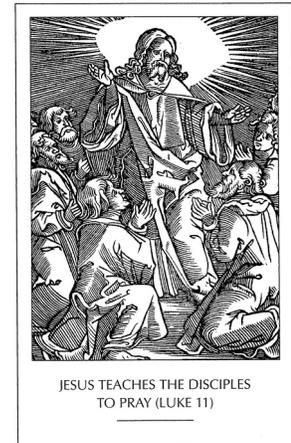


Sermon for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: June 30, 2024
Location: Trinity – Spencer, WI
Zion – Colby, WI

Old Testament: Malachi 3:1-12
Epistle Reading: Ephesians 1:3-12
Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:5-9ab



Sermon Text: Matthew 6:5-9
Sermon Title: The Lord's Prayer: Introduction

Introit: Psalm 50:10-14; Antiphon: Psalm 50:15

Hymns:

LSB 732 – All Depends on Our Possessing (v.1,6)
LSB 779 – Come My Soul with Every Care
LSB 781 – We Give Thee but Thine Own
LSB 617 – O Lord, We Praise Thee

Distribution:

LSB 919 – Abide, O Dearest Jesus
LSB 620 – Jesus Comes Today with Healing
LSB 461 – I Know that My Redeemer Lives

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Text: Matthew 6:5-9

⁵ “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...

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Grace, peace and mercy be yours in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are starting a seven part series today on the Lord's Prayer. It is found in the Bible in Matthew 6:6-13 where Jesus teaches:



When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They like to stand in synagogues and on street corners to pray so that everyone can see them. I can guarantee this truth: That will be their only reward.

When you pray, go to your room and close the door. Pray privately to your Father who is with you. Your Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you.

When you pray, don't ramble like heathens who think they'll be heard if they talk a lot. Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

This is how you should pray:



Our Father in heaven, let your name be kept holy. Let your kingdom come. Let your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Give us our daily bread today. Forgive us as we forgive others. Don't allow us to be tempted. Instead, rescue us from the evil one.

Did you notice, Jesus repeated it three times saying, "When you pray...?"

"When you pray, don't be like hypocrites."

"When you pray, go to your room and close the door..."

"When you pray, don't ramble like heathens..."

Notice: Jesus is assuming you do pray.

After all, the hypocrites pray. The Gentiles, who are unbelievers, pray. Certainly you should pray since your God is the one true living God. Jesus' point is: "*When you pray...*" don't pray like them. They pray to be seen and heard by other people. You pray to be seen and heard by God your heavenly Father. "Pray privately to your Father..." "Pray like this: 'Our Father in heaven...'"

This is a precious, gracious, divine gift God gives to His believers. Isn't it sad we have to be told, even commanded, to use it. Not because we're too humble thinking, "Oh, no really, I couldn't... I don't want to bother God," but rather because we're maybe lazy, undisciplined, perhaps unappreciative, or we don't believe it's important.

Our lack of desire to pray has to be one of the most condemning pieces of evidence against us showing what sin has done to us. We usually think of sin in terms of the bad things we do. The fact that we lack interest in this gracious gift is a tell-tale sign of the way sin has twisted and turned us against God.

So we must be commanded to pray. We must actually be threatened that if we do not pray we sin against God and deserve His punishment. If you want to check the official Law about this you can find it in the Ten Commandments where it says:

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie or deceive by His name, but call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks.¹

Do you hear what that really says? It says the Almighty God must beg us to take His gift? God says:

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble
and I will deliver you...²”



To that we say, “Well as a last resort, if I can’t think of anything better.”



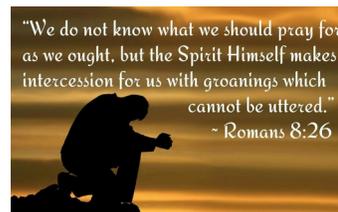
God says:

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.³”

To which we say, “If I ever get that desperate I suppose I might give it a try.”

What does this say about God, that He humbles Himself and begs us to take the precious gift of His Holy Name, so that we can call on Him!? Him! Not an anonymous “higher power” or “spiritual force” or “god - however you imagine god to be.”

He sends His Holy Spirit who calls us by the Gospel, and creates in us the desire to ‘call back’ to that gracious and loving voice we hear in the inerrant, infallible, trustworthy and true Word of God. In our desire to cry out to God we say, “I don’t know what to say. I don’t know what to ask. Teach me how to pray.” There is where the Holy Spirit points us to Jesus who says, “Pray like this... Our Father in heaven...”



With these words, the floodgates of Heaven itself are thrown opened to us.⁴ At Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River Luke reports:



While Jesus was praying the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son. With You I am well pleased.”⁵

Over and over again throughout the Gospels⁶ Jesus refers to God as “My Father.” Isn’t it the most amazing thing then, that when Jesus teaches us how to pray He invites us to call on, “**our** Father who is in Heaven.” Jesus is giving us His own identity before the Father. Because of His love He adopted us as His very own children. He freely chose to do this.⁷

Jesus says we should consider His Father to be **our** Father. Which can only mean that we poor miserable sinners are loved by the Father just like Jesus. It means the Father is “well

1 Luther’s Small Catechism

2 Psalm 50:15

3 Matthew 6:7-11

4 Malachi 3:10

5 Luke 3:21-22

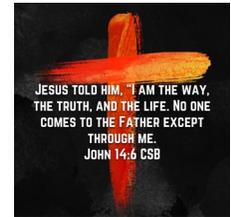
6 The four books in the Bible: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

7 Ephesians 1:5-6

pleased” with us, just like He is with Jesus. That means all of our sins have been removed from us as far as the East is from the West,⁸ paid for because Jesus carried all of our sins to the cross, even our sins against the very Command of God to pray in His name.

