

**"Lord Teach Us To Pray"**  
Luke 11:1-13, Easter Sunday V  
April 27, 2008

Beloved of the Lord.....Our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, was often found in prayer by His disciples. They often saw Jesus praying. At the baptism of Jesus, Jesus prayed and the heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit descending upon Him. At the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus "took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed" which means He prayed. After the feeding of the five thousand Jesus "went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone." Sometimes Jesus wanted to be alone when He prayed. Jesus prayed alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, though He wanted the disciples to pray with Him. They were asleep. Jesus said "Could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

It is because our flesh IS weak, that we need the Lord Jesus to teach us to pray. For it is not in our sinful nature to turn to God in prayer. But in the Bible we find the Lord commands us to pray, and then He moves us to prayer by His many promises to answer our prayer. In the Lord's prayer He even gives us the words we should use, so that we never need doubt our prayer is acceptable to Him. Where there is faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, there we can be sure our heavenly Father will hear and accept our prayer. May the Lord now through His Word, teach us to pray.

First, God commands us to pray. The second commandment says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain." It is a sin to use God's name in vain. Rather God would have us use His name for good, namely in prayer and praise. God compels us to pray saying, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." That is a command from God to pray. "Pray without ceasing." That too is a command. In I Timothy 2 we also hear God's command to pray, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority." God commands us to pray for our government, that there be peace in our country. Then the Gospel will have free course, and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people. Through the Gospel, lost souls find in Jesus their Savior from sin. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." We who believe should also pray before we eat the food the Lord has given us, as Jesus prayed when He had only five barely loaves and two small fishes. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Jesus taught us to pray "Give us day by day our daily bread." What little food

we have then will be blessed and well sustain us by the gracious hand of God. He satisfies the desire of every living thing. We are so precious to Him that the very hairs of our head are numbered.

God's command to pray is no different from His other commandments. Just as it is a sin to steal or covet or lust, so it is a sin not to pray regularly, often, and fervently. If we don't pray as God's commands, we should expect only His wrath and displeasure. Luther said, "It is our duty and obligation to pray if we want to be Christians, just as it is our duty and obligation to obey our fathers and mothers and the civil authorities."

But there are many reasons we don't pray as we should. Sometimes it is the knowledge of our sin and unworthiness that keep us from prayer. We feel and know the coldness of our devotion, our sinful lack of love for God. Our minds often wander in prayer. Is there one man that has even prayed the Lord's Prayer once perfectly? In prayer we certainly struggle against our sinful flesh. Luther said, "Indeed, the human heart is by nature so desperately wicked that it always flees from God, thinking that He neither wants nor cares for our prayers because we are sinners and have merited nothing but wrath."

But this brings us to our second point regarding prayer, namely God has promised that our prayers will be answered, for Jesus' sake. While God commands prayer saying, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble", He then promises us "I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." God promises to help those who call upon Him! Jesus also promises to help us saying, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth." Therefore when we are discouraged, and we feel as though God will not answer on account of our sin, God by these promises earnestly invites us to bring our large and small petitions before Him, for He will indeed help those who ask in faith! In His promise, "ASK and it shall be given you.... seek and ye shall find", we find an oath from God, a solemn promise that He will give us those things we need! In God's promises, we have no reason to doubt! Luther said, "Such promises certainly ought to awaken and kindle in our hearts a desire and love to pray. For by His Word God testifies that our prayer is heartily pleasing to Him and will assuredly be heard and granted." Jesus teaches us the goodness and rich mercy of God toward us, by the example of a parent and a child. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?" If we then who are sinful gladly give good things to our children that we love, just imagine how abundantly more God will give to those who are His own children, by faith in Christ Jesus! For we who trust His holy name by faith, have ready access to God by that same holy name of Jesus Christ! And, "If

