

July 15, 2012
Matthew 6:5-15

Pentecost 7 (Catechetical #3)
Lord's Pray: We Communicate With God

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we are going to accomplish something remarkable. Today we are going to finish speaking about the Ancient Catechism as was used in the Ancient Church. The Ancient Catechism contained the Ten Commandments, the Apostles Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. By the Middle Ages many other elements had been added to various catechisms. It was Luther who returned to the basic three and then included what was necessary to know about Baptism, Confession, and the Lord's Supper. This Morning we'll discuss the Lord's Prayer and when we finish it, we'll have covered the full content of the ancient catechisms.

The truth is, of course, we'll never really be finished with the Lord's Prayer, because, as Luther says, in it we have enough for a whole lifetime of prayer, and our heavenly Father gives us reason to make prayer our whole lifetime. Nevertheless, our brief look at the Lord's Prayer can give us a start in understanding how our Father gives us every good reason to pray.

How has your morning been so far? What have you done with your time? Some of you jumped out of bed early to make your family breakfast, others of you begrudgingly got out of bed and came to church, while others were somewhere in the middle. Some of you might have finished some projects around the house. We all have different duties and responsibilities, not just on Sunday Morning, but throughout the week...many of us go to work and do whatever the boss tells us, others go to sports practices and do what the coach tells you to do. Let me ask you this question: Did you pray today? It's one of your duties to pray. St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians... "Pray without ceasing." And Jesus introduces our text for today... "And when you pray." Notice it's not... "And if you pray." It is when. Our lives are to be lives of prayer. Our lives are to be lives of prayer because it's what God commands. One of our ways in keeping the second commandment is by calling upon his name in every need. How well did you do on that duty this morning.

I was raised in a Christian family. I was taught to pray before meals and pray before I go to bed. And at times pray after meals. Sometimes my prayer life is amazing...and at other times, I want nothing to do with it. Have you been in a situation where you've been so hungry to eat...you ate without prayer? Is that okay? Is prayer a take it or leave it option---as in, it's good if you remember, but its okay if you don't?

What are we to pray? How are we to pray? I really don't know how to pray! These are popular responses to the thought, You need to pray. Some people even think...it's okay if I don't pray...someone else will.

Did Daniel have this attitude about prayer? Of course not. Jealous leaders plotted to turn his religion against him. They convinced the king to pass a law that could not be changed and required prayer only to the king for thirty days. Prayer offered to the true God was not banned forever...just for thirty days. It was Daniel's custom to pray three times a day. How many of us would have an attitude: "I can give up prayer for thirty days. No big deal. After all, prayer is optional anyway." Some...actually I would say many Christians think this way...but not Daniel in our Old Testament lesson. Daniel knew it was his duty to pray. In spite of the consequences Daniel prayed.

Daniel agreed with what Peter and John told the Sanhedrin centuries later: "*We must obey God rather than men.*" Daniel understood it was his duty to pray regardless of the peril. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den. A stone covered entrance. The king and nobles sealed it with their rings. Daniel may have believed he was going into his tomb. It may have been Daniel trusted that God would take him into the eternal mansions of heaven at the mouths of these lions. But I'm reminded of another sealed tomb with a stone rolled in front of it. It served God's plan that when the stone was rolled away, Daniel was alive!—there—just as Jesus was alive—but not there!—because Daniel trusted God. Daniel knew it was his duty to pray regardless of the consequences.

Someone may say, "Well, that's not right. I shouldn't pray because God commanded me. God is not forcing me to pray. I should just be praying out of my heart. What do you mean, God commanded prayer?" When we come to the almighty God with meager little complaints, problems, and ideas, how you know God will listen to us? One way I know is because God has told me, "Come. Got any problems? Come! I want you to come. Pray without ceasing." God tells you to pray so that if you have any doubt that wants to hear your prayer, simply open the Bible and read that, yes, God has told me to come and pray. His command gives confidence rather than a burden. Have you trails and temptations. Take it to the Lord in prayer. God promises to hear our prayer.

