

WELCOME 15th September 2019 – 14 Pentecost '19 C

Matthew 6:9-13, Psalm 121 and John 17:6-12a

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! Special welcome guests & visitors! It's our privilege & joy to serve you in worship. We near the end of our series on the Lord's Prayer...in fact the final petition that is recorded in the NT.

Today we make 2 clear affirmations:

1. The Devil is a powerful enemy
2. The Devil is a defeated enemy

If we deny, avoid, or minimize either of those truths...we cause ourselves real trouble.

The Bible tells us, *"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* - 1 Pet 5:8 and

"The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil." - 1 Jn 3:8

In Christ, crucified risen & ruling over all things...evil is ultimately & finally destroyed.

When we pray, *"Deliver us from evil"* we enjoy the Father's protection for we stand in the presence & power of the One who alone has decisively & definitively won the battle over the evil one to give us a victory & a future filled with hope that no-one can snatch away.

We'll experience & celebrate that together today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, in your Son Jesus, we are more than conquerors over hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril & sword. Protect us from the evil one. Give us your authority & your power to withstand the forces of the evil one at work in our lives & in our world. By your Spirit in us advance the work of your kingdom against this world's darkness; bringing life, light, hope, peace & safety. Let it be so today for your glory & our witness to the world. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen!

14 PENTECOST '19 C – FROM HIS FULLNESS: THE FATHER'S PROTECTION

- FAITH CHAT:** 1. Three things you are thankful for this week.
2. When you pray, "Deliver us from evil" what do you have in mind?
3. Where do you see the evil one at work today?

From Gilgamesh & the ancient Babylonian creation myths to Marvel Comics' Avengers battling Thanatos...with Harry Potter, 9/11, Mao's Cultural Revolution, Stalin's Purges, napalm & climate debates thrown in for good measure: humanity is marinated in thinking good vs evil. Star Wars/Superheroes/NATO/you/me all ask the same question: Will good or evil prevail? Will darkness or light prove stronger in the end?

That is *THE* cosmic question human beings have wrestled from the very beginning. Humans want...we *NEED ARE DESIGNED TO BELIEVE*/hope in something greater/bigger/better than we are. Every human despite the pretence/protest of modern individualists *EVERY. HUMAN.* seeks deliverance/rescue from the problems & battles of life. Superman says to Lois Lane Superman Returns "Lois, you say the world doesn't need a saviour, but every day I hear people crying for one." When you pray, "Deliver us from evil," what do you have in mind? That is not a throwaway question...we each have something. It bubbles in the pit of every stomach...boils up from the very depth of our existence.

It's no movie blockbuster but the Bible affirms there is a cosmic confrontation that spans heavenly/earthly realms; & the effects of that confrontation are real & present even today. In fact...all 4 gospels/biographies of Jesus/accounts of the life of Christ...All 4 note that confrontation early on...that from the outset of his ministry mission life here among us evil challenged confronted attacked & rejected Jesus & at the end killed him

And Jesus gives us his description of evil & the work of the evil one...so we know it when we see it. Seriously...either folks deny the presence of evil I saw a psychologist on TV do just that...would not use the word "evil" - talked about people doing harmful hurtful bad things OR they say anyone who disagrees with their worldview is evil. I was in a conversation around a group of folks not long ago when someone said that anyone who didn't believe that humans were to blame for climate change was "evil." Jesus saw it like this: *The thief comes only to steal & kill & destroy. I came that they may have life & have it abundantly.* – Jn 10:10 Other trans: Life in its fullest – life satisfied with everything needed...Ps 23

Acc to Jesus...the evil one is that one who comes w/ malice w/ intent to take break scatter sow chaos & harm...to intentionally cause fear & division & mistrust of God or distrust of our neighbour...to by whatever means necessary break that sense of reliance & humble trust in the Father...to by whatever means necessary fragment human community & tarnish all the Father created & declared "good." Steal joy/life...

Over the course of these weeks I keep coming back to what sort of heart Jesus seeks to create in us as he gives us his relationship w/ the Father & the prayer/ing the conversation that emerges from that relationship as sons/daughters of God that we enjoy...Humility before the Father's greatness & holiness. Lift up the Father's Name. Appeal for the Father's Kingdom & will to be fulfilled. Rest in the Father's provision. Acknowledge our need for the Father's forgiveness/healing of our hearts & lives. Trust how the Father feels toward you is true & is enough. Live from the Father's claim upon you & toward his intention for you..."Deliver us from the evil one" is part of that heart-shaping...

This petition is 1st a confession of our spiritual weakness. It's a prayer of those who feel vulnerable at risk in the face of the evil one & all the evil one does here on earth It's a prayer of those who at times feel powerless in the face of the attacks of evil upon your sense of confidence in God your trust in the Father's will & work being good & right. (If God's good & he loves us why that bad thing/person)...

