

This week has been interesting. It has been a lot of ups and downs. We have had a lot of birthdays this week and a lot of sad news. But all week long, I don't know why, but this week and last week, I got asked 3 questions by multiple people all over town. Whenever I would go somewhere, someone would ask me one of these three questions. The first question: what year did I graduate? That is a random question to be asked this week and last week. The second question: was why or I should say am I or did I watch the debate? That was a big question in the last two weeks. And the third was some form of question about the Lord's Prayer. Why do we say it? When do we say it? Why is the catholic version different? Why do some places want to be more inclusive than other places? And really out of all of it, that is the hardest question to answer.

The first question is really easy. Anyone can look it up. I graduated in '92. The second one was NO! I was not going to watch it. I didn't watch it because I did not want to get upset and talk about it up here. And the third has a lot of different answers. It has a lot of different meanings to many many people. The Lord's Prayer is a fantastic opportunity for us. It is something Jesus taught us. Something he brought to us directly. Something that came from him. But it is interesting because it is only in 2 of the 4 gospels. It isn't in Mark or John. It is in Matthew and Luke. Today's version is much longer than the Luke version. But we need to remember that each Gospel was written for very specific people.

Mark was the first one. He was trying to get the word of God and Jesus's teachings out to everyone he could. Matthew and Luke came back later and said we need to include these things. Matthew wrote his gospel for Jewish Christians. Luke wrote his for Gentiles in terms they would understand. That is what God does. He speaks to us in ways we can hear him. Ways we do not always listen that he means for us to hear. And the Lord's Prayer is a great easy to remind us because all of us know it. It is something that we do, not just happening because praying is so hard. It shouldn't be hard. But it is. Finding the right words sometimes is very difficult. But the Lord's Prayer gives us an opportunity that we can share when we don't know what to say. And we know that God knows everything. He knows what is in our hearts so we don't need to be flashy and loud and yelling at the top of our lungs as we pray.

The reading tells us that we can pray in secret because it doesn't matter. He is going to know. He knows what is in our hearts. He knows what we are trying to ask, whether we can find the words ourselves or not. It makes it a great opportunity. Sometimes when I don't know what to pray, if I am having a really bad day. I don't know what help I know. I know I am not going to ask God to buy me a car. I am not going to ask for material things. I am going to ask for things that mean something: for wisdom, for patience, for somebody else, but sometimes you just don't have the words. And it's a great time that you can just say it. You can just simply say the Lord's Prayers. He knows what you need. He is going to give you that protection. He is going to give you that guidance. He is going to give you all that you need, even if you don't know what you need. It is a wonderful, wonderful thing. We don't always know.

I spent a year in Arkansas at the University of Arkansas doing some work there. And a friend of mine is a very unique individual. When you first see him, the first thing you think is this guy is weird. His clothes never match. His hair is going every direction it can and you never know what he is going to say. But he is a fantastic individual. He will do anything he can for you. And he is very midwestern in appearance. So he invites me to his church one day. I am like okay, great. I will gladly go. And we walk in and it is a Baptist church in the middle of

Fayetteville, Arkansas. It is not near campus. It is on the outside of town. We sit down and they start playing the piano, playing the prelude. Then a dude does cartwheels down the aisle. I am like this is not what I expected. They are screaming and yelling. And they are literally doing cartwheels and speaking in tongues. He is loving it. He is in the heart of it all. He is so happy, and I am like what is going on. This is not me. I am not that type of person. But then we got to the Lord's Prayer and all of us stopped. Everybody stopped and we all said the Lord's Prayer together. It is a great reminder that no matter what our differences are that no matter how we preach, how we worship, we have that moment.

Even when you go to Lenten Lunches and we have people from all over town there. And when the Catholics get to their part, they stop. They give the rest of us the respect to finish. They give us the moment to continue on even though they don't say it the way we do. They still respect it. And they respect that we all worship and love God in our own way. We talk to him how we can hear. How he can hear us. We share a moment that goes across all boundaries. It is a wonderful thing.

And if you are wondering, which I am sure somebody is. We didn't always used to say the last line. We were like the Catholics. We all said up to that point, everybody did. And when they changed to the King James version to include the last line, the Church of England started saying the end and all the other Protestant faiths followed. So at one point we were all Christians all saying the same Lord's Prayer. We found a way that we wanted to continue our faith just as they continued their's.