

July 24, 2016
Sermon for The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Luke 11:1-13

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Luke 11:1–13 (ESV)

¹ 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.” ⁵ And he said to them, “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. ⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ 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!”

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

Amen.

How has your prayer life been lately?

Have you stormed the gates of heaven with your requests? Have you worn out the knees in your jeans talking to God? Or has your prayer life been nonexistent, disappointing? Perhaps you've even caught yourself wondering why anyone should bother praying in the first place.

How persistent has your prayer life been? Has it been as insistent as the ringing of a telephone? The telephone company used to advise that we let the phone ring at least nine times. If we hang up after three or four rings, our call must not be that important to us and to the one we're calling.

If persistence and patience pays off with phone calls, why not in prayer?

In today's Gospel, the Lord Jesus not only teaches a prayer God loves to hear, but He also encourages a persistent and expectant prayer life in His disciples and believers today.

Not because of who we are or what we bring to the table, for that is nothing, but because He gives us the perfect prayer and because God loves to give good gifts.

So Keep Praying!—because Jesus has taught us that our Heavenly Father loves to answer His children!

The first reason Christians are people of prayer is simple: Jesus teaches us to pray by His example and by His words. It's supposed to be a part of the Christian life—prayer and praying! The first disciples noticed the prayer life of Jesus.

What they observed prompted a request: "*Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples*"

The perfect, holy life of God's own Son included regular praying and prayers. Luke records more of them than any of the other Gospel writers. In these first ten chapters alone, Luke records six instances: Jesus prayed at His Baptism (3:21), in lonely places (5:16), before

choosing the twelve apostles (6:12), and before and at the transfiguration (9:18, 29).

He is the dear Son talking to his Father!

By His example, then, Jesus taught His followers to pray!

He called on His heavenly Father as a dear child speaks to a loving father about everything.

Jesus taught us to pray by His everyday practice of prayer as the perfect Son of God.

But Jesus also taught us to pray by His words, what He taught. When the disciples came to Jesus with the request “*Lord, teach us to pray,*” Jesus immediately answered this “prayer” by teaching the way and the very words to say in prayer. He gave the prayer we repeat every Sunday—the Lord’s Prayer—a prayer you are invited to pray often and every day.

You can be sure this prayer pleases God and covers everything needed in a prayer.

Jesus Himself gave it and spoke it for you to pray—the very Savior who suffered on the cross for you, shed His blood to blot out your sins, and rose again from the grave to lead the way for you into heaven. This Son of God gave you this prayer to pray.

The very words you speak, then, are His words, words that say it perfectly—asking that God’s name be hallowed, that His kingdom come, that His will be done, that daily bread be given, forgiveness received be given to others, temptations and evil kept away. These are words given to pray in faith, to pray often, for the good of all people, blessings of body and soul.

None of these petitions is just for me or my own; the prayer starts out in the plural: “Our Father.” That’s why we bother with prayer—Jesus taught and gave us this most perfect prayer!

Even so, our Lord knew how forgetful we’d be, how sluggish and cold our discipleship is at times, how sporadic and weak our prayer life would be at best. We try to serve him with our finest intentions, but intentions wither before the heat and pressures of everyday life, ... and prayers often cease entirely.

Not only that, but prayer runs counter to our sinful human nature, as Dr. Luther said concerning the Lord’s Prayer: “Indeed, the human heart is by nature so hopeless that it always

flees from God and imagines that He does not wish or desire our prayer, because we are sinners and have earned nothing but wrath” (LC III 10).

To counter this misconception about God, Jesus shows us the true nature of the heavenly Father. He teaches it with a story from the text so we might know God loves to hear and answer prayer. It’s a story about a man who finds himself in an embarrassing spot. An unexpected guest arrives in his home late at night, tired and hungry. However, this host doesn’t have a morsel of food with which to demonstrate proper hospitality.

No Allsup’s or Wal-Mart to run to, so what’s he to do?

He went to his neighbor for a few loaves of bread. Even though past midnight, he knocks loudly to awaken the neighbor. You can imagine his neighbor’s mood; tired and sleepy, as he replies: “Get away from here before you wake the children!” But the man in need has no choice. He persists, louder and louder. He doesn’t take “no” for an answer.

At last the neighbor gives in and hands over the bread; it was the only way to make this pesky and persistent neighbor leave.