When we pray this prayer, we are saying, "Father, don't let me go to the place where I will believe the lies of Satan. Don't let me go to the place where I will be overwhelmed by the face of evil, but deliver me from the evil one & his power in this life." We're praying Deliver us from the lie that I am incapable of evil. Deliver us from addiction & depression & despair before unchanging sickness & sadness. Deliver us from self-loathing. Deliver us from self-indulgence/selfishness. Deliver us from fear. Deliver us from complacency. Deliver us from complicity...from being part of the problems not part of your solution. This petition is 1st a confession of our spiritual weakness. It's a prayer of those who feel vulnerable at risk in the face of the evil one.

But 2nd This petition is a profession of profound confidence & trust in the strength & power of the Father...Luther says: We ask in this prayer, as in a summary, that our Father in heaven may deliver us from all kinds of evil — affecting body or soul, property or reputation — then at last, when our final hour comes, grant us a blessed end & take us by grace from this valley of tears to himself in heaven. We pray "Deliver us..." trusting that in this life & in the one to come

evil does not have the final word...We pray trusting God's intention & destiny for us, those he names his children, is freedom from the tricks/traps/snares/strife/sorrow caused by the evil one.

I've been reading Proverbs...if you use the Bible Reading plans off the back table you're in Proverbs now...I have to confess I used to read Proverbs like I read fortune cookies. Early bird gets worm 2nd mouse gets cheese – how much deeper would the ocean be w/o sponges. But over time the Spirit let me see deeper into how woven throughout the whole of the Bible God speaks to promise his protection over his people. *Pr. 19:23 - Fear of the Lord leads to life, bringing security & protection from harm.* When I was at the CrossLink Gathering this week some of the churches there have a relationship with a mission organization in Mozambique (SE coast of Africa) & they received a message that some paramilitary groups were moving through the area...asked us to pray because they were vulnerable to attack & were concerned for the kids in their school the sick in their hospital & the people they were training for ministry. I had just read that verse that morning & prayed with an incredible sense of boldness because I was asking solely for what I understood God intends...couple days later...*Pr 24:19-20 - Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked, for the evildoer has no future hope, & the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.* We pray "Deliver us..." trusting that in this life & in the one to come evil does not have the final word...We pray trusting God's intention & destiny for us, those he names his children, is freedom from the tricks/traps/snares/sorrow of the evil one

When we pray "Deliver us..." we know that we are not bullet-proof or trouble-proof or trauma-proof or tear-proof in this world but EVEN IN THIS WORLD this "valley of tears" the Father promises healing from our wounds, hope in the day of trouble, comfort in the midst of trauma, joy in our tears & peace & patience & love & strength...at all times. We're saying "Father, do not allow the pain/pleasure/circumstances in my life to steal my faith or destroy my hope satisfaction fulfilment peace joy confidence in you"

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus looked straight at Peter: "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented & turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.*" - *Lk 22:31-32* Jesus knew before & better than Peter how badly he would fail. Peter who claimed unshakability greater than all the others would lie, deny, curse & then collapse in bitter tears & shame. But through it all Jesus says "My pleading in prayer will keep your trust in me unbroken & restore you to place of strength & leadership for the others." Paul would write; *2 Thess 3:3 - But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you & guard you from (protect you against) the evil one.*

Peter learned the hard way: "*Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*" - *1 Pet 5:8* Absolutely true...the evil one has nothing better to do than attack each & every one of us & does so relentlessly & ferociously...

Jesus promised that since the world hated him it would hate all those called by his name. And the more we live our identity as God's children & seek to live out his purpose for our lives – to advance God's kingdom of grace & forgiveness – to live out unconditional love, self-sacrificing generosity, costly forgiveness & reconciliation in this world – to invite others into that good news, we will be involved in a dangerous confrontation ...a struggle against that which would steal kill & destroy.

But in the midst of that battle we remember: "*The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.*" - *1 Jn 3:8* we remember: *Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh & blood—the Son also became flesh & blood. For only as a human being could he die, & only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. – Heb 2:14*

It's true. The devil is a powerful enemy. He is also a defeated enemy. By his dying & rising to reign over all things, Christ gives us the final victory. When we pray, "Deliver us from evil" we enjoy the Father's protection for we stand in the presence & power of the One who alone has decisively & definitively won the battle over the evil one to give us a victory & a future filled with hope that no-one can snatch away.

Let's pray with that in mind...Father, forgive us for ignoring or taking lightly the work of the evil one in our world and for faltering in the face of battle. We acknowledge our need to take hold of your power over evil, the victory won for us by Jesus. Lord Jesus you have indeed gone before us. You bore our sin. You carried our shame. You triumphed over the evil one and now we share that victory as you reunite us with the Father. Now Lord watch over us and keep us from all harm. Keep watch over us as we come and go both now and forever...Amen.