

My Father

Who art in Heaven

Hallowed, holy, be Your Name.

*Your Kingdom come
And Your will be done
In me – as they are in Heaven.*

*Give me this day my daily bread
And meet all my needs.*

And

*Forgive me my sins, trespasses
As I forgive those who sin against me.*

*And lead me
Take me by the hand
And lead me*

Not into temptation but deliver me from evil.

*For Thine is the Kingdom
Thine is the Power
And Thine is the Glory*

Forever and forever.

AMEN.

May I begin by putting your minds at ease! “Janet’s Journey with Jesus” is only covering one specific aspect of the last 4½ years – not the whole of my life!

I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but our God is a God of variety. You’ve only got to look around creation – think of flowers, trees, hills, valleys, animals, birds etc. I mean, who knew there were THAT many shades of green.....Emma!! In fact you’ve only got to look around this room to see variety! There’s no “one size fits all” as far as God is concerned. We are all uniquely made as He formed us and so we can come to Him in prayer in different ways and, indeed, in different seasons of our lives.

A bit of background - we arrived in Malvern in 2001 – little knowing all that lay ahead. For me – 2015 was a huge year in my life! My husband retired and left and in September 2017 our divorce came through. Needless to say those were difficult years and I found comfort and strength in praying the Lord’s Prayer every morning. I discovered a fresh way of praying that prayer and that’s what I’d like to share with you.

I would stand at the end of my bed and ever so slightly change the words, making it my prayer to my Heavenly Father. But I wouldn’t just speak it – movement was involved as well. I was reminded of the Jews when they pray have different positions and movements. Psalm 28:2 – Hear the voice of my supplication, as I cry to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. And Psalm 134:2 – Lift up your hands to the holy place, and bless the Lord.

And in the New Testament Timothy in his first letter [2:8] writes: “In every place of worship, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God.....”

And this is what I started to do – but not just leave them there. I discovered a way, which for me, became very meaningful. This well-known prayer that I’d known since childhood I began to pray slowly and thoughtfully – relating each phrase to where I was on my journey at any given time.

PRAY IT

Some words of explanation:

- *My Father – I am His Child – His Daughter – precious to Him.*
- *Give me this day my daily bread – at that point I didn’t know about finance and what was going to happen – but I knew God would provide food for my table and a roof over my head.*
- *Lead me – through separation, divorce, the sale of the house and to a flat God had in mind for me. And I went to look at so many that weren’t in His mind!*
- *AMEN – sometimes use the sign of the Cross. I came across this little book when my dad died. As a boy he had been brought up in a very high Anglican Church and when he was confirmed in 1928 he had been given this book – “Before the Altar”. One day I was looking through it and came across a paragraph. “The Sign of the Cross, made first on us in Holy Baptism, may often be made on themselves with profit by Christians..... that they may show that, with St. Paul, they do not glory in anything but the Cross of Christ, whence are derived all our hopes for mercy, help and salvation.”*

Gal. 6:14 May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. By doing that I was covering myself with that cross.

- *You’ll notice that space and silence are important. There’s a lovely word in the Bible – “Selah”. It’s mentioned 71 times in Psalms and 3 times in Habakkuk. One interpretation says that the word ‘selah’ comes from the primary Hebrew root ‘salah’ which means ‘to hang’ or ‘to measure (weigh)’. To pause, to consider.*

Well, there is, of course that famous Chinese Proverb: “I hear - and I forget. I see – and I remember. I do - and I understand.”

So, I would invite you, as I PRAY the prayer again – maybe to close your eyes so it becomes your response to your Heavenly Father and you’re not aware of those around you. Sit in a comfortable position – or stand as I had felt right to do so in the presence of my God and Father.

Can I just say also, that for some the thought of moving arms around may well be a turn-off. If that’s you, then please echo the phrases of this prayer in your heart, without the movement, but being mindful of the words and the pauses.

PART 2

Last September I discovered, what was for me, a new way of praying. Now it may be that for some here this isn't new – so please bear with me!

I was reading Matt. 6:6 where Jesus gives instructions on prayer: “But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Well, I already had such a room as a short while before this my spiritual mentor suggested that I create a sacred space in my bedroom – so that became the place I went to pray.

As I munched and mediated, ruminated, on that verse I was also aware, by courtesy of YouVersion.com and BibleGateway.com that some versions translate this as “go into your inner room”. That got me intrigued and I looked that phrase up in the NT Greek lexicon.

NT Greek lexicon: “eiselthe eis to tameion sou” – enter into the room of you. The word ‘tameion’ – innermost, hidden, secret room.

