

Blueberry Sunday

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Happy Blueberry Sunday! It's been a while since we've been gathered here on the heels of a festival to give thanks for the blueberry harvest. As this is our first Blueberry Sunday in a couple of years, I'd like to focus on the Lord's Prayer. In times like these—returning to a beloved event and celebrating a harvest—it is especially important to stop and remember that as people of faith, we trust that everything we have comes from God and is to be used for the purposes of God. We hold this festival to help balance our budget, engage with the wider community, and come together in thanksgiving as a faith family.

Also, it is good to pray to God in the face of a humbling miracle whereby a piece of fruit that weighs only .3 grams, or 1/128th of an ounce, has the power to lead to all of what we're celebrating these past three days.

Think about it! To get to an ounce of blueberries, you need, give or take, 128 of those little rascals. And then you need 128 x 16 for a pound, which is just over two thousand wild blueberries per pound. In 2020, the Maine Cooperative Extension said 47.4 million pounds of wild blueberries were harvested in Maine. That's about 95 BILLION little blueberries—and most of them were from Washington County. That boggles the mind. And those numbers are not up there with some of the biggest harvesting years.

Blueberry Sunday gives us the space to stop and give thanks for the things that boggle our minds, things that come from God, beginning with the pollinators who jump-start the whole thing as they tend to little white flowers that eventually give way to little blueberries. Sun and rain do all the hard work, and when rain is not so plentiful, we can pray thanks for irrigation systems.

We give thanks for migrant and local farmers who work the fields, so that in the end we can give thanks for tastebuds and the many hands that come together to create the festival that leads to parades and pies, a beautiful quilt, fish fries, a dessert buffet, food trucks, t-shirts, vendors, a special US Postal stamp, music, and dancing, along with all the other ways this worshipping and wider community come together every third weekend in August—forty-five times now. And the sum is always greater than the parts.

At the end of it all, our legs and feet are tired, our minds anxious over whether or not the money raised will be enough, we may experience or witness some cranky moments and some spectacular moments. We greet old friends and make new ones, we see old ideas that are no longer useful and new ideas waiting to be tried next year. Old memories are brought to mind and new memories are made—all while cleaning up messes and packing away leftovers. All of that and more first fueled by a piece of fruit that weighs 1/128th of an ounce.

If that doesn't move us to pray to God, I don't know what will.

When I think back on all the prayers I have offered or shared across my past seven years with you, I have always taught you to pray to God in all sincerity. Meaning pray what is true for you, pray by being present to the contents of your heart, and pray with all humility. Pray without attachment to the outcome, and pray in a way that leaves you open to how the Divine might answer.

On one hand, while it is an enormous act of humility to come before God in hope or in need. On the other hand, how wonderful to have a place to bring these things and trust they are lovingly received and always understood.

It is good and right to pray.

Part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount—including the Beatitudes, which we looked at last week—also includes instructions on praying to God. And even though Jesus was addressing his disciples, that same way of praying holds true across time.

To begin, Jesus instructs that praying to God should be done not for show, but for sincerity. When we pray to God, we are to pray in a way that keeps the focus off our egos and centered on God. Praying in this way keeps the prayer in the realm in which prayers are received. It's not a realm that can or should be observed, because it's the private space between you and the Divine. It's like the space between a bee and the nectar it's sipping. It's a sacred space. Now, I recognize we pray regularly together in a way that is seen by each other, but that's different because that's what is called cooperate prayer.

Then Jesus tells his disciples they don't need to sweeten God up before offering the contents of their hearts. Lest we forget, our maker knows what's on our hearts anyway. No need to add sugar. The berries are sweet enough and complete as is, meaning God requires nothing but a sincere and present heart.

After providing the hows of approaching prayer, Jesus then teaches the way in which to pray, beginning with that familiar opening line, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name."

Let's pause to remember that while Jesus taught in his native tongue, Aramaic, none of his teachings were written down in Aramaic at the time. None of the firsthand eyewitnesses to his teachings were alive when his stories and teaching were written down. These things were told and retold in the oral tradition and eventually written down—in Greek.

What I'd like to do now is move through The Lord's Prayer as Middle Eastern scholar Neil Douglas Klotz imagines Jesus intended to teach it, based on what the prayer might have been like in Aramaic. The Aramaic language has a mystical element to it—it holds things beyond words in many layers and levels, embodying a Spirit that is difficult to capture.

But first, let's consider how critical the opening word is, for it addresses the universality and the connectedness of the Divine. By saying "Our," we are recalling our connectedness to each other,

our belonging, and our place in relationship to the Holy. Most critical is the reminder that we did not birth all of this—the Cosmos did.

Again, to save myself from embarrassment, I will not read the Aramaic but only the English translation of The Lord's Prayer imagined in its original Aramaic. As I bring our forty-fifth Blueberry Sunday message to a close, I pray this prayer with thanksgiving for all that we shared and received across our festival because of something God gave us: Wild Blueberries.

Abwoon d'bwashmaya

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos/ you create all that moves in light.

Nethqadash shmakh

Focus your light within us—make it useful: as the rays of a beacon show the way.

Teytey malkuthakh

Create your reign of unity now—through our fiery hearts and willing hands.

Nehwey sebyanach aykanna d'bwashmaya aph b'arha.

Your one desire then acts with ours, as in all light, so in all forms.

Habwlan lachma d'sunqanan yaomana.

Grant what we need each day in bread and insight: subsistence for the call of growing life.

Washboqlan khaubayn (wakhtahayn) aykana daph khnan shbwoqan l'khayyabayn.

Loose the cords of mistakes binding us, as we release the strands we hold of others' guilt.

VWela tahlan l'nesyuna

Don't let us enter forgetfulness

Ela patzan min bisha.

But free us from unripeness

Metol dilakhie malkutha wahayla wateshbukhta l'ahlam almin.

From you is born all ruling will, the power and the life to do, the song that beautifies all, from age to age it renews.

Ameyn.

Truly. Power to these statements. May they be the source from which all my actions grow. Sealed in trust and faith.

Amen.