

Worship Service for July 26th, 2020
The Lord's Prayer – Part 4
Forgive Us Our Trespasses...

Welcome

Good Morning and welcome once again to the shores of beautiful Golden Lake. When I began to write this sermon there was an ominous threat of a storm and the wind has whipped the waves into a frenzy and there is even a hopeful expectation for some rain that is deeply needed, but alas it was not to be as the drops were few and far between.

But in the wind it was if God's breath was inviting me to celebrate in song, in word and in prayer. So let come now as a community of faith, to build upon Christ's sure foundation. Let us come, filled in prayer – our intimate connection to the Spirit's leading as Jesus has taught us. Let us come to gather in God's warm embrace to live love. Let us come together in prayer.

Gathering Prayer

Loving God, we come into your presence today:
we are filled with words, and seek silence;
we are filled with questions, and seek peace;
we are filled with doubt, and seek faith;
we are filled with tiredness, and seek rest.
May your Word be all this and more for us today. Amen.

Song

We welcome once again Devin Howard to today's service with a beautiful rendition of a song entitled "Come On Home" written by Drew Maxwell from Calvary United Church in St Jacob's Ontario. Please Enjoy

Thank you Devin for continuing to inspire us in song.

Scripture: Matthew 6:9-15 KJV

⁹ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

¹⁴ For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Meditation – Forgive Us Our Trespasses...Lord's Prayer Part 4

Trespasses. What does that make you think of? Maybe: walking down a country road past a bush lot, wanting to climb the fence and go for a walk. But you don't do it. There are signs nailed to the fenceposts: *No Trespassing. Keep Out. Trespassers will be prosecuted.*

Trespasses. Maybe what comes to mind is an old Bugs Bunny cartoon: Elmer Fudd, irate, brandishing his shotgun, well I guess in the age of political correctness he's not brandishing a shotgun any more, but you can hear him saying "No twesspassing. Can't you wead, you waskkly wabbit?"

Trespassing. It's a funny word. Maybe that's why we don't use it all that much any more. In fact, the only time we still use it is on those signs keeping people off private property. There—and in the Lord's Prayer.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

It's odd how the word turns up in the prayer that Jesus gives us. Perhaps it's less odd when we remember that the Lord's Prayer wording we use today dates from the time of Shakespeare. Many

of us think Shakespeare sounds a little odd, too.

Of course, back in Shakespeare's day, "trespasses" was still an ordinary word—and one that everyone understood.

Still, when you look up the Lord's Prayer in the translation of the Bible that was produced in Shakespeare's day—the one we call the King James Version—the word "trespasses" isn't there. You see The Lord's Prayer comes to us in two slightly-different forms—in Matthew's Gospel that we just read and Luke's Gospel Chapter 11 vs 1-4— but neither one has the word "trespasses" in it.

Matthew's version has us asking forgiveness for our "debts." Luke's version asks forgiveness for our "sins." The word "trespasses" only appears in the two verses following the Lord's Prayer, in Matthew's Gospel.

I'm thinking here's what likely happened: church tradition, down over the years, gradually moved the word "trespasses" up from the verses following the prayer into the prayer itself, to replace the word "debts."

So which is the right word—"trespasses," or "debts," or "sins"?

It depends on what Jesus was really saying. Let's try to figure it out.

Back before the days when "trespassing" meant sneaking over farmer's fence, the word "trespass" just meant "sin"—pure and simple. So "trespasses" and "sins" are the exactly the same thing.

That still leaves the third version of the prayer, where we're forgiven for our "debts." In Jesus' time, "debts" could mean "money owed," of course, just as it does today, but it normally implied you had short-changed some other person—or short-changed God—in any area at all. So "debts" really just meant "sins," the same as the word "trespasses" does.

So all three words mean exactly the same. What we're asking God to do for us is to *forgive us for our sins*, pure and simple.

Who would ever need to pray a prayer like that? Only people who are sinful.

Only people who are sinful. Now, who could that be? Could it be me? Maybe even—you? It all depends, doesn't it? It depends on what sin is. Once we figure that out, we'll know what we're dealing with.