God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8

Thus, whenever we are discouraged by our lack of prayer, or coldness of devotion, we ought to immediately turn to the many promises of Jesus regarding prayer! God will indeed help us, and He cannot do otherwise, for through the merits of His Son God does not count nor impute our trespasses against us, but declares us righteous, as righteous as His only-begotten Son who redeemed us from all sin! Our prayers then, which leave our mouths often tainted with sin, reach the ears of our heavenly Father in a most pure and noble and righteous way - for through Christ our prayers become righteous, well accepted, and even pure by faith in Jesus. Our prayers in and through Christ are just as holy and acceptable to God as the prayers of Moses, Elijah, and the twelve apostles. Luther said that through Christ "the prayer I offer is just as precious, holy, and pleasing to God as those of St. Paul and the holiest of saints." God readily accepts, hears, and answers the prayers of all believers throughout the world, because our one Advocate, our Mediator Jesus Christ has removed the guilt of our sin from us with His own blood. For His sake, "our Father which art in heaven" readily grants our large and small petitions. He wants you to bring your cares, your burdens to Him, for He cares for you. Your heavenly Father will bless you far more richly and abundantly than earthly fathers provide for their own children! Faith then perseveres beyond the knowledge of our sin and unworthiness, and through the gracious promises of God concludes and ends itself in the arms of our merciful Savior, who holds us closely to His bosom with an everlasting love. Faith in Christ understands that God freely gives me all that my soul needs so that I can reach my heavenly home above. For God is my heavenly Father who does all things for my sake and for my salvation. Faith knows and confidently concludes, that one way or another, God will help me in my time of need, and provide. By His grace, by His tender compassions upon me, He cannot do otherwise. He may not help me in the way I expect, in the time, or in the fashion I desire, but I know He will help. "Thy will be done", and not mine, O Lord.

There is therefore a certain peace and safety in prayer. When we pray in and through Christ, we are safe from harm and danger. Our troubled soul finds perfect peace. We pray "deliver us from evil" and He does. When Moses and the Israelites were fearful of the 600 chariots of Egypt, Moses prayed to God, and God delivered. Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the depths of the sea. When the prophet Elijah fled for his life from the wicked Jezebel, "he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." Certainly there is peace

and safety in prayer, for by faith in Christ we go to the Almighty God who guards and protects us from all evil. He "leads us not into temptation", that is He keeps evil and temptations away from us that are too strong for us. Though He tries and tests us for our own good, He never gives us more than we are able to bear. Even the powerful devil cannot lay a finger upon us, except with God's permission, and even then the devil is nothing more than a dog on a chain. Though he bark and howl against us, it is an empty and hallow threat, for by faith we have Christ and His righteousness. God need only yank the chain and the devil chokes like a dog and must back off. But we must do our part as well, that is we must resist the devil by the Word of God. The Bible says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." If you are afraid of the devil or his power, you need only go to Christ in prayer and you will find peace and safety. Do not be afraid, but turn to His powerful Gospel Word which declares you righteous. In Christ and His righteousness, there is perfect peace, perfect safety. Jesus said, "Fear not, only believe." Psalm 23 says, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." Jesus is always near.

As we close for today, let us remember to pray "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." If we are not sorry for our sins and trespasses against one another, God will not forgive, nor will He accept our prayer. But if we are sorry for our sins, for the sake of His Son, God will readily forgive and heaven is our home. Therefore let us at all times and in all places, turn to God in prayer. Let us be persistent, and confidently trust in God's rich and abundant mercy toward us. He has promised to help, and for the sake of Christ He cannot do otherwise. Let us especially remember that through Christ Jesus, our prayers are readily heard and accepted by our heavenly Father. Indeed our prayers are righteous and holy for His name's sake. Therefore let us not fear God in our prayers, nor be discouraged by our sins, but remember His grace and mercy are constantly upon us. He will answer our prayer, and give us the desires of our heart, for Jesus has taught us to pray "Our Father who art in heaven." Ask and it shall be give you. Amen.

Pastor Tobin Pederson, 7685 Maple Hill Rd. Corcoran, MN,  
55340, 763-494-5164, solideogloria96@comcast.net srmn0690