

Breaking Open the Word

Pentecost 7C, Proper 12, Ordinary Sunday 17
27th July 2025



Aligning with the Heart of God:
a prayer that deepens our
compassion and hospitality

A weekly reflection and sermon,
with study and prayer guides
following the RCL Lectionary

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Revised Common Lectionary Related

**Pentecost 7C,
Proper 12,
Ordinary Sunday 17C**

Genesis 18.20-32

Psalm 138

Colossians 2.6-15 [16-19]

Luke 11.1-13



Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

BCP

O God,
who hast prepared for them that love thee
such good things as pass man's understanding:
Pour into our hearts such love toward thee,
that we,
loving thee above all things,
may obtain thy promises,
which exceed all that we can desire:
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

INTRODUCTION

Are we truly praying in alignment with God's heart? Building on the theme of hospitality and compassion in Luke 10, we begin the journey through the 7th Sunday of Pentecost with the profound story of Abraham's intercession for Sodom in Genesis 18.

Setting aside the often-quoted and unsupported use of this story in prejudicial condemnation of certain community groups, the plea of Abraham illustrates the boldness we are called to in our own prayers. Once again, it is essential to recall that the unrighteousness of Sodom and Gomorrah lies in their lack of hospitality, not the mechanics of the sinfulness.

The Lord's Prayer is not merely a recitation, but a heartfelt invitation to advocate for justice and mercy, prompting us to

embody the hospitality of God's kingdom. We are reminded that prayer is an active, courageous expression of love—a co-labouring with the Spirit that directly impacts our communities.

As we seek to align our desires with God's, we are encouraged to advocate for one another and to embody righteousness. This challenges us to transform our understanding of prayer; it's a call to repair the world and stand in solidarity with those in need.

Ultimately, we are invited to become agents of change in a world yearning for hope. Let us commit today to diligent prayer, asking God to teach us to align our hearts with His, and to bring about His kingdom of love, justice, and peace in our lives. Will you join in this vital mission?

Prayer Point

- Pray for the courage to intercede boldly for others in our lives.
- Ask God to help us align our hearts with His hospitality and grace.
- Seek guidance on how to stand in the gap for those in need in our communities.
- Consider how we can reflect justice and mercy in our daily actions throughout the week.

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image

may become your eyes, ears, hands and voice.

**Aligning Our Prayers
with the Heart of God:**

A new chapter begins, but
the message is still the same.

We are called to imitate
Christ in our prayers and
actions, as Paul instructs us.
The Lord's Prayer serves as a
potent reminder that we find
ourselves at the intersection
of the kingdom to come and
the kingdom of God that is
already present among us.

In Genesis 18, we witness
Abraham, a model of bold
intercession, pleading on
behalf of the people of
Sodom. His prayerful
engagement teaches us that
God is always ready to listen,
receive, and forgive, even
when circumstances seem
insurmountable. Abraham did
not shy away from asking for
mercy on behalf of both the
righteous and the
unrighteous, thereby
exemplifying the profound
relationship we are invited to
have with God.

**There is no escaping that the
hospitality of the kingdom is**

**at the heart of our
transformation.**

At the heart of the teaching is
hospitality, essential to
understanding the previous
chapter in Luke's Gospel,
Chapter 10. If I were to
summarise the visitation at
Mamre, as visualised by the
Rublev Trinity icon, we are
asked to avail ourselves of
God's hospitality.
This hospitality leads to a
newness of life. In Sarai's
case, it was the fulfilment of
her long-held prayer for a
son. Isaac was to be born,
and the promise to Abram of
a line of people more
numerous than the stars of
heaven.

When we engage in prayer,
we are invited to align our
hearts with the hospitality of
the kingdom to come. The
Lord's Prayer is not merely a
collection of words; it is a
profound invitation to stand in
solidarity with those who
suffer and to advocate for
justice and mercy in a world
that desperately needs it.
Paul calls us to imitate Christ
in all that we do, say, and

pray. In the giving of the
Lord's Prayer, we are asked
to realise that we are
between the kingdom to
come and the kingdom of
God, which is near.

**Pleading, demanding,
arguing with God in and
through prayer.**

Like Abraham, who pleaded
for the salvation of both the
righteous and the
unrighteous of Sodom and
Gomorrah, we see that God is
willing to receive, listen to,
and forgive, even under
challenging circumstances.
Genesis 18:20-32 urges the
post-Pentecost church to
reclaim its calling to
intercede with renewed
conviction. Abraham's prayer
is not just an ancient
negotiation; it reflects the
church's mission in the age of
the Spirit. To pray in the Spirit
is to approach God with
boldness (parrhesia),
advocating for others with
compassion, from a
foundation of covenantal
trust that God listens and
responds. In a world that is in
urgent need of justice and
mercy, the church is called to
speak, plead, and hope in
God.^{[1][2]}

**We are co-labourers with
God in the Vineyard**

Intercession is not a means of
changing God's mind but a
mode of co-labouring with the
Spirit in God's redemptive
economy.

