

I speak to you in the name of our Creator, the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Did anyone hear Blaine read the Lord's Prayer in our Gospel today and wonder where the rest of it was? This is one of the reasons I am such a Bible geek, and I love scripture so much. The Bible is much deeper and wider than we often think. It is a wonderful collection of writings from a diverse group of people who are writing about their experience of God in their time and place. There are many perspectives within the Bible. The four gospels give four different perspectives. As you can see from your leaflet insert this morning the Lord's Prayer in Matthew is quite different from the version we heard from Luke today.

A quick note on Greek Texts. They are not all created equally! There is no one Greek New Testament on which translations are based. There are compiled texts which are edited from **many** manuscripts. There are over 5800 manuscripts of the New Testament. Of course, the vast majority of these are fragments. The three most common compilations are:

- The Textus Receptus which the King James Version is translated from. There are no manuscripts earlier than the 12th century! This isn't good as the older the text, the more reliable it is.
- The Majority Text which uses the text in the majority of manuscripts. This is a problem because there are way more later manuscripts than early ones, so that math skews the data to the latest manuscripts.
- The Critical Text which the NRSV is translated from. This relies heavily on the earliest texts, some as early as the 2nd century. This compilation is edited by many scholars who are experts in Biblical texts. It is often updated as new information or scholarship comes to light. We are currently working from the 28th edition. I've brought mine with me today so you can have a look at it during coffee time.

The Lord's Prayer is a great example of what happens when only the latest manuscripts are used to create the Greek text. The middle column is the Lord's prayer in Luke from the New King James Version. As you can see it has four additions to the prayer in the New Revised Standard Version in the right column. This shows that later scribes didn't like that the two prayers, Matthew's and Luke's, weren't the same. They believed that there should be just one prayer that Jesus taught, therefore it should be the same. This is called harmonization. But here's the thing, Jews, then and now, use many phrases in their prayers which can be mixed and matched according to the occasion. So, the prayers in Matthew and Luke are not two versions of one prayer but two collections of one-line prayers or petitions. This is supported by the fact that the two prayers have two different contexts. In Matthew, the Lord's Prayer is bookended with instruction on private virtue versus public virtue and the need to forgive others. The Lukan prayer on the other hand, responds to the specific request of the disciples to teach them to pray, as John taught his disciples. This is John the Baptist, who looked forward to a cleansing or baptism in or by the Holy Spirit and it ends with the promise that the Holy Spirit **will** be given.

I'm sure you are also wondering about the debts and sins difference. The Greek word for debts has a few meanings, one of which is a moral debt. "Sins" in Luke is the more common Greek term for sin: missing the mark, a moral failure.

"Debts" emphasizes justice and restoration.

- We owe God and others something: love, mercy, truthfulness.
- It frames sin not just as wrong-doing but as a failure to give what is due—to God, to neighbour, and to ourselves.
- Forgiveness then becomes a release from the crushing weight of what we owe. It's a beautiful image of grace.

"Sins" emphasizes personal and relational failure.

- It highlights our brokenness and the ways we fall short of God's holiness.
- Forgiveness here becomes a healing of relationship, a reconciliation.

Now you may be wondering why in one version of the prayer, the one that uses the formal "thy" language, the word trespasses is used. It's an odd word, isn't it? The Greek word translated as trespasses doesn't actually occur in the prayer itself, but is in the verses immediately following the prayer in Matthew:

"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt 6:14–15)

It's also in our reading from Colossians today:

"And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands." (Col 2:13–14)

The Greek word means something like, a stumbling aside, a false step, a trespass, fault, offence, or transgression.

So now, if you turn your handout over, you will see that Rabbi Gottlieb Klein suggests that Jesus is probably thinking about Ezekiel 36 when he teaches his disciples to pray. Klein shows how the different parts of the Lord's Prayer, line up with what's in Ezekiel 36, especially the part about asking for the Holy Spirit.

The knowledge of all this has given me permission to write my own version of the Lord's Prayer. It goes like this:

Our Creator, ground of all being, holy is your name.
May your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us.
May your will be done, throughout all your creation.
Give us today what we need for *this* day.
Forgive us our failings and shortcomings,
and help us to forgive those who have harmed us.

Save us from trials too hard for us and deliver us from evil.
May you reign in the kingdom, the power,
and the glory of your love, now and for ever. Amen.