That is the only reason we would dare to pray to the Holy Living God, in the name of Jesus who has reconciled us with the Father by His Body and Blood shed for us. Jesus teaches us, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.”⁹ It is because no one is acceptable to the Father except the one who believes in Jesus and approaches the throne of God in His Name. John the disciple writes to the churches:

The Father has given us His love. He loves us so much that we are actually called God’s dear children, and that is what we are.¹⁰



Not just in name only but through Holy Baptism where we were born again. There we are “Fathered” by God not just symbolically, but in reality. No one comes to the Father symbolically unless he only wants to be saved symbolically. We are, in reality, born again, born from above, in Holy Baptism and, in reality, really forgiven and really saved.

It is in the same reality by which He created everything out of nothing in the beginning, by the power of His Word,¹¹ He has spoken that same all-powerful Word on you:

I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the **T** Son, and of the Holy Spirit.¹²

St. Paul states the new reality for your life like this:

You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as children, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”¹³



Of course that means this new reality as a child of God is placed on all who are Baptized and taught.¹⁴ Just think about that. When we pray as our Lord has taught us, “Our Father...” we pray with: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and all of the children of God, past, present and future. We pray with the one true Holy Christian Church in heaven and on earth. When we say, “Our Father...” we come before God the Father, in the name of God the Son, through the power of God the Holy Spirit, “to ask as dear children ask their dear father.”¹⁵

How often have you heard someone say, “I pray to a ‘higher power’ or ‘a deity that is out there somewhere’ and I *hope* my prayers are heard.” Maybe you have even had that thought a time or two.

8 Psalm 103:12

9 John 14:6

10 1 John 3:1 [GWT]

11 Genesis 1:1

12 Matthew 28:19

13 Romans 8:15

14 Matthew 28:20

15 Luther’s Small Catechism

We acknowledge we're in trouble and need help, because we don't have all of the answers, like we thought we did. We acknowledge we have sinned and need forgiveness because the guilt is wearing down on us. We acknowledge we have been blessed and we need to give thanks to the Giver. So we pray, and we wonder, is there anybody out there? Is there anyone who hears me and who will answer me?



Then here, in the Lord's Prayer, everything gets turned up-side-down. Here is God, who has come down from beyond the limits of time and space, who has come into our world, into our life, into our trouble, into our sorrows, into our joys. He comes to find us.

It is there we suddenly realize this is God who is calling to us. This is not God who is far away from us, whose attention we must somehow grab, so He will hear us. Not at all! In Jesus Christ we realize it is we who are far away from God, and He comes to us. Not as an impersonal, anonymous spirit-being, but with His name, and His Body and His Blood. The Father who is in Heaven has come to us in His Son who says, "I am with you always."¹⁶

That's why we don't need to shout, dance or waive our hands to attract His attention. We always have it. It means when we pray we do so with the confidence that this is never a "shot in the dark" launched to a "cosmic power," or "nameless deity," who we are trying to find. We pray with the confidence that God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knows us, has found us and always hears us. He then teaches us, "This is how you should pray, 'Our Father in heaven.'¹⁷"

This leads to something else Jesus says about prayer. You know how it is when you really know someone, or when someone really knows you. You know what they're thinking and what they want without them actually having to say it. So if we can know one another this well shouldn't we expect God our Father to know us even better? In fact Jesus says, "your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."¹⁸



That means when we pray we should not think we are bringing something to the Father that is new to Him, or that He does not already know about us. There is no need for us to feel we need to give all kinds of reasons or explanations, or pray louder or longer, to instruct Him or persuade Him. He knows us better than we know ourselves.¹⁹ He knows what we really need better than we do.

Left to our own we might pray for what we think we need, but which more often than not is actually what we don't need. We are worried, and instead of praying for real peace and contentment we pray for more money which only leads to more worry. We have certain desires for things we think we cannot live without, but instead of praying for real freedom we pray for more of the very things that control us.

No matter how long or loud we ramble on to the Father in prayer, He will not for one moment be diverted from giving us what we truly need. He is after all, our loving Father in Heaven. To which we should respond with peace and relief and hearts full of thanksgiving.

16 Mathew 28:20

17 Matthew 6:9

18 Matthew 6:8

19 Luke 12:7

We should give thanks that our prayer does not depend on our expressing everything correctly, or on making the correct diagnosis of our real problem that we may or may not know or understand. We should give thanks that our prayers, so often thought of as unanswered, because we don't get the answer for which we were looking, are given the answer we need. We should give thanks that our Father in Heaven knows what is best for us, and works all things for good for us,²⁰ even at the cost of His only-begotten Son crucified for us.

Jesus says, "This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven..." To put it simply:



With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father.²¹

In Jesus' name.

Amen.



Proclaiming God's Word.
Encouraging one another in faith.
Witnessing to God's love.
Serving all people.



20 Romans 8:28

21 Luther's Small Catechism