

Sermon preached by Phillip Jensen, Dean of Sydney, at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney on Wednesday 28th March 2007. Reading: Matthew 11:25:30
Topic: "The Lord of Heaven and Earth"

We start with a prayer of Jesus that inevitably makes this a very interesting passage. How did our Lord and Saviour pray? What did He pray to His Father? For that's how it starts, at that time Jesus declared that "I thank you Father" He not talking to his disciples, he is talking out loud, he is praying out loud but he is talking to his Father in heaven. Here is the perfect son of God speaking to His perfect Father. "Thank you Father he says" He starts with thanksgiving, which is where we all must start in our prayers friends. Over and over again the bible speaks of praying over and over again with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is part and parcel of how we approach God. For it does not matter how bleak, how dreary, how dreadful life may be, we still have things to thank God for. And the very activity of thanking God, changes the problems of life we are in, changes our perspective of them, instead of being overwhelmed by them we start to recognize there is someone even more overwhelming indeed, namely God. We have always got to start our prayers thanking Him for the so many things He has given us – for creation, for our very life, for our family, for our friends, for this society, for the world. But of course thanking Him for the Lord Jesus Christ. That greatest of all gifts for His death on the cross, for His resurrection. There are so many things for which we can always thank Him for. No matter how the circumstances of life would want to crush in on us indeed – indeed it's when the circumstances of life want to start crushing in on us, when we most need to take the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and thank His Father. Count your blessings namely one by one – it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

We as a society as Australians are a people of gross ingratitude – we are very quick in complaining, grumbling, whinging. We who are in Christ Jesus must not be like that. We approach God with thanksgiving, as our Lord Himself approached God with thanksgiving, as the apostles teach us to approach God with thanksgiving. Notice who He prays to, He prays to the Father. God is fatherly. I know for some of us that is not much of a basis because our human fathers have failed us so completely. And yet, why is it that you are so hurt by the failure of our father. Lots of people hurt us don't they? And yet the failure of our father is more hurtful than what other people have done. Why is that? Because even though our earthly father may have been a dreadful man, who did dreadful things to us, the reason why we know it is so dreadful is because we know that that is **not** what a father should do. The very pain, should remind us of what a father should be like. That's why it hurts so much, if it was a man if it was another person you'd say "Well that's what he is like" but he is your father and fathers should not be like that. Fathers should be loving, fathers should be kind, fathers should be generous, fathers should be protective. We know that about fathers by the very pain that our father has inflicted upon us. Some of us know about fathers because of the kindness of our own fathers, because some of us come from wonderful fathers just as some of us come from very awful fathers.

But the Father who gives rhyme and reason to all fatherhood and shows us what true fatherhood should be like is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. All other fathers are but a pale reflection of the perfect father and that is the one who Jesus approaches. Father, you are the one who is caring, generous and protective. You are the Father. And notice what else He calls Him. Lord of Heaven and Earth. For that is who His father is. His father is the master of everything, the creator of it all, the sustainer of it all, the owner of it all – it is His. He can do with as He pleases. That's the basis of our prayer. We are praying to the Almighty. No point praying to the semi-mighty or the weak and the impudent. We are praying to the **Almighty**, the One who can make a difference, the one who can change anything and everything. He's the Lord of Heaven and Earth.

And we are praying to our Father who loves us, who cares for us, who protects us, who is generous towards us. If He was the mighty Lord but did not care for us, there is no point praying to Him. If He is the Father who has got no power, no authority, and no strength – there is not much point in praying to Him. But we are praying to the Father who is the Lord of heaven and earth.

It doesn't matter what your problems or difficulties are, it doesn't matter what your circumstances are, or how sick you are. The one we will invite you to pray to in a little while, is this one Jesus prayed to "Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth." Doesn't matter what it is – He is able to deal with it. He is the mighty one and He is loving, and willing to deal with it. That's a terrific basis for prayer isn't it? You can approach God on that basis. That's how Jesus approached Him. He said "Thank You" because all things had been handed over to Him. The Son knows the Father and the Father knows the Son.

The wisdom of the world does not know what the Father and the Son have shared. Because you can only know what you have been told about the Father and the Son. (V27) See the wise and the clever of the world will never know God. Only those who accept the word of God will know God.

Just sit there for a moment in your cleverness and wisdom and work out for a moment – what my mother's middle name was? You can't can you? No matter how long you sit there – none of you are going to think of my mother's middle name. That is just not possible is it? I can tell you but you could never work it out. Some knowledge you can work out 2 plus 2 equals 4. Some knowledge you can never work out – you have to be told.

Once you are told you know. But if you are not listening you won't know. That is the kind of knowledge that you have of God. If you can't even work out my mother's name, what chance would you have of working out my mother? I mean what could you tell me about my mother? You could tell me she was a woman, she had a son, - see you don't know anything about my mother do you? You don't even know her name. Frankly you don't even know her first name, let alone her middle name. The cleverness of humanity can't work out all the answers of life. There are some it can only be found by being told. If you can't know my mother without being told – what chance do you have of knowing God without being told? I'm not going to tell you my mother's middle name that will have to remain a mystery to you for the rest of your life. But I can tell you about God and His Son, because He has revealed about His son and has revealed Himself to His Son and His Son has chosen to reveal Him to us. We can know the Lord of heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ because the Lord Jesus Christ has made Him known to us. And to who has He made Him known? Well you see, it is not the mighty, it is not the clever, it is not the rulers – it is the weak, the frail, the fragile, it is those of us who struggle. For look at how Jesus invites us (V28) "*Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" It is those who labour and are heavy laden. Those who make a heavy job of living in this world, those who struggle in this world, who are tired and weary and worn because of the affairs of life - exhaustion of body and of mind, and of spirit, because we live in a world of sickness and hardship and difficulty. You can't help but think of the tiredness that comes with depression, it also comes with anxiety, it also comes with pain. If you are in continuous pain it is very tiring – it is exhausting, it just drains you. It comes with the headaches, with the bad backs; it comes with living doesn't it.

