our neighbourhood, church, families and lives. Jesus says, “Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.” Christian prayer is about reforming our knowledge, about our remembering, not about God’s remembering. 2. Christian prayer is not about trying to convince God to be gracious and loving. Jesus tells us that he will not beg God on our behalf. Why? Because “the Father himself loveth you.” Prayer is about embracing God’s will, not about bringing him around to ours. We pray always, in the end, “Thy will be done.”

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Jesus assures us, “the Father knoweth”, and “the Father loveth”. To think about prayer in terms of the knowledge and love of God is very helpful, then. Our prayer, whether of silence or sighs or words, is to be, and to be brought into, and to bring others into, the knowledge and love of God. We relate all things to his knowledge and love.

“Be careful about nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Keep those texts then before you. “Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.” “The Father himself loveth you.” Our peace, the peace of the children of God, is to rest in the knowledge and love of God the Father.

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So we ask in Jesus' name. And what has he taught us to ask for? Our daily bread, forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is the expression in words of our being sons and daughters of God. We are assured that the Father himself loves us, that we are never alone, but that he is with us. We know that fullness of joy, and we receive the peace of Christ, which is to joyfully share in his victory. We seek and receive the grace - that strength and help of God - whereby we may not only hear and think and love those things that are good, but may also perform the same through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.