Dear Readers,

Thanks to feedback from so many of you, we’ve decided to continue publishing Belton Joyner’s Bible studies and Karl Zorowski’s Church Mice. These two pieces accompanied by a variety of church-related advertisements will comprise a new publication called vine. You can access digital copies, beginning with the January 2015 issue, of vine online at: http://nccadvocate.com/vine/. Vine, like Every Day Grace magazine, will be offered free for as long as possible. We are so very excited to be offering this new publication and look forward to continuing to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Mary Andreolli
Director of Communications

PS—The first issue of Every Day Grace magazine will be arriving in your mailboxes very soon!

By Belton Joyner, Jr.

January 4, 2015


“A Model for Prayer”

With a text as memorable as the Lord’s Prayer, one might think there would not be many questions left. After all, even if I never said this prayer in my own devotions, I figure I have prayed it in corporate settings close to five thousand times. (Praying each day would bring the total closer to thirty thousand times.)

But there are questions. Jesus’ disciples want to be taught to pray “as John taught his disciples.” What was the prayer John taught his disciples (Luke 11:1)? Were the disciples jealous of John’s disciples? If this prayer is so central to our life, why don’t Mark and John mention it in their gospel accounts? And why does Paul ignore it in all his epistles? If this is the way Jesus taught us to pray, why do we add a phrase (“for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever”) to what He taught? And another question: Which is the best translation: forgive us our debts, forgive us our trespasses, forgive us our sins, forgive us our wrongs, forgive us our errors, forgive us our evils?

Luke must have sensed that this prayer-teaching of Jesus would stir up questions, because in Luke’s account, Jesus follows His instruction immediately with a story that should make things clearer. It is as if our Lord said, “You know that even weak and frail humans (Luke 11:8, 13) will respond to a plea from someone in need, so just imagine how ready and generous God will be” (Luke 11:5-13).

This is a dangerous prayer. Do we really want “Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven”? (“Bring in your kingdom”—Luke 11:2, CEB.) God’s kingdom is one of justice and joy and equal love and values of forgiveness and food for everyone and some relationships that do not quite fit the way we have structured life in the world. Maybe we’d like God to answer this request for kingdom-living… but could it wait until I get things more the way I want them?
**January 11, 2015**

**Text: John 17:6-21** "Jesus Prays for the Disciples"

On a large concrete block built into the wall outside the entrance to The United Church of Chapel Hill, there is a carving ... searching-believer. Does all this difference mean that Jesus’ prayer is unanswered? What... questions stirred by this prayer.

**Said:**

What Someone Else Has Said:

Walter Brueggemann (From Whom No Secrets Are Hid: Introducing the Psalms, ed., Brent Strawn, Westminster John Knox) has written, "(It is) praise to Jesus who has defeated the powers of chaos...who has provided ample food...who has breathed on us in an Easter way.

**January 18, 2015**

**Text: Hebrews 4:14-5:10 Jesus Intercedes for Us**

As I began typing this, my telephone rang. It was a clergy colleague who wanted me to put in a good word for him with a church official. I was honored that he trusted me with such a sensitive role, but the truth of the matter is that I have been less than impressed with this brother’s ministry. How can I intercede for him when I didn’t really think very highly of his readiness for pastoral work? Our study text this week says that Jesus is put into that same bind. We want Jesus to go to bat for us before God the Father, yet when our Lord looks at our credentials, He sees weakness, fail-ure, brokenness, sin. How can He intercede for us when we are such damaged goods?

First, Jesus understands how we got into this mess. Hebrews 4:15 in Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase (The Message) says “We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weaknesses and testing, experienced it all— all but the sin.” The word translated “testing” (“or tempted”) has its roots in a word that means “piercing through an object to see what it’s made of.” Temptation does that, doesn’t it? It checks us out to see how we are put together. When Jesus passed the test; we, not so much. But our Lord knows what it is like to be tested.

Second, because Jesus is willing to take us as we are, we don’t have to pretend before God. We can “draw near to the throne of grace with boldness” (Hebrews 4:16, NRSV). In the Hebrew tradition, a priest was someone who made a sacri-fice in behalf of the people in order to make things right with God (Hebrews 5:1).

Jesus made the perfect sacri-fice (Hebrews 5:9) “once and for all.” So, when we stand before God, there is with us One who under-stands us and who has made things right for us with God.

Each one of these gifted leaders has had a unique way of moving the congregation to corporate prayer for one another (James 5:13). Diane offered prayers that gave us warm connecting places with the prayer needs that were in our hearts. Brian invited us to name aloud the prayer requests we had, after which he prayed in half of all. Jamie had us name our prayer concerns, followed by “Lord, in Your mercy,” to which the entire congregation made it everyone’s prayer to join together, “Hear our prayer.” Julia shares situations of which she is aware and asks for updates from the congrigation; then she captures these in a memento. What Someone Else Has Said: Walter Brueggemann (From Whom No Secrets Are Hid: Introducing the Psalms, ed., Brent Strawn, Westminster John Knox) has written, “It is praise to Jesus who has defeated the powers of chaos...who has provided ample food...who has breathed on us in an Easter way.

**January 25, 2015**

**Text: James 5:13-18 We Pray for One Another**

Diane Christianson. Bryan Faggart. Jimmy Weaver. Julia Webb-Bowden. Those are the four pastors who have served Bethany Church in Durham during the years our charge conferences mem-bership has been there. There is a temptation to think of prayer as a way of filling out a spiritual order blank; God is supposed to do whatever is on our order blank. That understanding is a far cry from thinking of prayer as fellowship and communion with God. Jesus helps us understand this difference; the apostle Paul does it the same way, but the harvest of their prayer emphasis has been the creation of an atmo-sphere of caring, healing, and growth.

What Someone Else Has Said:

J. Manly (Jack) Hunter (Fair-way District - retired) died Nov. 19. Services were held Dec. 4 in Statesville. John Wesley (Beacon District - retired), died Nov. 3. Services of death and resurrection were held Nov. 5 at St. Luke UMC, Sanford.

What Someone Else Has Said:

J. Manly (Jack) Hunter (Fairway District - retired) died Nov. 19. Services were held Dec. 4 in Statesville. Alexanne Clark (Wrightsville UMC, Nov. 22. Services were held at St. Luke UMC, Sanford.

Henry Westbrook Lee (Cap-ital District - retired) died Nov. 1. Funeral services were held Dec. 4 in Benson UMC.

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin, “Lord, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name...”

Prayer: What Someone Else Has Said:

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**Prayer:**

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin, “Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name...”

Prayer: What Someone Else Has Said:

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As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin, “Walk with me, Lord, as I bring who I am before the throne of grace...”

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