

Call to Worship – St Patrick's Breastplate

I arise today through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness of the Creator of creation.
I arise today through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom.
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of Him,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of Him,
Christ in every eye that sees Him, Christ in every ear that hears Him.

Song – In Christ alone

1. In Christ alone my hope is found; He is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace when fears are stilled, when strivings cease;
my Comforter, my All in All; here in the love of Christ I stand.
2. In Christ alone who took on flesh; fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness scorned by the ones He came to save;
'til on that cross as Jesus died the wrath of God was satisfied;
for every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.
3. There in the ground His body lay; Light of the world by darkness slain.
Then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
for I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ!
4. No guilt in life, no fear in death; this is the power of Christ in me.
From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from His hand;
'til He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Prayer of confession

Father Almighty, King of the universe, we turn our thoughts and our hearts to you.
We bless you, and we give you thanks for your glory. We praise you for your great love, and
your exceeding grace to us through your son Jesus.
We give thanks to you Jesus for your sacrifice, for making a way for us to return to the
Father. You alone have the words of eternal life. We rely on you.

Spirit of Life, you we give you all praise. Shape our hearts and minds, speak to us, teach us, and bring us into all truth.

Lord, we confess our need for you. So often we have failed to live we should. We fall short of your desire to live as your children and within your will. We sin in what we've done, and what we've failed to do. Have mercy on us, forgive us, and restore us.

Assurance of Forgiveness

By the spirit that raised Christ from the dead, I proclaim the forgiveness of your sins, won by His precious blood. Go and live in his peace and his truth.

Bible reading

- Matthew 6:5-14

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

"This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Message

I'm reminded of the old hymn -

*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!*

Prayer is the greatest privilege of the Christian life. That by Jesus precious blood he has made a way to the Father, cancelling our debts, so that we can at any time come before the Almighty God, fully justified. What a wonderful gift!

What's more, we have privileged access to the father. We have the access of Jesus – of God's beloved Son – an all areas back stage pass. God's heavenly throne room has become our living room – at any time we can enter in and speak with him. We belong there, the way a child belongs in their home.

Brothers and sisters, make good use of your privilege. We shouldn't need encouragement to do so.

The Lord's Prayer

Today we're digging into Jesus teaching on prayer. Now this was marked by two fundamental characteristics – intimacy and privacy. Now Jesus modelled this countless times – he would stop his ministry, go off by himself and seek God in private prayer. He was singular in His focus, in his passion for intimacy and union with the Father.

What can we draw from this? It's that before anything we need intimacy with God – it should be our #1 priority. We need to come before our Father privately, one on one, because God wants all of our attention. He wants quality time with his children, him and you, no distractions.

Those of you who are parents – you understand this. How do you want your children to approach you? You want them to just come to you when they need help, to be simple and authentic and straightforward. You want them to approach you in the sure knowledge that they are wanted. God is the same – like a father, he wants to affirm us and strengthen us, and orient us to the world. Like a mother, he wants to console us, reassure us, love us into peace. He needs our undivided attention for that.

So go get alone with God. Get intimate. Stay simple.

Recently I sat under a great preacher who got me thinking about the Lord's prayer not just as a guide to prayer but as a guide to us. What are we like? What are our real needs? These are important questions that for the most part we overcomplicate. We get anxious – we stress about what God wants for us. Well, that's ok, the answer is right here in the Lord's prayer. The prayer that he wants us to repeat every day. The prayer that focuses us, that tells us what God wants us to reach out after and set our hearts on. That's some assurance.

So it starts with Abba father. And my mind immediately goes to Romans 8:14-17.

“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” NIVUK

We cry abba, father! We belong in the household of the Lord. We need our daddy. The holy of holies has become our living room, our place of safety. Abba, father – imagine a child rushing into the room, bringing the business of their lives to their loving parent. Abba father, look what I found. Abba father, I'm hurting. Abba father, he was mean to me. You know a loving father lets his children take liberties with him. God certainly does.

First and foremost we need our Abba. We need to found our identity on him. We need to know in Jesus, as sons, we can come straight into his presence - let everything unimportant fall by the wayside. We need to know how crazy God is about us, how he loves us like the first flush of love we experience for our children. We need intimacy with the Father.

Hallowed be your name.

Triumphant over the whole of creation is the name of God which is the character and the power of God. He is the utmost in purity and holiness. We adore God in his true glory, his true majesty, in the wonder of his mercy and his love. Over and beyond this broken wreck

of a world is a God who is holy and good. That means that we have hope. That means humanity has hope.

What's more, that's our family name now. Think of the name of God as like a banner, proclaiming who he is to the whole world – a good, pure and wonderful Saviour. We stand under that banner because we belong to it. We receive God's name, and reflect it to the world – that's true hallowing. We identify with his goodness, and that changes us.

