



**Resources for a Quiet Day taking the theme of
The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name

You will have prayed the Lord's Prayer countless times over the years, but I wonder whether you have ever paused at the end of the first line to ask yourself what the word 'hallow' means. What might it look like to be 'hallowed'?

Let me tell you a story – a story about a man named Trevor Huddleston. Trevor was a member of the monastic community at Mirfield in Yorkshire, and at the time of this story he was living and ministering in South Africa during the apartheid era. Trevor was appalled at the way the dominant culture of the time discriminated against those of colour, failing to recognize the infinite value of each individual created in the image of God. And so, as he saw a woman of colour walking towards him in the street one day hand in hand with her child, he subverted the norm and doffed his hat to her. This seemingly small gesture was a radical act for a white man in apartheid South Africa – so radical that when that child became an adult he spoke of that fleeting encounter between his mother and the white priest in his black cassock as being the most defining moment of his life. A moment that set the direction of travel his life would take. That child, of course, was Desmond Tutu.

The encounter was so significant for him because in the act of doffing his hat, Trevor Huddleston hallowed the young Desmond and his mother. He honoured them in a culture that seemed to deny the divine spark that was within them.

There is the essence of hallowing – simply to honour something, or someone, as holy.

We are called to hallow, and to allow ourselves to be hallowed.

We are called to look at God's world and to see afresh that original blessing, just as God in Genesis looked at his creation and saw that it was good.

How might you hallow those around you over the coming days?

How might God hallow you?

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven

I wonder if you have ever heard the musical composition, *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*. It's a wonderful and poignant piece recorded in 1971. In it we hear the voice of an elderly homeless man who was discovered sleeping rough near Waterloo Station. A jazz composer named Gavin Bryars walked past, heard him singing, and asked his permission to record him and set the words to music.

It's a work which finds its way into the listener's heart as we hear the voice of a man living in challenging circumstances but holding on to hope.

Whenever I hear this song I'm reminded of my friend James.

James is homeless for a whole host of complicated reasons that I won't go into now. He abides in the city centre with his sleeping bag, his dog, and a small collection of possessions which include several pairs of socks gifted to him by a local charity and which he prefers to cherish rather than to wear.

James and I spend half an hour together each Wednesday in the quiet before the cathedral becomes too busy, and it's one of my favourite times of the week. We enjoy a chat over a coffee and a bacon butty and then James sits by the tomb of St Cuthbert to pray all the prayers that people have left with him over the past few days. He prays each and every one of them. And then he lights a candle, waves me a cheerful farewell, prays a blessing on everyone who will visit the cathedral over the coming days, and returns to a doorway somewhere in the city centre.

James is for me a glimpse of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. The embodiment of a man living in challenging circumstances, holding on to hope.

Pope Francis rather famously said, 'I prefer a Church that is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.'

I rather like that. For we are called to embrace a spirit of divine discontent and longing that doesn't settle for what is, but joyfully hopes for what will be.

The hope of a kingdom that is and is yet to come.

Look closely. Can you see it?

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven

Give us today our daily bread

I don't know about your experience of lockdown during the pandemic, but the life of our household seemed to revolve around baking – and, in particular, baking bread.

It became fiercely and hilariously competitive, beginning with simple loaves and all of a sudden moving to wonderful creations of focaccia, polish bagels, tiger bread, dosa, babka and brioche!

We were, of course, in good company as for thousands of years bread has been the staple food of the western world – so much so that it is even written into the phrases we use. We speak of the main wage earner in a household as the 'breadwinner'. For a time it was even trendy to refer to money as 'dough'.

The narrative of bread runs throughout scripture too – from the last supper, to the compelling language of St John's gospel speaking of Christ as 'the bread of life', to God providing Manna in the wilderness.

And its Manna that I think provides the real insight here, because it was given abundantly for the day – but only for the day. God's people were only permitted to gather what was needed for that time, not to store or hoard or save it for a later date. They had to learn not to be greedy, to grab, to want to own or possess or find security in material things. They were called to learn what 'enough' looked like and to trust God for the rest, to discover what they needed to sustain them for the day and to be satisfied with that.

It's a lesson I'm constantly reminded of in my current work with pilgrims because when you're walking many miles, you don't want to carry the unnecessary weight of extra baggage.

To be a pilgrim is to learn what you need to sustain and nourish you for the day, and it is to learn to let go of the rest – for all is gift. As scripture reminds us, 'all things come from you and of your own do we give you' (1 Chronicles 29:14).

So here with a few questions to ponder.

What do you need to sustain you in your pilgrimage with God?

And what might you need to let go of?

Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

Durham Cathedral is famous for many things and one of them is its sanctuary ring. Clearly visible on the north door, it is striking in appearance and in stature, depicting the head of a lion devouring a man whose legs are being eaten by snakes! This rather alarming image evokes the concept of 'Hellmouth', popular in medieval times – and it has played a significant role in shaping the identity of the cathedral over the years.

The sanctuary ring was created to help those who had committed a great offence, and individuals who had done so would travel to Durham to grasp the ring in order to be granted thirty seven days of sanctuary within the monastery. This was a gift of time to wrestle with their own conscience before God and to decide whether to seek to reconcile with those they had harmed, to face the force of the law, or to flee in exile to another country. The hope was that those who had committed an offence could be honest before God, gain a deeper understanding of themselves, and move forward in hope.

Wrestling with ourselves before God is of course not something distinct to sanctuary seekers in medieval Durham. Think of Jacob by the river Jabbok as he wrestled all night with an angel and came away both wounded and blessed. His old identity as deceiver and supplanter was no more, and he was renamed and reborn.

We will all know something of that wrestling with ourselves before God, because part of the mystery of being human is that we make mistakes. We don't always get things right – and neither do those around us, and neither does the church. Sometimes we might feel as if we are wrestling with all that before God too.

Getting things wrong is a given. How we respond to it is a choice we can make.

There are two Greek words for forgiveness – the first (*sygchoresis*) is made up of the prefix for being with and making room for something; the second (*afesis*) simply means to let go.

To make room and to let go.

I wonder if you are holding on to frustrations with others that you need to let go of in order to see the image of God clearly within them once more.

I wonder whether you are being hard on yourself, clinging to the disappointment you feel at times when you have fallen short. Can you let go so that God can be at work in you anew?

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

Now and forever. Amen.

I wonder if you can remember your first love?

I don't mean by this the boy or girl you shyly held hands with in the playground at school. I mean your relationship with God – the love that knew you before you were born and that has held you ever since. Your first love.

I mention this simply because so many of us neglect that relationship amidst the demands of daily life and the various calls on our attention – not on purpose, but by accident. Distance creeps up on us and the relationship becomes stale.

The saddest words in the whole of scripture (in my humble opinion!) are uttered by God to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when he asks the question, 'Where are you?' because their relationship has been neglected, fractured, and they are hiding. Hiding from the one who created them and loved them into being.

Don't let God ever need to ask that question of you.

Attend to the relationship with the one who has called you. Attend to it with every fibre of your being. For we are called to tell the story of God's love – and we can't tell that story if we aren't living it.

St Claire of Assisi rather wisely said this: 'We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become'.

Dwell with that for a moment.

How might you attend to your first love, so that you can become even more abundantly the person that God calls you to be?

Now and for ever. Amen.