

**“Deliver us from Evil”**  
**Lent: Teach us to Pray**  
**Matthew 6:7-15**  
**04/02/2023**

### Recap of Series

Well today we are wrapping up this journey we’ve been on over the course of Lent working through the Lord’s Prayer asking the same request as Jesus’ first disciples in Luke 11 - Lord, teach us to pray. That’s been the title of our series and what we’ve been seeking together to do as a church family through our Lent Guide and these daily rhythms of prayer.

But I’ve realized, as I often do when we come to the end of a sermon series, that we easily could’ve titled this series something else, *namely – ways to commune with God.* (Now that would have been not nearly as catchy but...)

### **That’s what we’ve seen consistently week in and week out is it not?**

As one pastor writes - what we see in the Lord’s Prayer is that every **delight** (hallowed be your name), **distress** (the laments of our lives), **desire** (daily bread), and **debt** (forgive us our debts) are invitations back into communion with God. Delight, distress, desire, and debt (I love a good alliteration).

But that is the stuff of our life, is it not? That’s the human existence – ping-ponging around these realities – and so as we’ve been trying to see each week – if that is the stuff of our everyday life, then all of life is an invitation to communion with God if we would learn to pray. That’s this underlying thread in the Lord’s Prayer.

This week we’re finishing the Lord’s Prayer with verse 13 – **And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

Letting our **dangers** be a place of communion with God.

**Pray.**

### Introduction

**Andrew Delbanco.** In 1995 Andrew Delbanco, a professor at Columbia University and a self-described non-observant Jewish man released a book entitled *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil.* In the book, Delbanco tries to grapple with the historical basis for why American society as a whole seems to have no room for a cosmological or spiritual evil anymore.

In one part, he references a scene near the beginning of the 1991 horror classic *The Silence of the Lambs.* In the scene, a young FBI agent, Clarice Starling, asks the cannibalistic serial killer Hannibal Lecter what happened to him in his life to make him so corrupt and twisted. To which Hannibal replies – “nothing happened to me...I happened. You can’t reduce me to a set of influences...Look at me. Can you stand to say I’m evil?”

In response to the scene, Delbanco writes...

**“Modern people cannot answer the monster’s question. A gulf has opened up in our culture between the visibility of evil and the intellectual resources for coping with it...We have jettisoned in the West the idea of cosmic evil, or transcendent evil, or supernatural evil.”**

This is true in the broader West, and I think true for many of us in the room today...

- For example, what is your first response to this headline from March 7th of this year – *28 Girls Taken to Hospital for 'Anxiety,' Fainting After Using Ouija Boards at School in Colombia*.
- Or what is your reaction and anger directed towards when you read the title of this article, released after the tragedy in Nashville this week – *There have been more mass shootings than days in 2023*.
- Or let me bring it even more into your life – if you were to come to me and tell me you're struggling with anything, you name it – fighting with your spouse, struggling to read your Bible and pray, being physically unable to forgive someone in your group such that your whole body tenses up when you see them – and my counsel included something like – “pray against the power of satan and evil” – what would your response be?

Maybe even right now you're like – what did I walk into? I'll see you guys next week for Easter...

I think many of us, at least functionally, have very little category for the spiritual reality of evil let alone a personal worker of evil the Scriptures show us in the Satan, Satan, the Devil.

**And yet, if we're going to be Jesus-people, which we are as His followers, perhaps we should be a little more willing to see even what Jesus dealt with and spoke to regarding the existence of evil.**

- There are at least 12 different stories in the gospel accounts of Jesus casting out a demon from an individual.
- **Luke 10:19 – 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.**
- **Luke 22:31-32 – 31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”**

In other words, without even considering other places in the NT, just looking at the life and teachings of Jesus, it is not hard to argue that the existence of the spiritual forces of evil is not an outdated idea, or an antiquated fairy-tale aspect of our faith – but rather an essential reality we must live in light of in this whole thing we call life with God.

**But what does this have to do with prayer and what does this have to do with us learning to pray – “deliver us from evil”?**

**To understand that we need to zoom out a bit to the 30,000 ft level, and I need to show us what the NT teaches about evil and how it functions in the world.**

### **New Testament Teachings on Spiritual Warfare**

#### **1. There is a spiritual realm.**

Now, before we get to evil, we have to first just establish a spiritual world. Which might be a bit of a challenge for us because...Most of us grew up in the modern secular west, so we have been trained to live life in what philosopher Charles Taylor called “The Immanent Frame”. (We've talked about this before).

At its most basic level, the immanent frame is the notion that everything in the world is part of a natural order understandable without reference to anything outside itself.

That what is right in front of you and measurable and studiable is what is.

Author Mike Cospers picks up on this idea when he writes – **“I am programmed to expect that the world is what I can see, touch, and measure, and any thought or idea that runs against that expectation is met with resistance...I don’t think I’m alone. I believe that most people experience something similar - a subtle-but-strong resistance to faith and a skepticism toward anything that veers toward the supernatural.”**

Now how we got here as a society and the massive implications of what it means for our discipleship to Jesus are fascinating but beyond the scope of this sermon, my point is just this – everything in the world around you is going to position you to a default setting of skepticism towards anything transcendent, or supernatural, or spiritual.

