

VIM Meditation I  
Don Lee

Matthew 6:8-15

Prayer is essential for the spiritual life. Even more so, prayer is essential for mission. It's so easy to get "busy" doing good things for others and forget the uniqueness of our call as followers of Jesus Christ. Prayer not only reminds us of our identity as children of God, it sanctifies our inner world (makes it holy) so that the kingdom might come in and through us. True mission comes from the soul. I believe Jesus taught his disciples to pray, to prepare them for mission.

On his way to school, my eight-year old son and I take turns praying. There is nothing eloquent about the prayers we make. They are spontaneous and usually deal with practical stuff like thanking God for the day, asking for patience, protection, and the willingness to be kind and help others in need. While I pray often, this 'morning prayer' I look most forward to. It is the gift of spiritual intimacy not only with "our Father in heaven," but with my own son. Prayer is God's gift of 'our daily bread.'

Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

## VIM Meditation 2

Don Lee

Luke 15:11-32

In Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son, a father divides the family estate between his sons. The younger son takes his share and leaves for a distant country where he squanders his wealth in riotous living. His poverty, hastened by a famine leaves him knee-deep in pig muck, dressed in rags, and starving. Suddenly, the Prodigal remembers who he is. He is a child of his mother and father, and brother to an elder son. He is a member of a family and part of a community. Even more, he is a child of God. It is when he remembers his identity that he realizes he still has a home to go to. When the son returns, he is greeted with the open arms of unconditional acceptance.

While not explicit, there is a sense that something deeper is at work. Just as desire pulls the prodigal to a distant country far from his home, there is a force at work pulling him back. In the church we call that force, grace.

Grace is the action of God ushering in the reign of God. The signs of God's reign include healing, reconciliation and restoration. When we reach out in love and compassion to those in need, whether it's patching a roof, feeding the hungry, or merely being a caring presence, we are facilitating God's grace. When we participate in the work of God, grace happens for both the giver and the receiver.

Prayer: Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as your deserve; to give and not count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we do your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. – Ignatius of Loyola

VIM Meditation 3  
Don Lee

Matthew 6:8-15

The “Lord’s Prayer” has an inherently missional focus. It seeks the reign of God on earth “as it is in heaven.” Some may view their own failure and sin as an obstacle to a relationship with a holy God. However, Jesus as the self-communication of God redefines holiness in terms of unconditional love. Indeed, parables such as the *Lost Sheep*, the *Lost Coin*, and the *Lost son* in Luke 15, reveal a God who is not only approachable but who earnestly seeks a relationship with all of humanity. God’s salvation is always at hand.

The Lord’s Prayer not only addresses God’s relationship with us, (for example, how God provides for our needs), it also addresses our relationships with one another. The prayer suggests that we cannot expect forgiveness from God if we refuse to forgive others. Thus our reconciliation with God is somehow interrelated to the reconciliation of our world.

Following 20 years of war, the government of Uganda recently agreed to a ceasefire with the *Lord’s Resistance Army*, a rebel army of abducted children guilty of great atrocities. The Acholi people have their own solution for dealing with the war crimes of the LRA. It is the *mataput*-the word means drinking a bitter root from a common cup – and is a traditional reconciliation ceremony. The Alcohli people may have, if not perhaps a more sophisticated understanding of justice, at least a more Christian one. It is in the Eucharistic image of the common cup that we are reminded of our identity. We are all members of God’s family.

Prayer: Renew your church, O Lord. Save us from cheap words and self-deception in your service. In the power of your Spirit transform us, and shape us by your cross. Amen. –South African prayer, 20<sup>th</sup> century

VIM Meditation 4  
Don Lee

Luke 1:46-53

Mary's song praises God for bringing salvation to God's people. She speaks of a new world order. In God's Kingdom, the poor are filled and the rich walk away empty handed. Her words are a gentle reminder that one can be impoverished despite their wealth, just as the poor can be blessed even in their poverty.

Last November I took part in a mission trip to flood ravaged New Orleans. An A.M.E. church in the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward had received extensive damage. The church was located in an economically depressed area so it saddened our team to throw away most of the church's furnishings. Two elderly church members, Alton and Chaney, joined us daily at the worksite. Both in their 80's these two men worked as hard as any of our team members ripping out damaged sheet rock to be replaced. We were inspired by their commitment, faith, and joy. On a return trip six months later, I learned from their pastor that these two men had single-handedly replaced all the sheet rock we had collectively removed. It was then I realized just how rich this church really is.

The good news is that God is at work in the world bringing justice and peace to all people. Wealth is not an obstacle to blessing anymore than poverty is an obstacle to grace. Poor or rich we are all God's children, and if children, then heirs of the Kingdom. God's mercy is for everyone. We have only to respond to it.

Prayer: Glorious God, source of joy and righteousness, enable us as redeemed and forgiven children evermore to rejoice in singing your praises. Grant that what we sing with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives; so that being doers of the Word and not hearers only, we may receive everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. –prayer by Fred D. Gealy, USA 20<sup>th</sup> cent.