



THINK ON THESE THINGS..... (our contributor this morning is Tony Wilson)

Reading: Luke 11:1

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Reflection:

Many people find prayer difficult. I admit I'm one of them. It's clear from our reading that even Jesus' disciples didn't find prayer easy. So, one of them asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus must have prayed with the disciples on many occasions. If the Lord's Prayer, which immediately follows our reading, is anything to go by, it's likely that these regular prayers would have been simple. They would have concentrated mainly on basic essential matters, and would not have been very lengthy.

The Lord's Prayer has come down to us in three different versions. The first is in St. Matthew's Gospel (6:9-13). This is the version usually used in worship. The second is in St. Luke's Gospel (11:2-4). This is a shorter version with several of the petitions from Matthew's version omitted. The third is found in a first century Christian book not found in the New Testament, known as The Didache (8:2). This version is very similar to Matthew's, but is the first to include the closing doxology with which the prayer is usually concluded.

With three different independent traditions of the wording of the Lord's Prayer, it's difficult to claim that any form of wording for it is definitive. I can easily imagine early Christians praying simply on the basic essentials that Jesus had taught them to pray about, using words similar but not necessarily identical to the Lord's Prayer as we now know it. This was probably a good thing, as repeated use of well-loved wordings does sometimes mean people are not fully thinking about the words they are saying.

So, for us, it's all too easy to say the Lord's Prayer from memory without actually concentrating on what the words really mean. One church I used to attend sometimes used paraphrases of the Lord's Prayer. This was to encourage the congregation to concentrate on the meaning of the prayer, rather than just reciting the words automatically. I've chosen one of these paraphrases as today's special prayer. You might like to think about using it sometimes in your own prayers, or finding something similar, such as a meditation on the Lord's Prayer, from a book of prayers.

Breath-Prayer for Today:

Life giver, pain bearer, love maker, source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, loving God, in whom is heaven. The hallowing of your name echo through the universe. The way of your justice be followed by all peoples of the world. Your heavenly will be done by all created beings. Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever, Amen