It is wearying – **but sickness intensifies it**; the weariness of the world. It comes with the hardships of life, it comes with the emotionally exhaustion from broken relationships from living

with people that don't understand you and who don't like you. There are so many ways in which we find ourselves weary, tired and worn. Without drawing attention to it - as a child you have energy to burn, a place like this is just full of a place to dance. It is as we grow older, as we suffer the consequences of our bodies failing, of getting older and we face the sicknesses and the cares and the worries and the difficulties of life. As we go through the glandular fever as we go through the post viral syndromes etc. Labour, heavy laden, tired are words that have become all too familiar to life and Jesus invites us "Come" "Come" It is a wonderful word isn't it. And He invites them to come to Him. Come to the saviour, make no delay as the old hymn had it. Come to Him because notice the promise "I will give you rest" All things have been given to Him, by the Father who is the Lord of heaven and earth. So He is the one who can give us rest. Not the rules of religions of the world or of Judaism, not the Pharisees not the Sadducees, not the rules and regulations - they will not give you rest. They will just burden you more and more. It is the Lord who gives us rest. It is Jesus who gives us rest. Come to Jesus. He is the one, the Lord of heaven and earth has entrusted, with Himself. So in the face of the difficulties of life, the problems of this world, in the face of all the rules and regulations the Pharisees and the scribes and religious rulers can give to us Jesus says "Come to me and I will give you rest." For He is the great healer, He is the great Saviour, He is the one and the only one who can bring us to the Father. He is the one who can deal with the sinfulness of our lives and the guilt that we are under, and the relationships that are broken up and the bodies that are decaying. He is the One who do it. "Come to me and I will give you rest" for He says himself (V29) "My yolk is easy (V30) For when we come to Him we come to Him as the Lord. We come to Him as the One to whom we submit our lives. We come to the One to whom we place our lives in His hands. We place our bodies, our minds, our relationships, our friendships, our difficulties, our struggles. We put ourselves into His hands. And in placing ourselves into His hands, we place ourselves under His authority. You can't do it any other way. You can't place yourself in His hands and reject His authority. But if you accept His authority, you place yourself in His hands. And He is the one who can give us rest, for His yolk is not like the Pharisees, it is not like the rules and regulations of religion, His yolk is easy and His burdens light. Sure He is the Lord, but He is not Adolph Hitler, he is not Mao Tse-tung he is not Pol Pot, he is not Joseph Stalin. The Lords of this earth - they are oppressive, you come under their rule and they take every last penny from you. And they destroy your life and they destroy your health and they destroy you. But you come under the Lordship of Jesus and He gives you life and health. He gives you all the blessings of God that are available in this world and in the world to come.

"Come unto me" says Jesus "and I will give you rest - take my yolk upon you, learn from me" Look at what Jesus is like - gentle and lowly in heart. What a saviour - what a Lord - to be the Lord of the Universe and lowly in heart. Most of our petty politicians, they're rulers of tiny little empires and very proud of heart. Indeed the smaller the empire, the more pumped up a person is. There is no more dictator in the universe, than a man in a dust jacket and a walkie talkie. They are the real "kings" who will tell you where to go. Their empire is tiny but their authority is absolute. Jesus' empire is massive, but His heart is lowly, gentle, kind. Come to Him, come to the saviour, and make no delay.

We come again to Easter. Easter is the time when we see our Lord in His death, reversing the curse of death in this world. Easter we see again the resurrection of Jesus, demonstrating His victory over death, conquering it and bringing eternal life. Have a look at Matthew's gospel, the risen Lord Jesus Christ appears to his disciples (V28:16) When they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. Jesus came to them and said "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*"

I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for in His death and resurrection, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. That is why we come to Him, whatever our problems

are, whatever our illness, or our troubles, whatever our pain, whatever our suffering, come to Him because He is the one to whom all authority on heaven and earth has been given. He now is the Lord of heaven and earth.

Nobody else can fix you as He can and we can approach him and ask for anything because He is gentle and lowly of heart and because He promises rest, and that's what we need isn't it in the labour and toil of this life. The Lord's rest. The healing that comes with the Sabbath day, the fresh start of the resurrection, that's what we need. So in a moment or two, after the musical meditation, Chris Moroney will lead us in the laying on of hands. The essence of the laying on of hands is of course, fellowship in prayer. We extend our fellowship by the touch of a hand, but what we are doing is praying to our Father in heaven, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and we are praying in the name of the one who is Lord of heaven and earth, to whom all authority of heaven and earth has been given. We are praying in His name, to the Father who can change everything and anything and asking Him, out of His kindness and out of His power, to change us. We need to share what areas we need to change. What areas we'd like to raise with the Lord, what things we need in our lives to ask Him to do. But that's whom we are praying to, and that's how we pray, that's how we know we can be heard and we can be healed, because we come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose hands we place our lives and under whose yolk we chose to live.

Let's pray: Heavenly Father we thank and praise you for your Son, for His death and resurrection, we thank you Father that you placed all authority into His hands on heaven and earth and we thank you that He chose to reveal you to us, so that we can know you as the loving almighty Father that you are. Father we pray that as we come at this moment in time to approach you with our several different problems and issues, our individual needs that we have, for the healing of our bodies and our minds, our relationships, and our lives, we do thank you Father for our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ and pray and beg the mercy of your Spirit to be within our hearts and minds, leading us to our Lord and saviour and through Him, to you, that we might know your healing hand in our lives and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.