

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Pentecost 7C - Proper 12C
July 24, 2022
Luke 11:1-13

Jesus Teaches How to Pray

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." 2 And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread, 4 and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." (Luke 11:1-13 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

No one would deny that prayer is a vital part of the Christian life. After all, the Bible is full of prayers and people praying, and even Jesus Himself often prayed. Besides, God commands us to pray and promises to hear us. Yet, not everything in this life that is called prayer is Christian prayer. After all, other religions claim to pray, but it's not Christian prayer because the object of their prayer is wrong. It's often addressed to a figment of their imagination. Because of this, they can never be sure they will get a favorable hearing. Besides, their prayers do not flow from faith in Christ and are, therefore, worthless.

But Christian prayer is different. It's true prayer because it is addressed to the only true God. And the only way we can pray to Him is because of Jesus and true faith in Him. Furthermore, just as true worship is sitting at Jesus' feet listening to His Word, so true prayer doesn't begin with us and our desires, or what's on our heart, it also begins with listening to Jesus.

So, following on the heels of the Mary and Martha episode, one of Jesus' disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." Now if that sounds odd, consider that it was common for a rabbi to teach his disciples how to pray. And people could tell whose disciple one was by how he prayed because prayer was spoken out loud. Likewise, the disciples were learning that in the kingdom of God everything starts with Jesus.

Certainly, Jesus knew how to pray. After all, He is the true God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, come in the flesh, to reveal God and His love to us sinners. "In Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." (Col. 2:9). And what does this God in the likeness of man do? He prays. He prays to His Father. And what does He pray? Well, we're not always told. But, in addition to His prayers that are recorded in Scripture, I'm sure He prayed the Psalms. In praying, He showed that He fully trusted His Father to hear and answer His prayer, whatever it was.

So, how did Jesus teach them to pray? Like a parent teaches a child – by giving them the very words to pray. And in those words He teaches them, and us, to pray with faith in the one true God. He teaches us to address this God as "Father." Do you realize the blessed privilege that is? Though we are conceived and born in sin, separated from God, we can call God "Father," "Our Father," because He created us and has made us His children in our Baptism. We who were dead in our trespasses, God made alive together with Christ, having forgiven us all our trespasses, canceling the debt the Law imposes, by nailing it to the cross. (Col. 2:13-14). He claimed us as His own and put His name on us. And since we are His children, we can call Him Father and expect good things from Him.

You see, the Father sent His only-begotten Son into the world so that through Him the world might be saved. Jesus, the divine Son, born of Mary, is our Brother. He came to give His life to redeem us for Himself. He came to shed His holy, precious blood as the perfect and final sacrifice for the sin of the world, our sin, your sin. His innocent suffering and death on the cross was accepted by His Father as full payment for your sins. And because Jesus has suffered the full weight of God's just wrath over sin, He has thus won your forgiveness and freed you from that wrath. So, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Heb. 4:16). The Psalmist writes, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him" (Ps. 103:13).

That's what the last few verses of our text are talking about. "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" If earthly fathers, who are sinful by nature, and whose every deed is tainted by sin, know how to give good gifts to their children, then certainly our heavenly Father, who is perfect and holy, will give good gifts to us, His children. And there is no greater gift than the Holy Spirit. For it is the Holy Spirit who establishes and sustains our faith and enables us to live godly lives. Furthermore, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom. 8:26-27). Thus, we are confident that our Father loves us, hears us, and will help us. What a wonderful Father we have!

It is only right then, that, when we address our Father, we give Him thanks and praise and ask for things which redound to His glory and that are in accord with His good and gracious will. Thus, we pray that His name, which is holy in itself, is kept holy among us by true and pure teaching of His Word and our living holy lives according to it. We pray that His kingdom of grace would come to us as He sends us the Holy Spirit, so that we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives, and finally, at our last hour, enter His kingdom of glory. We pray for the needs of body and earthly life. We pray for forgiveness and a forgiving spirit. We pray for protection through temptation and deliverance from sin and Satan.

As we pray for all this, we know it's what God Himself wants us to pray. And as we repeat Jesus' words, we learn to realize that they express our deepest needs. And since those words are God's Words, we are certain that He hears them and answers them with a resounding "Yes" in Jesus.

So, beloved, we repeat the words Jesus gave us because they express the desires of our Father's heart toward us. And, lest we despair of praying, and to encourage us to "pray without ceasing," Jesus poses a hypothetical situation to demonstrate that we should persist in prayer. Yes, God knows "all that we need to support this body and life," but He wants us to realize our dependence on Him. He wants us to come to Him with all our needs and wants. And even though it seems that He doesn't hear, that He is taking a long time to answer, He wants us to keep praying, not to convince Him to do what we want, but so we learn evermore to trust in Him. For He promises to hear and answer our prayers. He never gets tired of hearing from His children. He doesn't give us what we want so we'll leave Him alone. Instead, He gives us what is best for us because He delights in giving us gifts. He is more than a friend who will give what we ask just to get us to stop bothering Him. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He is always ready and eager to hear our prayers and to provide for us simply because He is our Father and He loves us. As we continually come before Him, we demonstrate that we recognize our dependence on Him. We show that we rely on Him as the giver of all good gifts.

So, when you pray the Lord's Prayer, rejoice that our dear Lord has taught us so to pray. Firmly trust that God Almighty hears your prayers for Jesus' sake and that He is ready, willing, and able to answer. And don't have any doubts that He will provide the very best for you. After all, He sent His Son to die for your sins. You are His child and He is your Father, and He forgives you all your sins. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener