

Luke 11:1-13  
July 28, 2019

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

- “Now when all the people were baptized, and when **Jesus** also had been baptized and was **praying**, the heaven was opened” – Luke 3:21
- “But **He** (Jesus) would withdrawal to deserted places and **pray**.” – Luke 5:16
- “Now during those days **He** went out to the mountain to **pray**; and **He** spent the night in **prayer** to God.” – Luke 6:12
- “**Jesus** took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to **pray**.” – Luke 9:28
- “Then **He** withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and **prayed**... – Luke 22:41-42

Beyond Jesus, there is one common denominator found within the above passages – prayer. That’s what the disciples find Jesus doing at the beginning of today’s text, which perhaps prompts them to inquire of their teacher how to pray. It appears this was a key component of John the Baptist’s ministry as they ask, “Teach us to pray as John taught his disciples...” and now, as disciples of Jesus, they want instruction from him to model their own prayer life on. Luke, more than any other gospel writer, paints a picture of the significance of prayer in Jesus’ life and ministry. It would seem, for the Son of God, communication with His Father is critical.

Over the last several weeks our gospel passages have been emphasizing important aspects of following Jesus flowing from the commandments to, “Love the Lord your God” and “Love your neighbor.” Jesus has given examples of just how that might look like and now it seems he moves to another component of what it means to live as a disciple. A life of prayer with God.

From the very first words of the prayer that would be spoken repeatedly by the church Jesus sets the impetus for what prayer is. “When you pray, say Father...” Father, not Yahweh or God or Lord or Master, not that we can’t address God with these titles, but Jesus invites us to call God the same name He Himself prays – Father – a title that implies an intimate, personal, and loving relationship. This is what prayer is all about – prayer is the building blocks of our communication and relationship with God.

As I scan back over my life it is clear to see those times when God seemed so distant is when prayer took a backseat to what, at the time, seemed more important such as work, play, money, etc. There was a fundamental breakdown, as a result of my own doing, in my relationship with God which created a chasm and strained my ability to see God’s presence and hear God’s voice.

The Lord’s Prayer, while indeed a prayer, is also in some regards a confession of who God is. God is holy. God is giving. God is our provider. God is forgiving. God is our deliverer. This prayer helps us redirect our attention, focus, and trust in God in times of need and in our worship of God. It is a gift that closes the gap created by humanities sin to turn from God and set our sights elsewhere.

Jesus also expands on the importance of prayer through the telling of two stories. “Ask and it will be given you.” This saying is difficult and perhaps why people often give up on prayer or doubt it has any tangible benefit as we don’t always get what we ask for, see or hear a response to our plea. We have all been there and there are no easy answers to why it appears sometimes prayers are answered and other times it seems they are not. However, just because we don’t seem to get an answer, or the desired response doesn’t mean God failed to hear our prayer. Perhaps, there is more to prayer.

There was a pastor and a group of high school students gathered together. One student, not present, had recently lost a sister in a car accident. Several youth expressed a desire to go and visit the young man but they didn’t know what to say, how to act, or if they could provide anything to help him through this and so they chose not to go. But there was one student who put aside his fear and went. While he struggled to find what he deemed the “exact” words, upon departure, the grieving friend expressed how much he appreciated the visit and the knowledge someone was there with him.

Prayer is a lot like that. It's a relationship. And while sometimes our prayers seem to go unanswered God continues to fulfill the promise Jesus concludes today's passage with when He says, "How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" God's Spirit is always with us when we communicate with God. Perhaps a miracle doesn't happen, or our problems don't instantly go away but the very fact that God's presence is with us brings hope, comfort, peace, and love to the moment at hand. It equips and enables us to move forward and face whatever it is that lies ahead. Not alone, but together! Brian Stoffregen writes, "Prayer is the presence of God – not that God will always change the situation, but knowing that God is with you, that God is going through the tragedy or suffering or depression or death with you, not as a far off God, way out in space, but as your very close and loving father.

"When you pray," Jesus says, "say Father."<sup>i</sup>

I have spent a great deal of time in prayer over the past week at baseball games. Now, I don't believe God is all that concerned with the outcome of a baseball game or my prayers will sway the outcome of the game. Those prayers probably don't even fall in line with how Jesus teaches us to pray, "Your will be done" or "Your kingdom come." Or did they?

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 states, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." The very act of prayer is indeed part of God's will for us. Communication is essential to life in Christ.

My prayers for Matt or another player to get a hit, not make an error, no one to get hurt, and for me to remain calm were no less heard by our Father in heaven than other prayers. They were no less ineffective because on the surface they may have appeared superficial. If the heart of prayer is communication with our loving parent and creator, as Jesus models and teaches us, then all prayer offered to God is important and often the answer to those prayers is that they change us. The prayers I offered in those intense moments did calm me and helped me remember baseball for the gift that it is and not the idol we sometimes make sports or other hobbies and activities out to be.

It reminded me of something stated by one of the players on the field that night from his statement of faith when he was confirmed. Listen again to what Jaden Hierseman wrote, “I feel close to God when I’m praying and right before a sporting event I want to win. I pray before a game because I know God is listening. Or I pray when my team is in a difficult position. ... Praying helps me focus on the game better and it gives me peace. If you lose, it doesn’t mean God didn’t listen to your prayer, it’s just how life works. God listens to our prayer’s so that’s why it’s good to pray.”

Our youth may just be some of the best theologians we have. The prayer Jesus gave to his disciples and to the church helps us focus. It gives us peace. God listens to our prayers and that’s why it’s good to pray. So, when in doubt or when you don’t have the words, pray as Jesus taught, “Our Father, who art in heaven...”

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<sup>i</sup> Rev. Brian Stoffregen, [www.crossmarks.com](http://www.crossmarks.com)