

If the value of any text from the Gospel can be judged by the frequency of its quotation, today's Gospel must have a high claim for centrality in the Christian life. The giving of the Lord's Prayer makes a thrice-daily entrance, which even the humblest among us can take, into the mind and the prayer of Jesus Christ. *Do this in memory of me* gave us the Mass, and daily Mass is the height of what a Christian can do in memory of his master. But the Lord's Prayer can be accessed by the busiest person; it can be devoutly and attentively recited in half a minute, and a human being surrounded by tumult and involvement is assured of an authentic Christian mind. The Lord's Prayer is patient of a lifetime's meditation, because the things it asks for are superhuman realities, and our thinking of what they entail is a journey into God's mind. The Lord's Prayer I think is like a huge station, the starting-point and terminus of all our journeys as Christians. So I have found that long and intense trains of thought are always departing from this central station, carrying different people on different errands, and always returning to the great destination from which we began: the Father, Creator at the beginning, redeemer at the end.

I would point out that the word "daily" in our translation is somewhat misleading. The bread for which the Lord prayed was much more specific than "daily" bread, and the difficult word he uses in the original Greek text - which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament - has more about it of "tomorrow" than "today". Meditating on this, I recognised that if we are really praying for "the bread of tomorrow" it can only mean a prayer for the banquet of the Kingdom to be served to us.

This means that, together with the revolutionary prayer that the Kingdom should come (today), that the whole purpose of God should be accomplished on earth (today), that the Name of God should finally be confessed by the whole heart of mankind (today), this prayer for the bread of tomorrow completes *a prayer for the end of the world and the inauguration of heaven*. And it is not only our prayer, but the prayer of Jesus Christ.

If our prayer is sincere, and is granted, the meeting scheduled for Fr Alan at the University at eleven may become irrelevant, and my meeting in Derby at one o'clock will certainly be overtaken by a trumpet at noon, and Mr Brown really won't ever become Prime Minister.

Maybe only our hard-hearted refusal to forgive those who trespass against us is delaying the bringing of all our lives to judgment. This dangerous prayer should be used with caution, especially since it has every chance of being granted by the one who said

*Ask for anything at all in my name, and it will be given to you.*