
Make Us Bold To Pray

**An Evensong meditation by the Rev. Canon Lauren Holder
observing the Feast of Lancelot Andrewes**

Today the church remembers Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, who is not the Lancelot of Camelot, but a Lancelot known for his preaching, known for his prayers, and known for overseeing the translation of the King James Bible.

Of course, now we have many English translations of the Bible. At the 7am Tuesday Bible study here at the Cathedral, everyone brings whatever translation they prefer to read... some NRSV, some NIV, some KJV... and as we go around the room and read the scripture two verses at a time, we get to hear all the various words used for the same concept. It is wonderful to have different translations side-by-side.

But that was not the case in the time of Lancelot Andrewes. Bibles at that time were in the language only clergy had been trained to read: Latin, Greek, Hebrew. So only the clergy could interpret the scriptures. There was no room for private study and devotion. God forbid lay people read their Bibles at home and have their *own ideas* about the words on the page!

King James I, Lancelot Andrewes, and others changed the church and the world by making holy scriptures accessible to anyone who could read the English language. Thanks be to God for that!

I don't know Lancelot Andrewes personally, but I think perhaps his private prayer life is what influenced his desire to make the Bible more accessible to all. The man loved to pray. His book of private devotions is full of beautiful prayers—though if you read them you might wonder if plagiarism was a thing back in the 1600's. I think perhaps he just took the prayers of the church that he loved and put them into his own language so that they would ring that much more true to his lived experience of God's presence in his life.

Our lessons today have something to say about prayer as well. Paul urges us in his letter to Timothy to offer supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all people. Why? Because prayer changes us and changes the world: "so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity." Who here would like some more peace, godliness and dignity in our world? When's the last time you prayed for it? Of course we pray for these things at church, but imagine if we prayed that fervently "seven whole days, not one in seven." That line of course is from George Herbert's poem *King of Glory*—George Herbert who was inspired by Lancelot Andrewes. Seven whole days! Not one in seven.

Jesus prayed a lot. And so his friends asked him how they should pray. They knew how to pray already, but they wanted to pray like Jesus. And Jesus responded in love with the words we now call "The Lord's Prayer." Now we pray the Lord's prayer a lot. Many of us pray it every day, even several times a day. Sometimes when you pray a certain prayer again and again and again, you stop paying attention to what it says. But this prayer Jesus offers his friends is a bold prayer. It's why when we are praying the Eucharist the celebrant signals the start of The Lord's Prayer with the words: We are bold to say.

We are so very bold to pray.

As much as I don't want to suggest there's a right or wrong way to pray... I wonder: If you or I don't feel bold when we pray, are we really praying?

I don't say that to discourage you. If you don't feel bold when you pray, don't stop praying. Praying shapes believing. And it may take a whole bunch of less-than-bold prayers before you start to believe that your prayers

are as bold and transformational as Jesus suggests with his life and example. So just notice if you don't feel bold when you pray. Notice and be curious. Maybe even pray for boldness!

You might try, like Lancelot Andrewes, to take the prayers that are most familiar to you and re-write them with the words on your heart, words that feel more bold than rote.

I believe that prayer can change the world. I believe that prayer can create peace and godliness and dignity. I believe that prayer makes me bold and makes you bold. Bold enough to proclaim God's kingdom right here in our community: Your kingdom come. Bold enough to seek and offer forgiveness. Bold enough to follow Jesus.

I'll close with this prayer of Lancelot Andrewes for the evening:

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers, creator of the changes of day and night, giving rest to the weary, renewing the strength of those who are spent, bestowing upon us occasions of song in the evening. As you have protected us in the day that is past, so be with us in the coming night; keep us from every sin, every evil and every fear; for thou are our light and salvation, and the strength of our life. To you be glory for endless ages. Amen.