Can you see what Jesus is teaching here? Not that God is a grouchy old man who eventually gives in, but that God already urges us to pray, already welcomes our requests, already loves to hear and answer prayers. There’s no need to make noise, pound on the door; it’s already open to you, and you’re not speaking to a neighbor, asleep in the night, but to the Lord God who never sleeps.

He is alert to your every need and prayer, 24/7, ready to hear and answer.

In regard to the Lord’s Prayer, Dr. Luther again notes: “There is no nobler prayer to be found upon earth . . . because it has this excellent testimony, that God loves to hear it” (LC III 23).

So, keep on praying, God loves to hear and answer your prayers.

Whenever we hear the term “father,” it is, or at least may be, tainted by the image of earthly fathers. Possibly your father has been cruel, harsh in punishment, unfair in treatment.

An earthly father may have been absent, uncaring, or at the very least sinful in many different ways. You may also have had a kind, decent father, one who cared for you, loved you, gave you gifts, and took care of you, even though still sinful in many respects. Those images will affect what we think about God as our Father at times and will perhaps deter us from praying.

Jesus addressed this matter directly by saying in our text: *“What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?”* (vv 11–12). The grammar gives the expected answer: no normal human father would do such a thing! That would be harmful, and downright mean. Although some might because of sin, most human fathers would not hurt their own children this way or be so cruel.

Even sinful human fathers give good gifts!

Thereby, Jesus is calling attention to the very nature of God—He is the heavenly Father! If human fathers, sinful and weak, would not do such hurtful and harmful things, but will give good things to their own children, then *“how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”* (v 13). That’s not a question; that’s a statement Jesus is making. The heavenly Father gives much more, even the gift of the Holy Spirit, to His children!

The heavenly Father’s good pleasure is to give heavenly treasures, forgiveness of sins, in the name and for the sake of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit makes that Son known to you through the Gospel proclamation, the Holy Scriptures, in the waters of Holy Baptism, and at the Lord’s Supper. The Holy Spirit through these means creates, nourishes, and sustains faith in you. Such true, saving faith changes the way you look at the heavenly Father. Such true faith removes the scales of sin to see—really see—that your heavenly Father gives you everything, even this Holy Spirit to keep you for the day of everlasting life.

When you pray, therefore, your prayers ascend to your heavenly Father. Just as human fathers would not maliciously give stones for bread, scorpions for eggs, snakes for fish, even

when the child asks for them, even more certain is the fact that your heavenly Father will not give you what will be harmful to you. Thank our heavenly Father that he doesn't answer some of our prayers, our foolish prayers, to our hurt!

Instead, the heavenly Father grants prayer petitions for our good, even pours out His Spirit on those who ask—a precious gift that brings faith, new life, and salvation. And, yes, while we wait, leads us to pray continuously to our heavenly Father, the giver of every good gift.

So why keep on praying? Because you are His precious child by faith in Christ Jesus! It's the work of the Holy Spirit to give you this faith in the waters of Baptism connected to His Word. It's the work of the Holy Spirit to teach you that you have been buried by your Baptism into the death of Jesus and raised again to newness of life. The Holy Spirit teaches you here that you have the privilege of coming to the heavenly Father in prayer as a dear child comes to a loving father.

This story is told of Abraham Lincoln as he served as president of the United States. He had one standing rule about access to his office. While others had to knock and be admitted, his son Tad could come in anytime, about any concern. The president would drop everything, stop any conversation, devote his time and attention to Tad. He was his precious child.

So it is with you, dear Christian. You are God's very own child through faith in Christ Jesus. Through the perfect Son of God, you are considered God's own perfect child, cleansed by the blood of Jesus. That means his office, or heaven, is open twenty-four hours a day for you. You may enter and be heard, for you are His precious child.

Dr. Luther wrote: "For whenever a godly Christian prays, 'Dear Father, let Your will be done,' God speaks from on high and says, 'Yes, dear child, it shall be so, in spite of the devil and all the world' (LC III 32). John's First Letter gives you that same assurance: *"And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.*

And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him” (5:14–15).

Why bother with prayer? We keep on praying just because Jesus taught us to pray, because God loves to hear and answer prayer, because God is the heavenly Father who loves to give us much more than we ask or expect, even the Holy Spirit, and we pray because you are His own precious children by faith in Christ Jesus.

So, dear believer, keep on praying and praying. God loves to answer prayer!

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.