

7/24/2016
Luke 11:1-13
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Lord, Teach US to Pray

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

When you pray - what do you ask for? For many people, in praying they ask for things for themselves, help ME, heal ME, give ME, protect ME, let my team win , so often it is all about me! Now, before we get any further, let me be clear, praying for your own needs is not a problem - unless it is always and only about ME.

Yet in the Gospel today, Jesus gives us a bit of context to work with. Jesus had just finished praying in the sight of his disciples. One of the disciples approached him and asked:

“Lord, teach us to pray.”

Watching Jesus pray the disciples realized that there was a special relationship going on between Jesus and his Father in heaven - so they spoke up :

“Lord, teach US to pray.”

And the answer that Jesus gave, words over 2,000 years old, still prayed today. These words of the Lord’s prayer, these ancient words, taught to us by Jesus, bring us comfort - solitude - and a way of talking to God.

When we cannot pull words together, this is our go to prayer, a prayer that says so much - yet do we actually hear the words that we are saying?

Our Father

Give Us

Forgive Us as We forgive

Lead Us

Deliver Us

For thine is the Kingdom

It is not about me here, it is about *us*.

In the Lord's prayer Jesus gives us insight into the life that he lived. He gives us an understanding of the hope we have in the present and the hope that we have in a future made possible by his life, death and resurrection.

Lord, teach us to pray.

It's as if the disciples were asking Jesus to help us with our relationship to God - for it's in prayer that we gather together, praying for the *US* in the world, praying together as we grow closer in relationship to God and ultimately one another.

Lord, teach us to pray

Teach us how to have relationship with you and one another, relationship where we see the image of your son in the face of even the most unexpected individuals - teach us to see your son in the face of those that we may disagree with, or those that we mark in our own hearts as sinners or less than worthy.

Lord teach us to see your face in even those that make us uncomfortable and uneasy - because though we may not wish to see - it is as plain as is the sun in the sky beating down on us - your face...the face of your son *even in and especially in* those faces of individuals that make us uneasy and uncomfortable.

But proceed with caution - for the answer might be hard to hear.

Lord, teach us to pray.

Our father who art in Heaven - Our God, the God that created you and me with as much care as he created the matriarchs and patriarchs - the Father that sent his only son to save each of us so that we no longer have to fear the unknown of death.

Hallowed be thy name - every nation, every tribe, every language and every race that proclaim Christ as their saviour all believe in the sanctity of the name of God, a name hallowed throughout the ages and the name that will be hallowed for the ages that pass us by into the eons of eternity.

Thy Kingdom come - there will be a day when the kingdom of God comes to this earth and we all raise from death into the glorious light of God - a kingdom that will have no end, a place where we will fully see the created, the divine and the holy in the faces of each and every person - where equality amongst all of God's people will be not just recognized but unquestioned

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven - God's will on Earth was made whole in Christ and is continued to be sustained by the Holy Spirit. Search your hearts, take a moment and search them. Each time you pray this prayer you are praying that the will of God be done here on earth - here in your own time!

So take the time and search your hearts:

when have you felt the Spirit in action in your life? When have you felt the will of God in your life...your God moment if you will?

Do you suppose the disciples actually understood what they were asking when they said: "Lord, teach us to pray?" Do you think they actually understood how this would change the relationship between humankind and God forever!?

Think about it. We do not ask God to bring God's kingdom to simply smite out those we disagree with - we do not ask God's will to be done on this earth in accordance with our will, but all in accordance to the will of God.

The disciples did not say "Lord, pray for us." No, the disciples saw this relationship of Jesus with God and so desperately wanted that relationship that they asked for it - and as our Gospel says, ask and it shall be given. Knock and the door shall be open.

Now it's not saying to ask for anything and anything will be given. God is not the big Santa Claus of heaven, no, there are parameters. The Gospel says that God knows well enough what our needs are - so in prayers about "me" we have to also be prepared for a Godly "no."

Now God won't give us a scorpion when we ask for an egg - but God will give us what we need. The second part of the Lord's prayer helps us to understand how to ask for our needs.

Lord, teach us to pray

Give us this day our daily bread - today we will be celebrating our first Eucharist together, a time to share around the table of Christ our daily bread. Our Spiritual nourishment that will prepare us for the work we have ahead of us. Yet, what about the daily bread we need for our own nourishment?

Oh, if we are asking the Lord to teach us to pray, sometimes we are given answers to our prayers that are not easy. Sometimes they are very unwelcomed. Mana is not just going to fall from the sky to keep us fed, but when we pray for our daily bread, we are invited into the deeper question of what it means for us to allow God to work God's will through us.

We have a food pantry here, established so that some of our most in need brothers and sisters have access to some form of daily nourishment - but the pantry cannot and will not run on a prayer and a donation or on the sentiment of "well isn't that nice St. Stephen's has a pantry."

If we are praying that God gives *US* our daily bread we need to acknowledge that perhaps one of the corners where we hear the voice of God calling could be, perhaps, in the food pantry. Could God be calling you to volunteer there - to ensure that that daily bread is being given? Is this your mission site?

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that have trespassed against us - it's not going to get any easier here. Sin is all around us - in fact, Martin Luther fought against sin his whole life and acknowledged that it is part of who we are. We just can't help it at times.

This morning we asked for God's forgiveness and were reassured that through Scripture we know our sins are and have been forgiven. But listen closely to the prayer Jesus taught us:

Forgive us *as we forgive*.

I don't know about you, but I would much rather have a God that can do a better job in forgiving people that sinned against God than I am at forgiving people that have sinned against me. But hey, if we want an easy faith we chose the wrong one - because being Christian is all about forgiveness.

Now I'm not saying we can simply go out and forgive everyone and anyone, but what if we led our lives in a way that put forgiveness and reconciliation to the front of the line. Let me say it like this: what if we placed forgiveness and reconciliation in our top five list of potential responses to those that have sinned against us? Could we start there? Could we, here at St. Stephen's, participate in a peace initiative that calls to the end of escalating violence in the streets? Can we be prophetic voices calling in the wilderness to make straight a path of our Lord and savior and call for an end to retaliatory killings?

Why couldn't we?

And lead us not into temptation - The Lord is my Shepherd and I shall not want. He leads me beside green pastures, still waters, and not into the temptations of this world but with a knowledge that in Christ there is a kingdom awaiting every single one of us. Temptation is there, as is Christ leading us.

But deliver us from evil - yes, evil exists in this world. It's plagued with evil and we can have a wonderful discussion later about where it comes from, but for now we know that we can ask God to deliver us from the dark one and into a world of divine and Holy light.

Can St. Stephen's be just one of those torches of light on our earthly journey? I'd say so.

Lord, teach us to pray.

Lord, teach us relationship.

I pray that in our ministry together we can form a relationship that has its base in the words of the Lord's prayer, a relationship that helps us to deepen our knowledge of God and of one another. A relationship that will bring us out of the shadows of the city and into a shining bright light, a beacon of hope for Wilmington - that the divine love of God's gift, freely and without condition, is given to all of God's people.

A relationship that brings us face to face with with people we may never have otherwise realized bear an image of Christ in their faces, where together we can confidently pray the words Our savior taught.

Lord, teach us to pray

Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us and save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours. Now and forever.

Amen