

Angela Pound

Lord's Prayer

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One of the most iconic moments of the American civil rights movement, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, saw over 250 000 people of diverse backgrounds gather at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963. The march was not just about individual struggles, but about the collective “our” fight for civil rights and equality. Although Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s “I Have a Dream” speech is the most remembered part of the event, the march itself was a demonstration of collective action, with hundreds of leaders and everyday citizens contributing to the message of solidarity. King’s speech was powerful, but it was delivered on behalf of “our” collective desire for change. The march and its message helped shift the national conversation on civil rights and contributed to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, was a powerful symbol of unity over division. For decades, the wall stood as a physical representation of the Cold War’s separation of East and West Germany. It was not one individual’s actions that led to its fall, but rather the

collective movement of East Germans pushing for change, supported by growing protests and political pressure throughout Eastern Europe. Thousands of East Berliners, united in their desire for freedom, gathered at the wall, and the pressure eventually led to the East German government's decision to open the gates. What started as a series of protests grew into a powerful expression of "our" desire for reunification and freedom. The wall came down not because of a single individual's actions but because of the unified will of a people seeking change together.

In 2010, 33 miners were trapped underground for 69 days after a collapse at the San Jose Mine in Chile. Initially, the situation seemed hopeless, but the rescue efforts were a testament to the strength of collective action. Despite being buried more than half a mile underground, the miners banded together, maintaining hope and rationing food to survive. Outside, the government, engineers, and volunteers worked tirelessly on a plan to bring them all to safety. The miners' unity and trust in the rescue team were key. The rescue effort, which brought all 33 men to the surface safely, was celebrated worldwide as a triumph of teamwork, coordination, and persistence. "Our" collective strength - the miners' shared courage and the efforts of the global community - was what made it possible to overcome the odds.

"Our" represented a force greater than any individual could

muster alone. It is the power of unity, community, and shared purpose that elevates “our” over “my.” It reminds us that in times of crisis, unity can overcome even the most daunting challenges.

Today we are starting a new sermon series on the Lord’s Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13 which will run from now until the beginning of Holy week. The prayer is meant as a model, for as Jesus states at the beginning, Pray then in this way. The rest of the prayer illustrates key components and attitudes that Jesus’ disciples should incorporate into their prayer lives. We may choose to pray these exact words thoughtfully and reflectively, which are key, for it is not meant to be rote, or to put into our own words similar concerns.

Today I want to focus on the very first word, Our. Now, we won’t be going through this prayer word by word, or else it could take us a year to get through, but I wanted to stop and reflect on Jesus using the word, “Our” in this prayer.

Although the first word of the Lord’s Prayer in English is Our, this is not the case in the original. Because of grammatical differences between English and Greek, in English we say “Our Father” but in Greek the word order is reversed. “Father Our” or Pater hemon.

The Greek pronoun ἡμῶν (hémón) is used to denote possession or association with the first person plural,

translating to "our" or "of us" in English. It is commonly used in the New Testament to express collective ownership or relationship among believers or between believers and God. In the context of the New Testament, the use of *hémón* reflects the communal and collective nature of early Christian communities. The pronoun emphasizes the shared faith, experiences, and responsibilities among believers. It also highlights the intimate relationship between the community and God, as seen in prayers and teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

Have you ever thought of the fact that Jesus, when teaching the disciples how to pray, could have said, My Father, but he didn't, he said, Our Father?

For me, it was fitting to begin this series for the first week of February. 18 years ago I started my first career, as a teacher, and something happened that month of February. It continued for years, every February, but it was really before I recognize that something had changed. Years later after it started, one February, I was sitting in the staff room when all of a sudden I started crying out of nowhere. I didn't know what had all of a sudden happened, and I expressed this to a colleague of mine, sitting next to me at the table, a very dear friend of mine, who we had grown close together through our shared passion for supporting the youth around us. At which point, she said, I do. It's February 1st. Every February

you go through a rough spell like clock-work, and it begins every February. And she knew that for the next 6 weeks, until March Break, I would struggle through lack of sleep, low energy, and having trouble focussing or making decisions. I have never forgot that conversation because she helped me see the community that was around me. That there were people there who would support me through anything, that recognized I was struggling, but were willing to be there, every single year. They recognized something that I didn't at first, and helped me. I would eventually get diagnosed with Seasonal Affective Disorder, and through this I would increase my vitamins substantially, and try to ensure I was getting outside no matter the weather. And while, it hasn't fixed it all, it has definitely helped. February is a month I know I need to draw even closer to God, and is the time of year when I first started using my sleepless nights to listen to God's word more, and pray more.