And sin may not be what we think.

At Golden Lake Camp, our young campers get to do archery, well not this year, but most of them don't do it very well. They all manage to shoot their arrows, of course—the arrows seldom just fall to the ground. But not many hit the target, either.

A few arrows go over the top of the target and off into the bush. A few go to the left or the right. But most arrows just fall short. They don't get there at all. They start out in the right direction, and they fly through the air for a few metres. But they don't

arrive where they are intended.

The looks on the campers' faces tell it all. Archery appears to be very easy, and they are surprised at what actually happens. More than that—they are a bit disappointed. Hitting the target—or actually hitting the bull's eye—is much harder than you would think. And the usual problem is that the arrows just fall short.

In the New Testament part of the Bible, *falling short* is the picture we're given to help us understand the meaning of sin. The usual New Testament word for “sin” is the Greek word *hamartia*—which just means “falling short of the target.”

Sin, in God's eyes, amounts to falling short of the target.

“*Forgive us our trespasses*” then just means, “Forgive us, Father, for falling short of what you ask of us.” *Forgive us for falling short.*

Could you and I be people who sometimes fall short?

Maybe we could be. Now, for sure, we're not the sort of sinners you read about on the internet. We don't shoot people or abuse our children. We just don't do those sorts of things. But sometimes—yes, maybe even, often—we do fall short.

That's a different way of looking at sin, isn't it? That's not at all the way we usually think of it. We usually begin by thinking of some list of things we should or should not do—the Ten Commandments, for example—and then set out to measure ourselves against the list. Our hope is to find out how we're doing. And when we check

ourselves against the list, most of us come off quite nicely.

Have you built any idols lately? No? Score one point. Did you swear at all this past week? No? Score another point. Ok maybe a half point or maybe even minus a point.

You're remembering the Sabbath day, because you're here listening. You didn't kill anyone, or steal anything, or run off with your neighbour's husband or wife. Not bad. You're going to score at least eight out of ten. Maybe even ten out of ten!

We say to ourselves "Sin" is just a list of things to be avoided,. Once we have the list in hand, we know what to do about it. We avoid all the bad things, and do all the good things, and usually score fairly high. Then we feel good about what we've just done.

But—*falling short*? Sin is—*falling short*? Just—falling short of God's hopes and dreams for us? Falling short of what God intended, and breaking God's heart? Falling short of what Jesus would do, if he were in our shoes? Is that what sin is?

If *that's* what sin is all about, then I've been there. I'm still there. You've been there, too. And the question is no longer whether we score an "A" or a "C." The question is what we, as a people who fall short, going to do about it?

First, the bad news: there is nothing we *can* do about it. The good news is that there is nothing we *need* to do. God is prepared to deal with our sin for us. He is prepared to forgive. All we need

to do is ask.

Forgive us our trespasses.... Forgive us, Father, for falling short. Forgive us for letting you down, for breaking your heart. Forgive us, as we pray with the words that Jesus taught us.

And he will forgive. That's why Jesus gave us the prayer. Those are words that we need to pray. And when we do pray those words, God forgives.

Perhaps you've noticed how the Lord's Prayer is actually a number of smaller prayers, strung together end-to-end. It's interesting that Jesus does not tell us to pick and choose among them. We're not invited to check off the sections that apply to our situation and only pray those parts. The prayer is a unified whole. You can't pray it in pieces.

So, all together we pray for the coming of God's kingdom—because it hasn't happened yet. All together, we pray for our daily bread—because none of us can live without it. And, all together, we pray to our Father to be forgiven for falling short—because all of us have fallen short, and all of us need to be forgiven.

How do we know that for certain? Because Jesus gave us the words to ask for forgiveness—and he built them into this prayer that he invites us to pray. Whenever we pray this prayer, we admit that we are people who need forgiveness. And when we use these words to ask for forgiveness, that is what we receive.

We do receive. The One who invites us to pray guarantees it.

But then: it almost looks as if there is a string attached. Did you notice? Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. What's that all about?

