**COMMENTARY Matthew 6:7-14 (Narrative Lectionary, NL124)**

Each version of *The Lord’s Prayer* gives us, gifts a fresh way to meditate, think about and wonder at the expansiveness of God. And John Philip Newell version is no different. In fact, there were three ways in which Newell’s re-working of the words this familiar passage and prayer opened up new thoughts and connections for me this week.

The first was in the names he used to open his prayer: “Ground of all being,” “Mother of life,” “Father of the universe.” Pastor Lori has already mentioned how integrating new and different ways of addressing God can expand how we understand and perceive God. So, allow these many names of God to also expand and energize your imagination. Let them be a wonderful way to infuse *The Lord’s Prayer* with new life and meaning again. Newell, actually borrows the phrase “Ground of all being” from someone else, the 20th-century Catholic theologian Paul Tillich. Who saw God as the ground upon which all beings exist. As the life-force and energy from which *all* living and non-living things take their form.

Newell then. continues his prayer with a plea that we would know God’s Presence and God’s longings, balancing his understanding of God’s transcendence with God’s immanence. He prayers that we human beings may someday come to align our will, our desires, our longings with the Maker of human beings. This is a way of appreciating that for people to relate or respond to the Ground of Being, it is helpful to visualize a personal God. One that has longings and desires, extend love and good things to us, and wants to be in relationship with us. This is a prayer for a ‘oneness’ with God. A Christian concept that echoes something of Buddhist teachings. One Buddhist thinker explained that “‘oneness’ doesn’t deny distinctions between two contrasting ideas, entities, or principles. Rather, it asserts that, while different, neither can be considered independent of the other…there is a dynamic relationship between them.” Newell’s words, remind us that we were made to be in a dynamic relationship with our Maker.

And finally, as I was meditating on this notion of oneness with God, that idea it began to shape how I understood Newell’s next interpretive choice. He writes, “May there be food for the human family today *and* for the whole earth community.” What a beautifully inclusive rending of “Give us this day our daily bread.” One that really takes seriously the prayer to have God’s longings be “our longings in heart and in action.” To include the “whole earth community” in his prayer Newell draws our attention to the fact that not only human beings require food and sustenance. And in this Western industrialized world, we humans often understand ourselves to be separate from the natural world, but we are not. We are subject to the same forces that determine survival, as much as, the rest of the natural world. We suffer when there is polluted air and water. We suffer, when it doesn’t rain, or it rains too much. We flourish when trees are allowed to grow on hillsides, preventing landslides, protecting shelter for animals, and convert CO2 into breathable oxygen. We flourish when ecosystems are restored, and biodiversity is protected. And so, when you pray for yourself and for your loved ones, when you pray in *The Lord’s Prayer* “Give us this day our daily bread” may the “us” be all of earth community.

As we continue our reflections through readings and song, take time to bathe in the presence of God, the “Ground of all Being,” the “Mother of life and Father of the universe” that longs for relationship with you, and between all of the members of earth’s beautiful and diverse community.