***But the Bible constantly points us past and beyond what we can experience with our senses to a spiritual reality.***

I mean just consider a few examples from the Scriptures:

**2 Corinthians 4:18 – 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**

**Hebrews 11:1+3 – Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen...By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.**

There is a spiritual, unseen realm. There is life beyond what we can see, taste, touch, smell, and hear. There is a spiritual world...

**And this matters, because of the 2nd reality the NT is very clear on...**

## **2. In that spiritual realm, there are spiritual forces of evil.**

You can’t get past the 3rd chapter of the Bible (Gen 3) without seeing that there are two opposing forces throughout history – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness.

There is a spiritual realm. Spiritual forces exist in that spiritual realm. And those spiritual forces are either **good** or **evil**.

So we hear Delbanco’s quote – the West has given up the idea of cosmic, transcendent, supernatural evil and we, as Bible believing Christians, say “nope, not us!” We learn to live with this as a category, not just of belief but one that affects our lives. Because the spiritual world affects the physical world and vice versa.

Which leads to point 3...

## **3. Those spiritual forces of evil are against the people of God.**

Jesus teaches us to pray – **deliver us from evil**. Or some translations – **the evil one**. When Jesus says to pray “deliver us from evil” – evil is not some abstract idea out there that stays put in the spiritual realm.

**Evil, in the Scriptures, is a personal force(s) bent against and seeking to destroy the people of God.**

**1 Peter 5:8 – Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

**Ephesians 6:10-12 – 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle**

**against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

We wrestle against the spiritual forces of evil. Against the cosmic powers over this present darkness. This is weight and sobering stuff.

We have an enemy, seeking/straining/moving to devour us with his schemes.

**The Schemes of the Devil + the spiritual forces of evil:**

- **Gen 3 - Deceiver** – The one who would lie to us and get us to question God’s goodness and kindness. That part of you that would say something like “I know God is good, but...” that is a scheme of your enemy.
- **Rev 12 - Accuser** – The one who would seek to stand over those of us who are declared righteous, holy, and clean and forgiven because of faith in Jesus and say “nope, not good enough.” That part of you that believes “I’ve trusted in Jesus but there’s still stuff I have to do to earn God’s love” – that is a scheme of your enemy.
- **Matt 4+13 - Tempter** – The one who would press on your sin nature, the already inside of you wicked desires you have, and entice you to follow them, to chase after and look for life apart from God. “I know this is not good for me, but...” – that is a scheme of your enemy.
- **Jude - Dis-unifier** – That part of you that refuses to forgive, or suddenly wants to question every motive or action of people in your community group, or the part of you that wants to run from community, or gossip and destroy church unity – that is a scheme of your enemy.
- **2 Cor 4 - Blinder** – blinding the minds of unbelievers such that they will not worship or turn to God.
- **Luke 13 + 2 Cor 12 + Job - Sickness** – that part of how the enemy and spiritual forces of evil might work is through physical pain

In other words – **The problem is that evil doesn't just exist, it exists to make war against the people of God.**

The spiritual forces of evil are against you flourishing as the people of God – in your physical health, in your identity in Christ Jesus, by tempting your sin nature towards all sorts of sin, by disrupting your unity with other believers...You have an enemy.

**And if I can just pause here for a moment – and do a quick pastoral aside...**

Part of why this matters so much, that we realize who our enemy actually is – is because when we forget our real enemy, we start making up and attacking new ones.

- When we lose sight of our real enemy, our spouse becomes the enemy.
- When we lose sight of our real enemy, our CG leader becomes the enemy.
- When we lose sight of our real enemy, our living situation, our job, our stress at work becomes the enemy.
- When we lose sight of our real enemy, the person on the other side of the political aisle from us becomes the enemy.

And I see so many Christians remembering “the spiritual life is a war” but doing incredible amounts of damage to themselves and others when they forget who that war is against.

**Evil, in the Scriptures, is a personal force(s) bent against and seeking to destroy the people of God.**

**But if we just stop there, we’re left in fear.**

Stopping at point 3 is what drives so much of Christian fear and defeatism. We've got an enemy, he's on the prowl, I'm doomed. And we live in fear of evil – fear of temptation, fear of who we might become, fear of the future, fear of the next election, legislation, the next cultural change.

And we forget this central reality of the story...

#### 4. Christ triumphs over evil.

At the heart of what Jesus came to do was disarm, demolish, and destroy the enemy and His kingdom. The arrival of Jesus onto the scene 2000 years ago, and the Kingdom of God He ushers in with Him is a declaration of war against those who would oppose Him.

Jesus comes, he lives the perfect life (resisting the kingdom of darkness while on earth), He dies, and He rises again defeating satan, sin, and death.

