

The Farmer: a Parable about the Lord's Prayer



Written by Nate Wilson
Illustrated by Amos Wilson



Once upon a time, there was a small farmer – the farmer himself wasn't very small, but his farmland was small, so he could not grow very much food. This farmer would plant what he could and then harvest it and carry it in a wheelbarrow to the market in the village every day. Sometimes, there would not be much to harvest. On those days, he still took his wheelbarrow to the market with just a few vegetables in it, knowing he wouldn't make much money that day to cover the winter days when no crops would grow.

Well, it was one of those bad days, and this farmer was plodding behind his almost-empty wheelbarrow down the road, when a magnificent carriage pulled by six mighty horses swept around the bend in the road and almost plowed right over him! The farmer heard a yell from inside the gilded carriage and the whole train came to an abrupt stop just beside him.



To his surprise, the king himself emerged from the carriage to speak with him! “Uh oh,” thought the farmer, and he dropped to his knees to grovel upon the gravel, apologizing profusely for upsetting his majesty’s ride and begging forgiveness. He wondered if it hurt very much to have a sword slice through one’s neck. “Quit blubbering and stand up,” said the king, “You’re just the man I’ve been looking for! You see, I am working on an economic recovery plan, and I see from the scarcity of goods in your wheelbarrow that you are in need of capitalization!”

Well, that set the poor farmer’s mind reeling. He began dusting off his threadbare clothes and trying to look like the sort of person worthy of a king’s whatyoumaycallit plan. “My dear man,” continued the king, “here is what you are to do: First, you are to come to my palace tomorrow with an estimate of your family’s daily living expenses. Second, you are to make amends with Duke Crankynose who owns the land hereabouts (You HAVE had run-ins with the old “Crank,” haven’t you? Yes, I thought so!). And, by the way, when you come by my palace, would you remind me to send a hundred brave knights to your county? Very well; good day!”

The poor farmer stood there dumbfounded as the king bowed courteously, returned to his cab with a jaunty wave, and disappeared in a cloud of thundering hooves.

After a few moments of deep thought, the farmer remembered that he was on his way to the market with his meager harvest, so he continued his cumbersome way to the village square.

All day, he thought about the king's message as he greeted townspeople and quickly emptied his wheelbarrow, then trundled home with a pocket jingling only lightly with change. At length, some thoughts took definite shape in his mind, "How dare that pompous monarch strut his benevolence in front of me like that! I bet all he cares about is getting re-elected! In a pig's eye will I ever show up in his throne-room begging for bread! The nerve! I'm doing fine on my own, aren't I? Well, on the other hand, maybe I'll just keep his offer in mind in case I ever need it in the future, but I definitely won't go to the palace tomorrow, because tomorrow is old Crankynoses' birthday, and every year on his birthday, he tries to talk me out of my farm! I've got to be there to stand up to him, and maybe I can think of a good insult I can hurl at old Crankynose when he comes 'round, just to keep him in his place!"

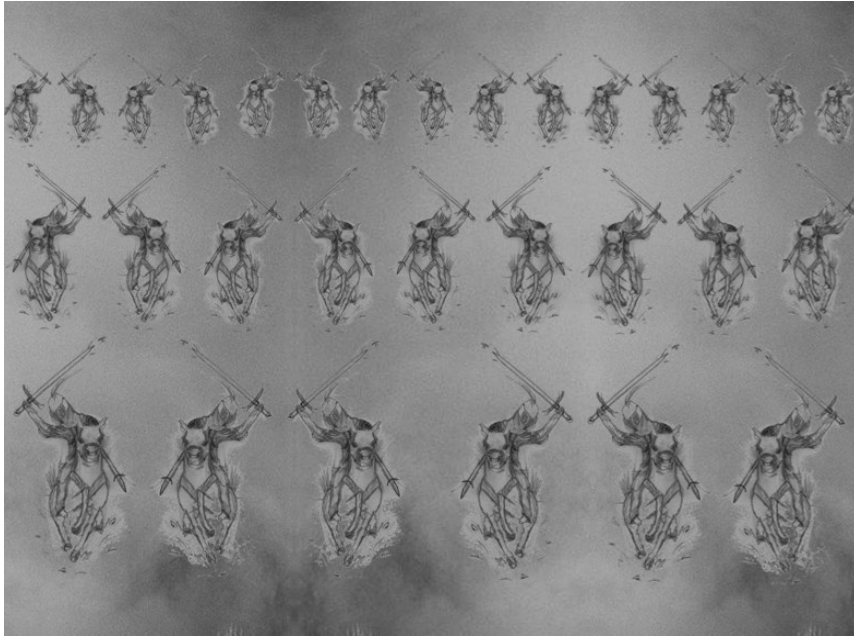
That night, over a bowl of vegetable soup, the farmer treated his bewildered wife to an elaborate critique of economic recovery plans.





Next morning, the farmer went out to pick vegetables from his garden, as usual. True to form, Duke Crankynose came to the farmer's hovel with his annual solicitation of the farmer's property, but this year, things were different. The old duke had been particularly upset by the particularly-exquisite insult hurled at him by the farmer at their last meeting. Crankynose had decided that he was done with dickering and it was time to force the farmer's hand. This year, on his birthday, the Duke arrived with 50 soldiers to drive the farmer and his poor wife off their little bit of land and claim exclusive ownership over the entire countryside!

As Crankynose and his 50 cohorts loomed over the little farm, an icy wind swept over the earth, and the thundering sound of a hundred horses reached their ears. The sun hid behind a cloud and 51 pairs of eyes scanned the horizon for the meaning of this omen. But the farmer chuckled to himself; he remembered the 100 knights the king had mentioned yesterday and he thought to himself, "Now old Crankynose is gonna get what's coming to him!" and he chose an even more choice insult than ever to shock the ears of miserable old Crankynose.



The hundred horsemen hove into view at that moment, all dressed in black and flying a foreign flag. Like a farmer cutting down wheat with a scythe, the enemy army swept through the ranks of Crankynose's men, slaughtering everyone in sight – including the farmer and his wife.

The fearsome horde continued to pillage their way across the countryside until they were stopped in the next county by 100 of the king's knights, together with 50 troops supplied by the local duke (a certain Mr. Much-Forgiven). Legend has it that this strategic defense was masterminded by another local farmer who claimed to have been visited by the king himself...



When you pray, pray thus...



Give us this day our daily bread



Forgive our debts as we forgive...



...deliver us from evil.

We are like the farmers in the parable, and God is like the king who told the farmers to do three things. In the 2nd half of the Lord's Prayer we are instructed to ask God for our daily bread, to forgive and seek forgiveness, and to ask for protection from temptation and evil. Like God, the king in the parable knew the strength of the foreign army; he also knew that the poor farmers and rich dukes needed to be united in order to defend their country, and he also knew that certain actions needed to be taken by the very next day. The first farmer's failure to trust the king, follow the timing of the king, and petition the king according to his instructions resulted in a horrifying disaster.

There could have been a third farmer in the story who went to the king the next day but instead of presenting his daily needs, finding forgiveness, and petitioning for armed forces, as the king had instructed, he might have decided to ask the king to build a ship and appoint him as captain over the new vessel. That farmer would have suffered the same fate as the first farmer, because, although he was petitioning the right king at the right time, he was asking for the wrong thing, and the enemy would have destroyed him while he was waiting for his boat to be built.

All parables have their limitations, but do you see the point? God has given us a list of things to ask of Him in the second half of the Lord's Prayer, and we will find blessing if we ask for the things He tells us to ask for when He tells us to ask for them, rather than asking for something different or failing to ask at all.

~Nate Wilson