

Way back when I was a rebellious teenager, I spent a lot of time raging against the machine from the comfort of a middle-class home with carpet that didn't have tacks sticking through the edges and three bathrooms complete with showers. After a rough start teetering on the edge of poverty, we ended up pretty comfortable by the time my angst boiled over. At that point, I was still going to church, but I wasn't super happy about it. I'd negotiated a deal that let me off the hook most Sunday mornings, so long as I went on Wednesday or Saturday nights, unless of course, I was on the schedule to acolyte. Then I'd brood behind the altar and hope no one noticed just how little I wanted to be there. Or hoped everyone noticed. One night, I was feeling particularly grumpy and started writing what I was sure'd be the first of its kind: a rewording of the Lord's Prayer to reflect my then-agnostic -- or maybe even atheist when I was feeling brave enough -- beliefs. I began, "Our Father, who *aren't* in heaven..." Did you catch that? "Who aren't in heaven?" Bold stuff, right? Well, I was just getting started. My fingertips blazed out that first phrase on the computer keys and my stride was thoroughly hit, and then Mom called "Dinner" down the stairs, so I put my revolution on hold to eat popcorn shrimp and canned green beans or some other wholesome meal brought to you by Mom & Wal\*Mart. By the time dinner was over, my full belly outweighed the rage in my head, and I went to bed full but ready to fight another day. Well, the next day, Mom asked what I'd been working on. After I'd gone to bed, she'd found that first daring line and called me out. For context, Mom was much more strict in her religious persuasion than I, and her take was not one to be questioned. So, quick thinking me, I lied. I told her I was thinking about how God must not be in heaven because God's down here with us, walking around and doing stuff, and that's where I was headed. She called my bluff and just said, "Hmm. Well, I'd be interested to read it when it's finished." Shoot. Busted. Well, now I had to write something, and I wasn't about to push any further than I already had. I finished writing something that was not good and not earth-shattering and not at all what I felt and definitely did not allow myself the space to work through the idea that was brooding in there at the time.

Thing is, I think both Mom and I were wrong about the Lord's Prayer. Mom thought, more than anything, it was about obedience. You say this because Jesus said to say it. And I thought, more than anything, it was about obedience. You say this because Mom said to say it. And both of us were wrong. Kind of. Mom was wrong because she missed the fruit of that prayer, that Jesus' disciples ask him how to pray, and he says, "Say this." It's a great one to repeat over and over again, but it's also a great model for how to put together other prayers. "Dear God, you are God and you've got things going on we can't imagine. If you've got a spare minute, consider these one or two things we're asking for. Did we mention you're awesome? Amen." Sure, you can repeat it rote, but how much fuller can our lives of prayer become if we take that model and expand what we can pray about? And I was wrong because I missed the fruit of that prayer, too, that the revolution I was grumbling for was right there in the prayer I was grumbling about! God who aren't in heaven? Well, that's the whole point of the guy that's hosting the how-to-pray seminar! That's Jesus, nicknamed "Emmanuel" or "God-among-us" because he's not way far away. He's right here! And the revolution starts right away with an authority figure that has a kingdom the likes of which no human empire has ever seen and surely can't compete with. A kingdom that takes the rules of power and productivity of this world and reduces them to "the imaginations of our hearts." That's a kingdom that will come and supplant the ruling classes of the world, a kingdom that will come and lift up the lowly, a kingdom that will come and feed the hungry, exalt the poor, and elevate the excluded. That's a kingdom that provides daily bread, provides sustenance, provides for the needs of the body without asking about deservedness or earnings or whether or not they can be trusted with a handout.

And that's a kingdom that assumes you will forgive even the worst of those who have wronged you, and a kingdom that assumes you will be forgiven for the worst of what you've wrought.

My angsty self couldn't see the revolution right in front of me, and while I'm not even sure my mother could see it, if she had, she'd have been terrified of what it would mean. I once heard someone describe the story of Jesus with tongue thoroughly planted in cheek, as the "Socialist Hellscape of The Gospels." The Gospel of Jesus is a mighty scary place, assuming you like how things are going in this world, or at least benefit from how things are going. But we have seen the failings of human systems time and again. Empires gorge themselves expanding into other lands and other fortunes with what must feel like infinite growth potential, only to deflate and crumble and crash down. There's always a bigger fish, or a richer fish, or an incredibly poor school of fish that just won't give up. Nations endure and succeed and fail with a sort of economic respiration across time. Cities blossom by riversides and thrive and flood and thrive again. All things come to an end, all things in their season. Few end gracefully, some sputter out, in flames, in ashes, in abandoned homes and fields reclaimed by creation. The thing we can count on, over and over again, is that no matter the economic or political system, it will fall short, always will fall short of thy kingdom come. Of course, some are closer to what God has in mind, and many are a far cry from that justice and peace. But none of them fully promote what we say we're about.

You know, I love it that we say the Lord's Prayer every time we come together. We say it in Eucharist and Morning Prayer and our Prayer Vigil. It's an anthem for us, a cross your heart moment in each service that centers us all together in those reddest of red letters taught to us by Jesus himself. But if we just say these words because Jesus said to and don't actually look at what the words are saying, we're a literalist mother and a privileged kid with a rebellious streak. Look at those words, look at all the words we say together, and really hear them. We ought to feel them deep in our soul, to understand what it is we say we're about, and then to act like what we say out loud, in front of God and everybody, act like what we say out loud actually means something. Thy kingdom come? Thy will be done? Down here like thou hadst in mind? The truth is, I don't know if I'm ready for that revolution. I mean, I want to be, but do you know how much each one of us would have to change, would have to share, would have to do if the Kingdom became real right at this moment? It's a beautiful thing we grow towards, but there will absolutely be some growing pains. Of course, if we don't lean into that revolution of Christ, creation groans on and the people sigh with sighs too deep for words. We, each of us, have grown up in systems, systems that have served or failed us, depending on which and when and where. But something has shifted, seems like globally, something nasty and full of trials, something tyrannical and power hungry and greedy and jealous. Something evil lurks, turning up the heat in our lives a half a degree at a time, and it is boiling us alive. That something relies on us not being able to imagine that things might get better. It relies on us saying the words of our prayers but not knowing them for what they are. It relies on us being too tired or too ill-informed or too stubborn or too cynical to try.

There's a line I came across once that says we ought to pray as though everything depends on God and serve as though everything depends on us. I have tried to do the latter my whole life, even when I was ready to rage back in my teens. I have tried to serve as though everything depended on me. And on many occasions, I have prayed as though everything depended on God. But I can only count on these two hands of mine the number of times I've prayed with deep longing for the fullness of God's kingdom to come. Because while revolution must come, revolution is scary. Revolution is scary because it changes everything. Revolution is scary because it changes us. Revolution is scary because it changes me. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done? I don't know if I'm ready for that, so I pray with the hope that the revolution of Christ might just catch hold one heart at a time, and maybe, maybe even in mine. Lord, teach us to pray.