

Sermon Luke 11 1 13 10th Sunday after Pentecost Series C

Sermon: 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 11:1-13 (v. 1)

Theme: Lord, teach us to pray (How?)

Goal: To teach God's people to pray according to the pattern set up by Jesus.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: There are so many different ways to pray. Lutherans pray quietly. Pentecostals shout loud when they pray all at the same time. Some like written prayers. Others like free prayers. What is the best way to pray? Jesus gives us good advice how to come to God in prayer.

I – As children to our Father

- First of all, we cannot approach God in prayer if we don't believe in Him and if we are not in good relationship with Him. Therefore Jesus began His prayer calling God as "Father", "Our Father". We have to believe that we are not strangers and enemies anymore, but that we have been accepted in God's family through our baptism by faith in Jesus. By His death on the cross and His resurrection, Jesus opened the door to the heart of God.

- Luther explained it in a marvellous way in the Small Catechism: *With these words (Our Father) 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 dear father.*

- The Lord's Prayer is the most complete prayer ever taught. First we ask for things related to God, His Kingdom and His will. *God's interests are put first, followed by ours. That obviously is the true priority in the prayers life of a Christian.* (ABC 1226). We come together to worship **Him**, not us.

- Secondly, Jesus taught us to ask for our needs, physical and spiritual needs: The daily bread, the daily forgiveness, and protection against temptation and the evil. *According to Luther, 'when you pray for daily bread you pray for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy daily bread and, at the same time, pray against everything that interferes with enjoying it. You must therefore enlarge and extend your thoughts to include not only the oven and the flour bin, but also the broad fields and the whole land which produce and provide for us our daily bread and all kinds of sustenance... To put it briefly, this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in this world' (Book of Concord) (ABC 1226).*

- The Small Catechism helps us to understand better each petition of the Lord's Prayer. Therefore I insist that each family have to have a Small Catechism at home to go through from time to time and to review the richness we have in it about prayer and about the other contents it has.

- From the quotation of Luther I will take two words that are illustrated by Jesus in the following verses about prayer: *boldness and confidence: ...so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.*

II – With boldness

Jesus tells a story about a man who goes at midnight to his neighbour to ask him for some bread because he got a visitor that came late and he doesn't have any bread to offer to the visitor. The neighbour complains about the late hour when someone is knocking on his door; but eventually he stands up and gives some bread to the man, as Jesus said: "...yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs."

- The Old Testament reading helps to understand what Jesus means by boldness (Genesis 18:16-33). Abraham pleaded with God for Sodom

several times. He knew he was bothering God, but with insistence he “bargained” with God, asking if God would destroy the city if there were 50 right men inside it. As there were not 50, Abraham reduced the number to 45, to 40, to 30, to 20, to 10. It’s interesting to read the text again at home and to see how boldly, but at the same time respectfully, Abraham pleaded with God not to destroy Sodom and Gomorra. It’s a good example how we can insist with God in prayer. God will always listen to our prayer, but He will answer according to His sovereign will. He knows what is better for us.

- Jesus says more: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” This is a beautiful image of boldness: ask, seek, and knock! If the first attempt doesn’t work, the second will work. If the second trying doesn’t work, the third will work. Ask, seek, and knock! Boldly! God’s promise is sure: you will receive, you will find, and the door will be opened to you!

II – With confidence

And we have to ask with confidence, without doubting. The second parable Jesus tells to illustrate His teaching is about our confident family relationship: “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?” We know how easily children run to mom or dad to ask for something: to ask for an ice cream, a new toy, some biscuits... Sometimes we don’t give what they are asking for, because it’s not appropriate for their age, or there are other priorities in the family’s budget. But we will never give them something dangerous or poisonous, like a snake or a scorpion.

- For me personally this relationship between father and his child is the best illustration to understand how God answers our prayer. I

had the experience with my father when I was a kid, and I had the experience with my children when they were kids. It helps to understand better why God sometimes says YES to our prayers, sometimes he says NO, and sometimes He says WAIT till you are big enough to manage this or that. On the other hand, our heavenly Father gives us much more than we ask for. We have daily surprises how God pours out His blessings on us, giving us challenges to face and opportunities to enjoy, out of love to His beloved children, - as we do it with our children as well, not just rewarding them when they do something good, but giving them all the necessary food and clothes and toys and time and love... and... and...out of love because they are our children.

- And there is a bigger promise Jesus gives to us in prayer. He says: “If you then, though you are evil (this means, we are not perfects as moms and dads), know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven (who is perfect) give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” The Holy Spirit was given to us when we were baptized; but God wants to give Him in a rich measure more and more, strengthening our faith and equipping us for all good deeds according to His will. The Spirit comes through the Word and the Sacrament, God’s spiritual food to strengthen us.

Conclusion: The teaching about ‘How to pray’ is not over yet. Jesus and the disciples prayed several times more, alone by themselves, in the fellowship of the brothers, at home and in the church. Now it’s a matter to practice it and to approach our Heavenly Father as beloved children by faith in Christ, with all boldness and confidence. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle – Cape Town, 28 July 2013