

SERMON FOR JULY 24, 2022

TEXT: LUKE 11: 1-13

THEME: SAY YOUR PRAYERS

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

In the name of Jesus:

One evening a mother sent her fifth grade child to bed and told him to say his prayers before he went to sleep. Several minutes later she went to make sure that he was getting in bed. When she stuck her head into his room, she saw that he was kneeling beside his bed in prayer. Pausing to listen to his prayers, she heard her son praying over and over again. "Let it be Tokyo! Please dear God, let it be Tokyo!" When he finished his prayers, she asked him, "What did you mean, 'Let it be Tokyo'?"

"Oh," the boy said with embarrassment, "we had our geography exam today and I was praying that God would make Tokyo the capital of France." Sadly, many today treat prayer in this way, thinking it is a magical means by which we can get God to do what we want. And then, if the prayer is not answered in the exact manner that was requested, the one who is praying gets

angry at God and then refuses to believe in God. In our text for today, we see that Jesus teaches us to say our prayers and then gives us the very words to use in prayer.

His disciples in our text ask Jesus: "Lord, teach us to pray." Jesus answers their request by giving to them the very words to use; it is what we call the Lord's Prayer. Some have called it the model prayer, others the perfect prayer, it is the prayer that Jesus gives and so we are to pray it often. When you don't know what to pray, you pray the Lord's Prayer.

But how can you be confident in prayer? How do you know if God will hear and answer you? Jesus prays confidently, and confidently tells you how to pray confidently, when He prays these words, and when you pray these words: "Our Father, who art in heaven."

Many people today do not know what prayer is, don't know how to pray or why to pray, so therefore they aren't confident in their prayers. Still others don't believe in God, don't believe He exists, or that He won't answer prayer. So many then approach prayer wrongly, believing that if God is in control, He then should answer their requests. It is as if they demand an answer from God, and when they demand an answer, they will not be satisfied with the answer God gives them in their prayer **unless God answers their prayers the way they want their prayers answered.** Hence, they don't believe in a God

who is different than them, in fact, they don't want a God who is different than them, rather they want a God who is like them. What these people do is that they make God into their own image. They don't change, instead they change God. And so, if they pray, and God doesn't answer in the way or manner that they like, they conclude that prayer doesn't work, or God doesn't answer prayer, or that God doesn't even exist! These people don't believe in God, they believe in an idol of their own making.

Prayer is not a negotiation. Many today view prayer as a negotiation, as they bargain and barter with God. Saying: "God, if you answer my prayer, then I will do this or that, or such in such." As if God is moved by what you can offer Him! God isn't One who needs anything from anyone of us. Christian prayers are unlike any prayers offered by the people of this world. Prayer isn't a negotiation with a super power. You don't try to get on God's good side by praising Him or buttering Him up. You can't shame God into action or acting in the way or manner you want. Prayer doesn't spring from our need but our relationship.

Prayer is a conversation with God. And you can know for certain that your conversation and relationship with God is on solid ground, because of who God is. He is a God of love. Jesus begins the Lord's Prayer with the words: "Our Father who art in heaven." God is your loving Father who is able to do

far more than what you ask or understand. Luther explains this fact in the explanation to the introduction of the Lord's Prayer where Luther writes: "With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their Father in heaven." God has adopted you into His family in the waters of Baptism. You belong to Jesus. And whoever belongs to Jesus has God as their Heavenly Father, who loves His own and willingly hears and answers prayer.

You can be confident in your prayers to God because your confidence is based in Jesus. God hears you for Jesus' sake. Jesus took your place in His life. He died your death on the cross. He rose for you and you are His by God's grace through faith in Jesus. So you can be confident in prayer, knowing that God will hear you, for Jesus is your Savior. He gives you confidence for He forgives you. And you can be confident because God loves you, no matter what.

But how do you know if you are praying the right words, or saying the right things? Here again God is good and gracious. This is why He sends His Holy Spirit, to not only give you faith in Jesus but also to turn your meager, sinful words into prayers and petitions that are pleasing to God. Even when you don't know what to pray or what words to use, God is there for you

working by the power of His Spirit to turn your imperfect words and imperfect prayer into that which is pleasing in God's sight. This is what Paul writes in Romans 8: "**26** Likewise 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. **28** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Yes, you can and should be confident, for God as your loving Father does work all things for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. And you have been called in Baptism. You and I may not fully understand what God is doing, or why things happen the way they do in this life, but we can be confident of God's love for us in Jesus Christ and be confident He hears and answers our prayer because He is our Father who sent Jesus to be our Savior.

This is, as they say, a game changer! For to know and believe that God is gracious to sinners changes everything when you pray. Your confidence is not on account of anything you have done, can do, or will do. Your confidence is in God who eternally loves you and wills to hear your prayer. You can be bold in your prayers, because you know that God wants to hear from you.

Jesus explains it this way, in verses 5-8 of the Gospel lesson. Jesus says: “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, **6** for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; **7** and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything’? **8** I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.” The one who is sleeping goes to answer the door and grant the request, not because he likes the person who is knocking on the door. Who likes anyone waking them up in the middle of the night by knocking on the door and having you get out of bed? The point that Jesus is making here is that the person answers the door and fulfills the request of the neighbor because the neighbor is bold enough to do this! The neighbor is in such dire straights that he is willing to go to any length to ask for help in time of need. And so, Jesus says, the one opens the door, not with a baseball bat, or in today’s day and age with a loaded gun, but he answers the door with bread, exactly what the person is asking for, in order to silence the one who is disturbing him from his sleep. So too, God answers you when you are persistent in prayer, not with punishment, but with love, for God loves you with an everlasting love and wants to treat you lovingly, as a loving parent will

treat his or her own child. God wants you to be confident and bold in going to Him when you pray, for He loves you and nothing will separate you from His love.

So ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened, because God is your loving Heavenly Father, who gives to you His good gifts, and you can be confident when you SAY YOUR PRAYERS that He will work all to your good and His glory, for He loves you forever.

Amen