



The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Our Savior

Sabbath Survival Kit



NINTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST, JULY 29, 2007

We want to learn how to pray, and our prayers have many shapes. Jesus' model prayer shapes our own and leads us to a fuller realization of God's presence in our lives and in the world - a vision shared by Paul as he proclaims Christ's new day. Today the church remembers Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany - Jesus' close friends; and Olaf, Christian king of Norway.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and ever-living God, you are always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and you gladly give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us your abundant mercy. Forgive us those things that weigh on our conscience, and give us those good things that come only through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

WORD

FIRST LESSON - GENESIS 18:20-32

Then the Lord said, "How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know." So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham came near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." Abraham answered, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." Again he spoke to him, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." He said, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." Then he said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

HOLY GOSPEL - LUKE 11:1-13

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial." And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

SERMON

PASTOR WAYNE ZSCHECH

Many of us long to know "how to pray". We think there are right and wrong ways to pray. But if we remember that prayer is conversation with God then we might begin to ask ourselves, "Is there a right or wrong way to have a heart-felt conversation with someone who loves us dearly?" Clearly the answer is no. However, having a deeper understanding of the Lord's Prayer might help us pray more often and from the heart when we take time out to talk with the God who created us and Jesus who saved us by the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us.

Luther is a great help here and so I share his reflections from the Small Catechism on the Lord's Prayer as the head of the household was meant to share it with his (it always was the dad in those days) family.

Father. Luther writes, "With these words God wants to entice us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father." Actually, the word Jesus taught his disciples was "Abba" which is the Aramaic form of "Daddy" rather than father. Luther's comments are amplified by this understanding. The God of all creation wants a relationship that is so close he wants us

to refer to him as “Daddy”, a term of endearment, trust, and love.

Hallowed be your name. Luther explains, “It is true that God’s name is holy (hallowed) in itself, but we ask in this prayer that it may also become holy in and among us.” This happens, “Whenever the Word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as God’s children, also live holy lives according to it. To this end help us, dear Father in heaven!” I have taught my daughter and the children and youth of the congregations I have served that God’s name becomes holy in and among me when I use God’s name for prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

Your kingdom come. Interestingly, there are some ancient versions of this text from Luke that also include “Your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us.” This ought not to be ignored as Luther explains this petition of the prayer saying, “In fact, God’s kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us.” This happens, explains Luther, “Whenever our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that through his grace we believe his Holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.”

In other words, this petition is about us participating in God’s work in the world. This petition is like us praying, “Dad, don’t let me sit on the sidelines of your battle against sin and evil in this world. By the power of the Holy Spirit you’ve given me in the waters of baptism, let me be a part of your victory over the powers of sin that rear up in poverty, oppression, homelessness, hunger, and alienation that I experience in the world around me. Let my actions be an experience of your kingdom of love, mercy, and hope for new life breaking into the darkness of others.”

Give us each day our daily bread. Luther reminds us that “In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we as in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.” Is daily bread simply a loaf of white, wheat or sourdough? No. Luther explains that daily bread is “Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, and upright spouse (my wife longs for this one), upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors and the like.”

Phew! How many of us every considered any or all of these things when we offer that simple petition of the Lord’s Prayer? I would guess many do not. Yet, when we think about it we do need all those things and much more if we are to experience the abundance of life that God, our heavenly Daddy, intends for his beloved children.

But in addition to praying for it we are to be thankful for that which we have received. Rather than a shopping list of what we want for “daily bread” Luther encourages us to be thankful for what we already have. When we do, we may even realize we have an overabundance of daily bread, that which we need to survive and thrive, and therefore are able to provide for others daily bread on God’s behalf. When we do we participate in God’s kingdom and will coming to and through us toward others.

And forgive us our sins as we forgive everyone indebted to us. Regardless of whether one uses the word trespass, sin, or debt, the point of this petition is forgiveness. Luke intensifies it by using both sin and those indebted, but the point of forgiveness is clear. Luther explains this petition in this way. “We ask in this prayer that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins nor deny these petitions on their account, for we are worthy of nothing for which we ask, nor have we earned it. Instead, we ask that God would give us all things by grace, for we daily sin much and indeed deserve only punishment. So, on the other hand, we, too, truly want to forgive heartily and do good gladly to those who sin against us.”

This isn’t a *quid pro quo* petition whereby we ask God to forgive us *if* we forgive others. It’s a reminder to us that our God is a merciful and forgiving God. No matter what we do, say, or think, there is nothing for which the love of God in Christ crucified will be too great to forgive us of our sins. But when we pray, remembering this forgiving love of God in Christ, we are then encouraged to go out and forgive those who have sinned against us, who owe us something.

And do not bring us into the time of trial. Other ancient manuscripts of Luke include the line, “but rescue us from the evil one”, which is probably why we have the addition in our form of the Lord’s Prayer. However, the point of this petition has to do with being tempted, to be led astray from our relationship of love and trust in our heavenly Dad. And so Luther says about this petition, “It is true that God tempts no one, but we ask in this prayer that God would preserve and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, or other great shame and vice, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and gain the victory.”

As Christians we believe that God in Christ has already fought and won the decisive victory over the powers of sin and death by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. With the resurrection on Easter the final of reign of God’s kingdom of eternal life was inaugurated on this planet. And we who have been baptized and believe in this truth also trust that it is as true for us as it is for the risen Jesus. Therefore, when we are tempted to not trust in the resurrection by the devil, the world, the self-centered desires of our flesh this petition reminds us who has already won the battle and to trust in it when we are faced with temptation to “go with the flow”.

Jesus didn’t give his disciples a magic prayer. It’s not a *Protego* shield charm like in the Harry Potter books will protect us from evil. But it is a simple prayer form whose components remind us of our relationship with a loving and merciful heavenly Daddy who literally, loves us not only to death, but new life as well. So if we aren’t afraid to talk to each other and make requests, let us then be confident in our conversations with the God we have come to know through our Lord, Jesus who is the Christ.

BLESSING

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. May you be rooted and grounded in his love. Amen.