I once had a friend, years ago, who suddenly stopped speaking to me. I tried to call him a number of times to try and sort things out but to no avail.

*That all happened many years ago, but I expect he still would not speak to me today. And I'm still not sure what I did wrong, if anything—but if I *did* do something wrong, in his eyes I am clearly still unforgiven.*

When people are hurt by others around them, those who are hurting do not always willingly forgive. When you and I are hurt by others around us, we do not always willingly forgive. But whenever one of us refuses to forgive, Jesus has a problem with that. How do we know? Because he tells us.

He tells us in a most direct and pointed way. He tells us through the prayer we are asked to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." In other words: "Father in heaven, please forgive me with the same sort of grace and generosity I use when I forgive people I need to forgive."

We're saying, "God, check on the way I forgive other people, and then you imitate what I do when you set out to forgive me."

“Whoa,” you say, “that’s a little scary. I sure hope God does a better job of forgiving than I do.”

Yes, it is scary. It’s supposed to be. Jesus means exactly what he says—because his Father in heaven *is just as concerned that I forgive you, as he is that I receive forgiveness for myself.* And to be sure that forgiveness does happen for both of us, he links those two things together.

It was October 9th 2012 that Malala Yousafai was shot in the head by the Taliban during an assassination attempt as she rode home from school on the bus. This was in response for her blog that she wrote promoting her views supporting education for girls in her home of Swat valley. The attack left her unconscious and in critical condition, but she survived.

Clearly, you would think that she would not be thinking of forgiveness. I can’t imagine how she ever could. I can’t imagine how I ever could, if I were her. I can’t imagine it.

But On 10 October 2014, Malala Yousafzai was announced as the co-recipient of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for her struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education. At age 17, she was the youngest Nobel Prize laureate. During her acceptance speech she acknowledged that *she needed to forgive the men who did this to her. She needed to—because if she didn’t, their wickedness would destroy her.*

I don't know how that girl could ever forgive the men who nearly took her life—but I do know someone in much the same situation who once did.

I know someone who did.

I know someone who was beaten almost to death, and whose hands were savaged with spikes, and who was strung up like an animal until he bled to death. And that person forgave the men who did it.

He forgave them. He forgave them because he loved them. But he also forgave them because he knew there was no other way.

There is no other way. And in the prayer that he left with us, he asks us to do as he did.

We're asked to do the same. And because he is the One who asks us, we really have no choice.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Thanks be to God.

Prayers of the People

God of the here and now, God within us and among us whose constant presence challenges us to hit the mark, we give you our thanks this day.

We thank you God for our families -- families of blood, families of faith, families of friends. May the light of your love hold us together. We thank you for your abundant grace that gives us life anew, as we journey along our daily path, endeavoring to love and accept all that we encounter.

We pray today for those who suffer the loss of family, friends and

neighbours - May they may feel and know our caring prayers go out to them now. (Silence) We pray for those whose lives closely touch our own, may they always be in our hearts, and may they always have daily bread for their journeys and to know that we will always be there to welcome them upon their return.

Lord we ask for strength to advocate for those whose lives are hidden, overlooked and ignored. May we learn to recognize the many, varied, and important contributions that each one of us makes, from the rich and powerful, to the poor and disenfranchised.

May Your love find all those that need You this day. It is easy for each one of us to ignore our fellow humankind as we get wrapped up in our own lives. This is our chance to offer up our prayers silently to those whose roads are difficult both mentally and physically and that we hold in our thoughts this morning....*(Silence)*...

God in our midst, we thank you for the love that you shed on these our many journeys, and ask for your guiding spirit on each one of us here as we endeavor to live out a life in faith. May we feel your constant presence as it guides and comforts us through this coming week.

Precious God we thank you for your constant presence and for your understanding. With love and affection we pray that you will walk with us, helping us to show others how the love of Jesus Christ has touched our lives. We pray all this in Jesus name who taught us to pray saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen

Our closing hymn is by the group Sanctus Real and is entitled "Forgiven" - Have a blessed week - until we meet again.