This movement—from
Abraham's intercession to the
Spirit's empowerment—
makes it clear that the
church's identity is closely
tied to its willingness to stand
in the gap.

Genesis 18:20-32 teaches us
that prayer is not a passive
spiritual practice but a
courageous and costly act of
love. It expresses theological
maturity and moral
responsibility, one that does
not shy away from the
world's realities, nor shrink
back from divine holiness. It is
grounded in the trust that
God is not only just but
relationally just—attentive,
open, and moved by the cries
of those speaking from within
the covenant.

**Lord, teach us to be
diligent in prayer.**

In Colossians, Paul
encourages us to be diligent
in prayer, to advocate for one
another, and to seek
righteousness in every aspect
of our lives. As we pray, let us

remember that our prayers can be a powerful force for change, standing boldly in the gap for those in need. When we ask to be taught how to align ourselves with God, Jesus offers examples of how justice and righteousness can be reflected in our daily lives. “Teach us to pray” could just as well have been a request to “Teach us to align ourselves with you.” Teach us who you are, in the name of God.^[^3]

Jesus promises that if we pray for the Holy Spirit, it will be given to us. This is evident from the beginning of verses 1-4, where Jesus teaches us a form of the Lord’s Prayer. Both are related to the Holy Spirit, who is linked to God and engaged in community, including those we do not know and may not agree with.

The Kingdom of God is near

The prayer is not mainly about our desires but about God’s desires for us. It is a prayer in the plural: Give us. Forgive us as we forgive those who owe us. Do not lead us into temptation. It is a prayer for the community, from the community, to the

God of community. “God’s kingdom is not ours, and yet it is defined by our feeding, forgiving, protecting, and welcoming. Let that kingdom come. God calls us to life, not death or eternal damnation.”^[^4]

Transformation into aligning with God

When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we dedicate ourselves to aligning our prayers with God’s heart, embracing divine hospitality that leads us to advocate for justice, mercy, and new life in our communities. Our prayers express not only our desires but also motivate us to act, transforming our lives and the world around us.

We are called to compassionate transformation through prayer. We are encouraged to hold on to hope as we stand in a world searching for hope, yearning for love, even when we are groaning in pain as the birth of universal peace struggles to be reborn. Amen.

Footnotes on page 12

Discussion Questions

What does Abraham's bold intercession in Genesis 18 teach us about our role in prayer?

- Abraham prayed not only for the righteous but also for the unrighteous, showing the depth of his relationship with God.
- How can you advocate for those who are struggling in your school or community, just like Abraham did?

Why is hospitality highlighted as essential to our transformation in the sermon?

- The sermon explores how God's hospitality can lead to a new life and how this concept relates to our prayers.
- How can you practice hospitality in your everyday life to create a welcoming environment for others?

In what ways can we ensure our prayers advocate for justice and mercy as described in the sermon?

- The sermon points out that prayer should be an active response to the needs of those around us.
- Can you think of a situation where you could pray for justice or mercy in your life or community right now?

How can we imitate Christ in our prayers as suggested in the sermon?

- The sermon emphasises the importance of aligning our prayers with God's heart, just as Christ did.
- In what specific ways can you modify your prayer life to more effectively reflect Christ's compassion?

How does praying for the Holy Spirit relate to our understanding of community in the sermon?

- The sermon explains that when we ask for the Holy Spirit, it connects us with God and the community, even with those we may not know.
- What steps can you take to strengthen your sense of community with those who are different from you?

THE LORD'S PRAYER: MAORI & POLYNESIA

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.

A MODERN RENDERING OF THE LORD'S PRAYER BASED ON BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S REWORDING

Heavenly Father,
may everyone honour and respect you,
and live as your devoted children and loyal citizens.
Help us to follow your ways here on earth
just as perfectly as they are followed in heaven.
Provide for our needs today, just as you have each day
before.
Forgive us when we fall short,
and help us to forgive others who hurt us.
Keep us from being tempted,
and protect us from all that's evil. Amen.

This **five-day devotional** will take a meditative dive into the text from this weekend. We will explore themes of prayer, intercession, and aligning our hearts with God's will, as taught through the lens of Scripture and the teachings of Jesus.