#### Just look at how the NT talks about it:

1 John 3:8 – The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Col 2:15 – [Christ] disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

**Tripp's Birthday.** The best picture I can give of this is from a few weeks ago. We've become friends with a few families in our neighborhood who have kids around our kids' ages. And one of them turned 2 and so we went to his party, and they brought in this guy with a company called *Party Pets*, who brings all these animals to birthday parties for kids to interact with.

And one of the first ones he brings out is this giant snake. I mean it's huge and I HATE snakes. But Harper is like the first one to get up, he like wraps it around her like a belt. I'm freaking out but she's confident as all get out. Not my kid. She's also not that brave. Last week we had a meltdown over soccer. So there we are.

But here's the thing about that snake at the party – whenever someone is getting ready to have a snake available at things like this for folks to pet and interact with, they will de-venom them. Meaning even though the snake seems scary, and even though it still in the words of my 3 year old Harper "has sharp teeth" – it's been disarmed. It cannot do real damage.

It might still bite. It could still hurt. But there is no more venom.

That's what Paul tells us in Colossians. Jesus has disarmed the spiritual forces of evil. He has disarmed the evil one. Though they may still attack and though at times it may still hurt – there is no more venom. He has total control over them, they can be overcome, they have been disarmed by Jesus.

**So the NT waves both flags really high. Two big alarm bells: We're at war with the spiritual forces of evil who are seeking to devour us as the people of God AND Jesus reigns. He's disarmed all of the powers and forces of evil.**

#### 5. So we pray "deliver us from evil".

That's what this line is. When Jesus teaches us to pray – **deliver us from evil** – it's a simple prayer of sober-minded, awake and alert, confident in the coming victory request – Father, keep us safe. Rescue us from every accusation, every

lie of deceit, every temptation, every seed of disunity, every sickness, every attack – hedge us in and protect us from the spiritual forces of evil.

**Why?** Because there is still a war for us to fight.

Christ has defeated death. He has disarmed the rulers and authorities, triumphing over them in his death and resurrection. And yet, you know this – we still are at war. We still face temptation, deceit, accusation, sickness, death, the powers of evil in the pain points and suffering of our world.

**That is because we live in this middle space theologians call the “already, but not yet.”**

- **The already** – Christ has come, lived, died, and rose again. Satan has been defeated.
- **But not yet** – there is still a war being fought as we await Christ's 2nd coming. The day in the future promised by the Scriptures where Christ will return, his victory which is guaranteed will be brought into fruition, and the enemy will be laid aside for all eternity.

**D-Day.** The best example I have of this is World War II. When the Allied forces landed on the coast of Normandy on June 6, 1944, Germany was all but defeated. Within 2 months the Germans were in full retreat out of France, the allies had won the war. However, it would be another 9 months of skirmishes and battles until the war in Europe was officially over with the German surrender on May 7, 1945. **Though the war had been won, battles were still being fought.**

That is where we are now – in the waiting time of leftover battles. The war is over. A victory is assured. And yet we still fight now as we await Christ's return and ultimate victory.

**“Deliver us from evil” is a call to action.** To be alert. To be awake. To be on guard against the powers of evil.

That's what Paul says in **Ephesians 6 – there are spiritual forces of evil that we must stand against. How? The whole armor of God.** There are ways we learn to stand guard against the forces of evil. We love to talk about the fun stuff - helmet of salvation, sword, shield. Those sound kind of cool.

But look at how he ends it – **Eph 6:18 – 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.**

**There is a spiritual realm, with powers of evil, attacking us as the people of God, yet powerless under the reign of Christ...so we pray deliver us from evil.**

### Conclusion

That's the invitation of this line – we go to our heavenly Father and we pray – Lord, deliver us from evil.

**What if this week we let every danger lead us to prayer?**

**Every threat of evil:**

- **Every temptation, deceit, accusation that rises up within our soul.**
- **Every act of hatred, violence, wickedness that happens in our world.**
- **Every threat of danger we face as the people of God.**

We know how to typically buffer ourselves from or fight against danger – we go to the doctor, we go to the therapist, we go to the bank, we go to our boss, we go to our social media platforms.

What would it look like if this week we first ran to prayer?

Danger from the spiritual forces of evil comes up in our lives, whatever it may be, and it becomes an invitation to prayer. An invitation back into communion with the heavenly Father.

**Every danger or temptation from evil you face can be a place of communion with God if you bring it to him in prayer.**

### **Carpenter Bees.**

What if that was our posture this week in prayer?

### **Practice**

#### **Prayers of Spiritual Warfare.**

##### **1. Look**

JI Packer – **“Can you yet see your own life in terms of being threatened and endangered by evil of all sorts, and so of needing God’s deliverance every moment? If not, believe me, you cannot yet see what you are looking at! You are like a person wandering blindfolded and with ears plugged in the middle of a city street, with traffic coming both ways.”**

##### **2. Discern (with community)**

##### **3. Pray for deliverance**

*Read Psalm 59 from Sheltering Mercy.*