This was like a breath of fresh air because, for me, it took it out of the realm of my physical sacred space [although that was where I was] and into my very being itself.....my inner room – where God lives – God's space in each of us. Since giving my life to God in 1965 I have always been taught that you can pray to God anytime, anywhere – and, of course, I take my inner room with me wherever I go!!

All this is background to say that I then heard an invitation - “Come”. It reminded me of this, Rublev's famous Icon “The Holy Trinity” or “The Hospitality of Abraham” and Paul has kindly provided this for us this evening. Father, Son and Holy Spirit and we are invited to Come into that space at the front – sit with Father, Son and Holy Spirit – be with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But my experience was a corridor! In my mind and my heart I responded to that invitation and in my Ignatian imagination I began walking down that corridor.

Corridor – door on left –very tentatively I opened that door and peeped in – that room was so bright and it contained three comfy chairs. I was aware of the presence of Jesus on one of the chairs but, of course, the Trinity, although Three, are also One – not to be separated. I was invited to sit and join this Awesome Threesome! I was aware of being warmly welcomed as a daughter of my Father, a sister to my brother Jesus, (Rom. 8:29 and Heb. 2:11) a member of the family as the Holy Spirit drew me in. No words were spoken - we just sat – chilled out together. But I did experience feelings, probably more than anything else that first time, of acceptance, love, peace, restoration, renewing – God was happy I was there – and so was I!

As I sat there a Noel Richards song of 1991 came into my mind:

*To be in Your presence,
to sit at Your feet,
Where Your love surrounds me,
And makes me complete:
This is my desire, O Lord,*

This is my desire.

*To rest in Your presence,
Not rushing away.
To cherish each moment
Here I would stay:*

*This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.
This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.*

Noel Richards © 1991 Kingsway's Thankyou Music

It is a place of intimacy with God. A number of years ago the pastor and author Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote these words: "Consider with what rash hastiness, unprepared thoughts, preoccupied minds and unexamined lives we often rush into God's presence.....and out again." And I would say -Let's learn to linger longer!

Through the Prayer Course we've been doing we've spent some time listening to God for words and pictures. We can do that again in the next few moments – or we can simply "BE" with God.

I'd invite you again to sit comfortably and hear Jesus invitation - "Come". Walk down your corridor and open the door. As you enter that bright room be aware of the chairs and the presence of God. Hear the invitation to sit and then cherish the time you are there. Our Heavenly Father is calling us deeper - into Him.

PART 3

So, we come back to the corridor! I never rush down this corridor. I know that I am meeting God in that room and so this is a time for preparation, for getting myself into a place to be ready as far as is possible to come into His presence.

Well last September the invitation “Come” came often over the next couple of days when Jesus and I would just sit – be -- together. Anyway, a couple of days later the invitation came again - so I walked down the corridor, turned left and entered the room. The three chairs were there as usual and I was invited to sit, as usual. A few moments of silence passed and then I was aware of being asked a question.....who did I specifically want to bring to Jesus at this precise moment. This was easy, I knew straight away! This person I was thinking of has been on my heart and in my prayers for a few years in their struggle.

An instruction came - go and bring them to bring them to ME. I left the room, walked back down the corridor and met the person. Together we walked back up the corridor and into the room. This loved one was invited to take a seat. I sat down and there was silence. I was then aware of Jesus’ eyes meeting mine and those eyes said ‘Go’. I left the room and that precious person with Jesus. I could have prayed – and indeed had prayed many words with that person in mind - - now they were in Jesus presence – with Him and He knew the whole picture.

My task was done. I had simply brought someone to Jesus for Him to begin the work of the Godhead within that person’s life.

I was reminded of reading something years ago about Bishop Michael Maddocks, who began The Acorn Christian Healing Foundation. When he prayed he would simply ask God to meet with the person at the point of their deepest need. Surely only God Himself knows that of each one of us. We may know in part, the person themselves may know in part – God knows fully.

And, of course, it’s possible to pray this way, not only for individuals but also for organisations, towns, cities, countries into that room. Just as an aside - it can become a bit crowded at times and you need more chairs! But somehow that room expands!

I wonder who is on your heart to bring to Jesus. Let’s close our eyes and in some moments of silence bring that person, persons, situation – or even ourselves - directly into the presence of God. Maybe we can walk down that corridor again, into the room and into God’s presence. Whoever – whatever is on your heart simply bring that person, situation - or yourself - to God, trusting He will begin or continue His work at the point of deepest need.