Luther makes this interesting comment regarding prayer, "Babbling and bawling...is not prayer." There is a certain form to our prayer and a certain discipline of things we need to do. For example, bowing your head and folding your hands are appropriate to teach our children. But this is not what makes prayer. Some may think that if they put energy into a prayer, God will listen to them better. IF a prayer has energy, it is more acceptable to God. If I bawl and cry out to God, then he will listen. There was a competition between the prophets of Ba'al and Elijah. Each was to build an altar and pray for God to accept the sacrifice. They prophets of Baal had the most sincere prayers ever; they walked around their altar, bawled, and cried out with loud voices. They even cut themselves to show that they were sincere. But there was no answer because they prayed to a false god, to an idol. The effectiveness of prayer is not from the energy we put into it. Rather, it's from the person who hears our prayer, the True God. Elijah prayed to God, and God heard. And God sent down a consuming fire on the altar. Although the altar was drenched with water, the fire consumed everything.

Elijah and Daniel prayed to the one True God because it was commanded of them. They obeyed the command of God. They thought as Luther writes: "This act is an act of

obedience and the commandment of God. ON this I can rely and depend, and I can revere it highly, not because of my worthiness, but because of the commandment.” They might have even thought as we should: “On my account this prayer would not amount to anything; but it is important because God commanded it.”

All those thoughts of “I am not worthy enough! I don’t know how to pray! Someone else will pray! Don’t stand up to God. For our prayers first and most important must be based on obedience to God, regardless of our person, whether we are sinners or righteous people, worthy or unworthy.” God commanded us to pray. So we are to pray. And when we pray, He hears our prayer. He even promises to answer us. As long as we pray for the Lord’s Will to be done...the answer is always...yes according to my will. He says in Psalm 50, “Call on me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you.”

What’s even more remarkable...God takes the initiative and puts into our mouths the very words and approach we are to use. He gives us this gift of the Lord’s Prayer. He teaches us to pray.

He teaches us, he commands us to pray. He wants us to pray to him. He wants us Call upon His name. He wants us to talk to him. God wants you to lament and express your needs and concerns, not because he is unaware of them, but in order that you may kindle your heart to stronger and greater desires and open and spread your apron wide to receive many things.

Take out your hymnals now and turn to pages 323 and 324. Here we look at the petitions and meanings of the Lord’s Prayer. As you see the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer you see that he desperately desires that you call upon Him as any child would ask their loving Father. The reason you can speak... “Our Father who Art In Heaven...” is Jesus. Without Jesus...you would not have been adopted into God’s family.

Without Jesus, you would not be able to speak to God...but because of Jesus your sins are forgiven and you can stand before God in prayer. Prayer is a privilege, but it’s also that command and promise that I spoke about above.

With God as your Father, he is excited when you phone home. He is excited when you spend time with him, much like parents are when you call them. I know my parents are thrilled when I call home. They are thrilled because they love me. God is thrilled when you speak to him in prayer. He is thrilled because He loves you as one of His children.

It’s what Luther is speaking about when he writes these words in response to the introduction...”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 dear father.”

We should all form a daily habit of prayer. It would be good if we would learn this from youth. It’s a great blessing to be raised in a family where parents teach their children to

pray regularly—when you get up, when you go to bed, before and after meals. Pray without ceasing.

Sometimes our heavenly Father teaches us the habit of prayer. He may remind you to pray when you are flat on your back in a hospital bed so that you look up to heaven and remember him in prayer. Sometimes he teaches you to pray by allowing you to have difficulties, either in your family life, work, or finances. Sometimes he teaches you to get on your knees when you desire children and are unable too. These are all opportunities to be reminded of the godly habit of prayer.

God's will is done for your ultimate blessing. When you pray with the will of the Father in mind...he will say yes to you. He will give you what you need in due season...may not be what you want...but will be what you need, and we give God thanks for that. God answers his prayer in his own time and in his own way.

Six months ago we had no idea how long we would wait for the answer for our prayer of children through God's gift of adoption. As we prayed earnestly the Lord led us to once again look at LCFS out of Wauwatosa to see how we could work with them and LSS out of LaCrosse. We were granted an exemption from the state for the correct licensing. Through that excitement and news that we could finally be in the process of adopting a child into our family, God provided us with the birth parents for our child. In God's infinite wisdom he has chosen us to be the birth parents for our child who will ultimately be adopted into God's family. We give thanks to God for this tiny blessing. We give thanks to God for this answered prayer in a way that we did not think it would be answered.

Remember the Lord's Prayer is a gift from God, learn it, remember it, pray it with meaning and earnestly. Look once again at your catechism's and really understand what you pray when you pray the Lord's Prayer.

And finally remember, that it is because of Jesus on the cross that you can come to God in prayer.

IN Jesus Name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.