And now you are wondering what's this bit about asking for the Holy Spirit. Well, there is a little-known variant in the Lord's Prayer in Luke which replaces "your kingdom come" with a request for the Holy Spirit to come and cleanse us. We have two manuscripts which have survived the ravages of time. MS 700 from the 11th century reads: "May your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us," and MS 162 which is from the middle of the 12th century does not have "upon us" and reads: "May your Holy Spirit come and cleanse us." While the surviving manuscripts are late as far as biblical manuscripts go, and I have just said, the earlier the manuscript the better, we do have **much** earlier references to the variant in manuscripts now lost to us, namely, Tertullian, from the 2nd century, Gregory of Nyssa from the 4th century, and Maximus the Confessor from the 7th century. Gregory is very clear that the variant exists when he writes:

"Perhaps the same thought is expressed more clearly for us by Luke, who, when he desires the Kingdom to come, implores the help of the Holy Spirit. For so he says in his Gospel; instead of 'Thy Kingdom come' it reads 'May thy Holy Spirit come upon us and purify us.' ... For what Luke calls the Holy Spirit, Matthew calls the Kingdom"

The phrase "May your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us" clearly assigns the act of cleansing from sin to the Holy Spirit. Gregory of Nyssa argues this when identifying the operation of each person of the Trinity regarding sin; "the Father forgives sins, the Son takes away the sins of the world, and the Holy Spirit cleanses from the stains of sin those in whom he dwells." He further states that, "the proper power and virtue of the Holy Spirit is precisely to cleanse sin." That's worth pausing on. The Spirit doesn't just hover near us—She takes up residence within us. And from that intimate indwelling, Gregory says, flows the Spirit's "proper power and virtue": to cleanse sin at the root. This isn't about shame. It's about transformation. The Holy Spirit doesn't accuse us, she cleanses us. She doesn't condemn us, she renews us from the inside out. And friends, isn't that what we long for? Not just to be forgiven, but to be made new.

The psalmist today pleads with God to "revive us again, so that your people may rejoice in you. Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation." I met God when I was just 9 years old in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the 70s and 80s. My parents started an interdenominational prayer group on Friday nights in our home. We experienced some amazing things. The veil was very thin, and we encountered the Triune God in deeply transformative ways. God's Holy Spirit was moving across the globe with renewal and revival breaking out within many different denominations and countries. It was experienced here in St. Mary's in the 80s and 90s. Anyone who was a part of our Friday night prayer group has yearned for another renewal. But we have all learned that you can't manufacture it, and you can't force the Holy Spirit's hand. My folks and I have been praying for decades now and I had begun to think that it wouldn't happen again in my lifetime. But that has changed in the past year,

particularly the last 6 months. We are seeing and hearing evidence of the Spirit's work once again across denominations and countries. The momentum is picking up. Many of my fellow clergy are no longer speaking about the decline of the church, but growth and renewal. It's happening right here in St. Mary's!

In the psalm the result of God's revival is that "steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other." That's one of my favourite lines from the psalms. How we long for that right now. The world needs steadfast love, mercy, faithfulness, righteous and peace. And the only way that will happen is through the cleansing and transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Our desires for power, control, security, and prosperity must be transformed into a desire to seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. To care for the widow and orphans, those in need and on the margins. To love our neighbour as Jesus commanded us.

Jesus promises his disciples and therefore us, that "Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." I know that it doesn't seem like that sometimes, and honestly that's another sermon, or a long chat over coffee. What I do know is that when you seek God's face, you will encounter God. The Triune God, Three in One, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or if you prefer, Creator, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit.

We've been hearing and perhaps singing the song *Restore Us Again* during communion the past few weeks when I have been with you. I invite you to read and if you are comfortable sing along with Rachel and Joel today.

Restore us again, God of our salvation, Revive us again in Your unfailing love
Holy Spirit bring us life once again, Holy Spirit lead our hearts back to You.

But I have to warn you, if you ask for God to restore and revive, and the Holy Spirit to come, watch out! Be prepared to be transformed. To be healed, to be made whole.

Come Holy Spirit come! May it be so!

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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A comparison of the Lord's Prayer as found in Matthew, later manuscripts of Luke which show harmonization with Matthew's Prayer, and in early manuscripts of Luke.

Matthew 6:9–13 (NRSV)	Luke 11:2–4 (NKJV) Harmonized with Matthew	Luke 11:2–4 (NRSV) (earliest manuscripts)
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.	Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name.	Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.	Your kingdom come.	Your kingdom come. (or “May your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us”)
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.	Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.	
Give us this day our daily bread.	Give us day by day our daily bread.	Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.	And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.	And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,	And do not lead us into temptation,	And do not bring us to the time of trial.
but rescue us from the evil one.	But deliver us from the evil one.	

The Lord's Prayer

Compare with Ezekiel 36:23–31

Rabbi Gottlieb Klein suggests that Jesus is probably thinking about Ezekiel 36 when he teaches his disciples to pray. Klein shows how the different parts of the Lord's Prayer, whether in Matthew or Luke, line up with what's in Ezekiel 36, especially the part about asking for the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 36	The Petitions of the Lord's Prayer
23: I will sanctify my great name	Hallowed be your name
24: And I will take you from the nations and gather you from all countries	Let your kingdom come
25–27: I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.	Your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us.
26b: I will remove from your body the heart of stone	Deliver us from evil
28: and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.	Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
29b–30: I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field abundant	Give us each day our daily bread
31: Then you shall remember your evil ways, and your dealings that were not good; and you shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds.	And forgive us our sins