

Sunday 18th June 2023.

**THE LORDS PRAYER –
PROTECTION**

Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15



Today's sermon is titled protection. In March 1989, an asteroid 804,672 metres across, moving at the speed of 70,811 klm per hour. It shot across the very path that the earth travels, missing earth by only 6 hours. Did you know about this danger?

Every day an estimated twenty tons of material from space enters our atmosphere, most of it the size of grains of sand but some as large as golf balls. Did you know about this danger?

Daily we face temptations of every size and shape. Do you know about this danger? You should!

This is the fourth movement in the Lord's Prayer which leads into confession and forgiveness. In confession we open our lives to the healing, reconciling, restoring and uplifting grace of Jesus Christ who loves us totally.

Forgive us and deliver us.

Behind every fall is belief in a lie. In Genesis, we see that all our problems are common to humanity. Adam and Eve believed the lies the serpent told them. When we sin, we are continuing to believe Satan's lies. We need to identify those lies so we can see God's truth. When we give into temptation we believe the lies of Satan, who says – these are good; so, we say then God is bad. It is our choice to make.

The goal of Satan in the fall was to replace God on His throne; to recruit Adam and Eve, and subsequently all of us who follow, to join his rebellion and to deface God's image-bearers – us.

Satan is the master deceiver and teller of lies. He tempted Adam and Eve by leading them to become dissatisfied with God which led to their disobedience of God which led to them replacing God with something in creation to make their lives work apart from God.

This led to their spiritual and physical disintegration. Adam and Eve chose to do what they wanted; they ran from God; they became ashamed, and they rejected God; they were spiritually disintegrated. Physical disintegration led to death, disease, destruction, and disorder.

Why would God create Satan to allow him to do all these things? It is a good question, but we don't know the answer, except we know that God is with us in the evil that abounds.

Some people try to suggest it is because God is not all-powerful or all-loving or else, He would stop Satan. This is just more of Satan's lies – casting a net of doubt. We have a choice – to believe in Satan's lie or believe in God. We can rejoice though we are living in a world of heaviness for it is but for a season.

Romans 8 says: “our suffering cannot be compared with the glory we will see.”

God is all-loving and all-caring for He has put in place His plan to restore all the earth back to how it was meant to be, in the Garden of Eden. **What is that plan?** The sacrifice and resurrection

of Jesus, His Son, to take upon Himself our sins, to wash our scarred bodies with His blood so we can become clean and sin-free.

It is interesting to note the wording – lead us not into temptation. Does this mean that God tempts us? Of course not, but it doesn't say that He will keep us from being tempted. It is asking God to help us face temptations and to lead us out of them. It is not a sin to be tempted – it is what we do with temptation that is important. All of us face it every day in many forms.

Matthew held an important job in Capernaum, collecting taxes for the Romans. He was isolated and shunned by other Jewish people because of the job he was doing. But that changed when he met Jesus. Jesus saw through to Matthew's potential – past his sins – just like he does with us.

What was the path that Matthew took.

Firstly, Matthew confessed. He admitted that the lure of money and prestige were directing his life, leading to him being lonely and on the outer.

He then obeyed. When Jesus met Matthew and called Him, Matthew obeyed instantly and walked away from the temptations from the devil. This led to a change within himself, he accepted the unconditional love from Jesus, and felt free to invite Him to his house for a meal.

Matthew faced the truth of his sin, what he had been doing and how deceitful and greedy it was. As a result, he was welcomed, he was forgiven and began his path to recovery.

Notice what he did not do – He did not make excuses – it is my task to do, we must pay taxes, people should not shun me, I am Jewish, it is not my fault.

Have you ever had a close look at your fingerprints – they are all different. It is the same with sin and temptation. We each have our own ones, yet we have more in common with addicts than we believe – we all can become addicted to something, to believe Satan’s lies.

There are always “trigger points” in our lives; places where we are more vulnerable to give into sin and temptation. It is important to recognise what these are to understand how they are impacting our living today and then seek God’s help to handle them.

We all need to take stock of where we are vulnerable to Satan’s lies, which lead us to sin. Places that draw us, sadly, to worldly pleasures. It may be gambling, alcohol or drugs, it may even be shopping where we overspend, it may be people who do not respect our Christian belief and who can lead us to question. It is one thing to go into the trenches to share God’s word, but it is another to join others in their sins.

An old Arabian Proverb says, “he who wants to play with a cat should be able to bear its scratches.”

Avoiding temptation means that we need to stay out of places and situations in which we will be tempted. God is telling us, keep out of there!

We do not simply face the desires of our fallen nature, but we face a real and living devil that has only one goal – to destroy us and lead us away from Christ. The devil has years of experience in

leading people astray and is an expert on human nature. However, he is just a fallen angel, his power is nothing compared with the awesome majesty of God.

When we are struggling with temptation, we have our Mighty God to draw strength from. But we also have each other – we cannot travel the road to recovery alone, we must walk together and never in isolation.

Jesus never promised that following Him would be easy or we would be set up for success. Each of us can think of a time when someone did us wrong. We can all recall a truly hurtful act that another person carried out against us. Can we really be expected to forgive those who have offended, maligned, and even hurt us or our loved ones? Yes, we are.

For God does not give us what we deserve according to our actions but forgives us out of an abundance of grace – God’s undeserved favour. As followers of Christ, we pray this prayer as a reminder and a call to action. Lord, help us to forgive those who have sinned against us.

When you pray the Lord’s prayer, take time to think specifically about your sins and ask for God’s forgiveness. Think about and pray for forgiveness for the corporate sins of humanity and our society.

Who do you need to forgive? Ask for God’s help to forgive those who have sinned against you.

Tell God honestly how hard it is, He understands, and you will feel His loving comfort and compassion upon you. God is the Eternal Judge who will judge that person or persons.

The Lord's prayer ends like it begins, with praise to God. In the first line of the prayer, we named God (our Father) and praised God (hallowed be Your name). At the end of the Lord's prayer, we praise God again.

We name God's greatness by stating that all things belong to God. This final line of the Lord's prayer is a doxology, which means something that gives praise or adoration to God.

We pray bring God's kingdom to earth, provide for our daily needs, forgive our sins, and deliver us from evil. Why do we pray this? Because God answers prayer and does and will act in today's fallen world, but we need to be His arms and feet – His servants.