Many of you, when I first started as lead pastor in September would come up to me on and off throughout the fall and say, I am praying for you. These words carry immense power and thought, and I hope you recognize how significant these words can be for many people to hear. For me, it was the fact that, amongst everything in your day, you would stop and ask God for his support in my life, and ultimately in the life of Billtown Church and

beyond. That meant a lot to me. It demonstrates the power of community, what we are called to be as believers of the One True God. It reminds me of when Jesus sent out the disciples two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits, they were to go together, not on their own. Or when Jesus says in Matthew 18:20 “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”” There is power when we come together in community, in Jesus’ name, whether in prayer or fellowship, as God is Our Father, not just mine or yours. I am reminded through the Lord’s Prayer, and as you say I am praying for you, that we are better together.

Part of our shared community is knowing each other, which I believe often begins with our names, probably why it’s so important for me that everyone knows each other’s names. Names are key in forming relationships. Case in point. I can struggle to meet new people, knowing what to say, so I often will take the dog for a walk to try and connect with people, as she’ll go up to whomever for attention, it breaks the ice, and then we start talking. There was a lady in Kentville, who would love it when Oreo and I would walk by. She would often stop, we would make small talk, and then we would continue on our day. Well one day, I saw her and after passing by I had a feeling that I needed to talk to her, so when we made the loop around the town, she thankfully approached us and we started talking more. It

was a Sunday after church and she was telling me that none of the warming shelters were open because it was Sunday (despite the fact that it was freezing out. Oreo and I were walking quickly to try and keep warm and to get back home in the heat). I asked her if she had tried other places, at which she said, she usually would hang out in the lobby of a bank, and would have to move from time to time. She told me her story, she had three girls, of which two had committed suicide, and her only remaining daughter with her only granddaughter lived in the city. Her friend was the homeless man found deceased in Miner's Marsh just a few short months ago. She told me more about her life, which I won't share with you, but I then asked her, her name, which she told me, but for privacy reasons I'll keep it close to me. Before we were going to bid farewell, she asked me for a toonie to go get a drink. I told her, while I had absolutely nothing with me, as I walked out the door with literally nothing, not even my phone, that I would go home and come back to get her a drink. She said she was usually around town, so we would meet up again. I haven't seen her since, despite walking throughout the town many times since, with change in my pocket for a drink, I cannot find her, and I keep searching. But I pray for her. No matter where she is in this world, we share One God, who I pray to, to watch over her. God is Our Father, whether she knows Him or not.

As Justo Gonzalez reflected, “I was opening the day with private prayer. In my devotions, as I very often did, I turned to the Lord’s Prayer and began saying, “Our Father...” But then I realized that I was by myself. Why say, “Our Father” rather than “My Father”? When I said, “our” didn’t this show that I was simply repeating the prayer without thinking about it? This brought another thought to mind. Could it be that, even though at that point I was physically alone, I was not addressing God on my account only but also in the name of my wider community? I was joining not only my seminary community, and not only my contemporaries throughout the world, but even the many generations who in years and centuries past had prayed “Our Father.” Thus, when we say “Our Father” we are not praying alone, even when we pray in private. In hundreds of different languages, in tall-steepled churches and in small chapels with thatched roofs, privately and in the midst of multitudes, this great “we” who are the body of Christ raise our unanimous prayer: “Our Father.”

And so, as Billtown Baptist Church, we are a community of believers, part of a larger community of faith, all called to take care of all of creation, for we are all God’s children.

If we look at Acts, beginning in chapter 2, verse 42, it says,

**Acts 2:42–47 NRSV**

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

and continuing to chapter 4 starting at verse 32, Acts 4:32-37

#### **Acts 4:32–37 NRSV**

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

In the early days of the Church, the believers were described as being "of one heart and soul." They had everything in common and sold their possessions to give to anyone who had need. They were not concerned with individual wealth or status, but with the collective good. The phrase, "our" replaces "my" as they shared everything and worked together for the common purpose of spreading the Gospel and caring for one another. This communal approach was foundational to the success of the early Church.

Paul uses the metaphor of the body in his letter to the

Corinthians to describe the Church, where every believer is a part of one unified whole. Each person has a unique role, but all parts work together to function as one. This highlights the idea that the Church is stronger as “our” body - unified and interdependent - stronger than any individual part working alone. The collective “our” empowers the body of Christ, while “my” or “I” alone cannot fully realize God’s purpose.

These stories today illustrate the biblical principle that God’s work and purposes are often fulfilled not by individuals acting in isolation, but by communities coming together with shared vision, purpose and sacrifice. The shift from “my” to “our” is a call to humility, selflessness, and mutual support - values that are central to living out God’s will on earth.

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He emphasized the collective aspect of faith. The importance of communal relationship with God. This prayer reflects the biblical value that the health of the community is as important as the individual’s needs. It isn’t about my, but our. Jesus didn’t just die for me, but for us and He lived for us too. There are people in our community struggling or hurting, within these church walls, and beyond in our local community. Talk to someone after church that you don’t usually talk to. Start with names and see where it goes. But most importantly, raise them up to the One we all call

Father, “Our Father”. Let us sing together before we come to the table of Our Lord, together, as a community of believers. The Lord’s Table is not just an individual act, but one that unites a community of believers, affirming that we are all children of God, part of a collective journey of faith, “Our Father.”