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

This is where we set our hearts. Seek first the kingdom and everything else follows from that. The son of God has come into the world to set the captives free. So that whatever we do - in big and small actions – if we are in Him, we hallow the world.

It's a beautiful old word 'hallowed' – it means, simply, to make something holy. We hallow God's name with praise. We hallow the world with acts of love, and by submitting our flawed will to the Father's perfect will. Because that's what our lives are about now – a hallowed world, God's kingdom come, God's will put into action. Our Rebellion is replaced by grateful obedience, offering our whole lives to the will of the father.

What do we discover here about us? We discover our heart's focus, our life work and meaning; the coming of God's kingdom, and the eternal blessing that awaits because of it.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Over to our pragmatic needs. Give us our daily bread. Give us just what we need, Lord – no more, no less. Give us just enough.

We pray for fuel, not treasure. We pray for the strength and the sustenance to keep going. That's all we need from the world. Just what I need and no more – that's a prayer that's not focused on this world, but the next. It reminds us we're not here to accumulate things – we're here to love God, to love sinners, and to do his will.

It teaches us that our prayers of provision should be purposeful. We can ask anything from our Father, the really useful prayers are: Lord, give me this specifically, so I can work to your glory. That's our true needs, not our wants; thousands of preachers have said it before – the moment our focus goes from our needs to our wants is the moment those wants start to dominate us. That's the quiet takeover of idolatry, loving created things not the creator.

I need daily bread. I need fuel for now not riches for tomorrow.

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

Well isn't this the one line we wish wasn't there? But we are faulty, flawed human beings, and our hearts constantly need to give and receive forgiveness. To give it and receive it.

Whether we like or not – we are leaky vessels. We need constant reorientation to God's will. We look behind us and there is a trail of our sins and failures. We never stop needing God's grace, it's a daily need.

But we're in a broken, sin stained world too, aren't we? So we never stop needing to offer grace to it, either. You see, this is how we actually win, and it's how God's kingdom wins. We see it every time a Christian forgives. Rather than being beaten down and discouraged and resentful of all the cruelty in the world, we can forgive it. We stop that slow slide into

frustration and loss of control in its tracks. We can never stop being agents of God's grace because Jesus' grace on the cross never stops.

We need forgiveness in our lives – giving and receiving – that's the way of peace.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

Now this is an eye-opening one. Every day we need protection from evil, deliverance and guidance not to stumble. Because, newsflash, there is an evil world out there. Jesus never confuses us – we should expect to live amongst evil, with both worldly and spiritual enemies wanting to do us wrong. And he explicitly tells us that because we belong to him, expect trouble. If the world hates you, remember it hated him first.

So there are two dangers that we need to be reminded of every day. One is spiritual – an enemy who wants to hurt us, and the other is temporal – a world that hates us. That enemy rebelled against the Father, killing his Son, but that didn't work, so now he wants to destroy the Father's work, his children. Us. How does Peter put it? Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Lord, deliver us from the evil one. We need protection from him every day, and so do our spouses, and friends, and children. Lord, protect us all, keep us safe. Because the moment you belong to Jesus, you're a target. Be a difficult target – rest in the rock of your salvation, Jesus.

And there is the world your enemy reigns over. A world of tiny kings and despots. A bright world that seems good, but if we invest our hearts in it, in any of the things of this world, we become owned by it. It's a world where a mother turns on her own child in the womb – where people are so deluded they see God's blessing in their lives as a curse.

Neither the world nor the devil is going to stop rebelling any time soon, but it's our job to confront them not to appease them. To love them and expect to be hated in return. But our Father knows we need protection, guidance, help, aid to do that. He knows we go our own way, that we install ourselves as King so easily.

We need protection and guidance, and we serve a Lord ready to provide it.

Psalm 37:23-24 says:

“The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.
Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand.”

Isn't this our merciful Lord? Yes we go out as sheep amongst wolves, but our shepherd is with us.

Brothers and sisters, these are the things we need to remind ourselves of, *daily*. These are our *daily needs*. The things we really need – we need our holy Father, we need his identity, his Name, and we set our focus as his kingdom come on earth – that's the point of everything we do. From the world we only need fuel for the day, not treasure for tomorrow. And in all our relationships we need forgiveness – we need to give it and receive to keep our hearts clean. We need protection from evil that wants to destroy God's work, and guidance away from temptation, so that we don't make ourselves an easy mark for that enemy.

And that's it. It's simple. It's do-able. A child can do it. In fact, only a child can. Go out and use your wonderful privilege in prayer, as a child of the most High.

Song: by Frances Jane Alstyne

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine; O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation; purchase of God; born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Saviour all the day long.

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2. Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
3. Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Saviour am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above, filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

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Benediction

[2 Corinthians 13:11](#) - Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

This service was prepared by Mark Holgate for HopeNet SA