Day 1 Genesis 18

On this first day of our devotional, we reflect on Abraham's bold intercession on behalf of the people of Sodom. In this passage, we see a powerful example of how prayer can advocate for others, even when the circumstances seem dire. Abraham does not hesitate to ask for mercy on behalf of both the righteous and the unrighteous, demonstrating the deep relationship that is possible between us and God.

This reminds us that prayer is not just about presenting our requests to God, but it is also an opportunity to engage with his heart and express our concerns for others. As we pray, we can model this boldness and compassion, bringing our community before God and standing in the gap for those who may be struggling.

- What does intercession mean to you, and how can you practice it in your life?
- In what ways have you seen God respond to your bold prayers?
- How can you be a voice for those who cannot advocate for themselves?
- Pray for hearts that are aligned with God's compassion for others.
- Ask God to help you see the needs in your community that you can bring before him.

Day 2 Luke 10

Today, we consider the concept of hospitality as a transformative element in our lives and prayers. In Luke 10, we see the Lord's invitation to extend God's hospitality to those around us. The act of welcoming others can open doors to divine encounters and transformative relationships.

As we engage in prayer, let us remember that we are invited not only to receive God's hospitality but also to extend it to others. This may mean being a source of hope and support

for those who need it. Our prayers should reflect our commitment to live out this calling in practical ways, advocating for justice and mercy in our communities.

- How can you practice hospitality in your daily life?
- Who in your life might need to experience God's hospitality through you?
- What steps can you take to ensure your prayers reflect the needs of those around you?
- Pray for opportunities to show kindness and welcome others.
- Ask God to give you eyes to see those who are marginalised and in need of support.

Day 3 Colossians

As we move to Day 3, our focus shifts to the importance of diligent prayer as encouraged by Paul in Colossians. This is a call to action, reminding us that our prayers should be consistent and fervent as we advocate for one another and seek righteousness in all aspects of our lives.

In this devotional, we reflect on the power of collective prayer and its transformative impact on our hearts and communities. Through diligent prayer, we align ourselves with God's desires, advocating not only for our own needs but also for the needs of others, thereby building a stronger community of faith.

- How disciplined is your prayer life? What changes can you implement?
- What does it mean for you to intercede for others regularly?
- In what ways can you encourage others to pray for each other?
- Pray for your community, lifting up the specific needs and challenges that you encounter.
- Seek God's guidance on how you can be more intentional in your prayer life.

Day 4 Hebrews 4:16

On Day 4, we explore the significance of approaching God's throne of grace with confidence. This scripture invites us to seek God's mercy and grace boldly, reminding us that He is

always ready to listen and respond to our prayers.

This passage calls us to trust in God's relational justice and to approach our intercessions with assurance that they matter. We are reminded that our prayers are not merely words, but an integral part of God's redemptive plan. As we pray for others, we acknowledge both our dependence on his grace and our commitment to advocate for those in need.

- What does it mean for you to approach God's throne with confidence?
- How does understanding God's willingness to listen change your prayer life?
- In what areas of your life do you need to rely more on God's grace?
- Pray for a deeper understanding of God's grace in your life and community.
- Ask for boldness to speak to God about your concerns and the needs of others.

Day 5 Matthew 6:9-13

As we conclude our devotional series, we return to the Lord's Prayer, which encapsulates the essence of aligning our prayers with God's heart. This prayer is a powerful community prayer, reflecting our collective desires and needs as we seek God's will above our own.

In reciting this prayer, we acknowledge the communal aspect of our faith and prayer life. It is a reminder that God calls us to participate in his kingdom and to advocate for justice, mercy, and new life for all. As we finish this week, let us commit to living out the truths we've explored, allowing our prayers to transform our hearts and the world around us.

- How do you feel after exploring the Lord's Prayer over this devotional series?
- What commitments will you make to align your daily prayers with God's will?
- In what ways can you advocate for justice and mercy in your community moving forward?
- Pray for continued strength and guidance to align your life with God's heart.
- Seek God's direction on how to live out the principles of the Lord's Prayer in your daily life.

End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke (St Paul's Press) (Johnson)

Rev Dr Andrew McGowan: Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

David Adams, Glimpses of Glory, Year C

The following authors as featured at The Worship Cloud

www.theworshipcloud.com

N. T. Wright,

Jane Williams,

P James Woodward,

Paula Gooder

Mark Pryce,

David Perry

[^1]: Anna Madsen, **OMG:Center for Theological Conversation**; <https://omgcenter.com/2013/07/29/luke-111-13-promises-politics-pentecost-and-the-lords-prayer/>

[^2]: Kyong-Jin Lee
<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-17-3/commentary-on-genesis-1820-32-6>

[^3]: Anna Madsen,
[^4]: Anna Madsen



Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on
Gunaikurnai Country and
our respects are made to
the First Nations people
everywhere.



Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

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