

Prayer is a part of my spiritual life that I know I can improve upon. No matter how much I pray, I realize, I always want more of God in my life. I need to pray more. The busyness of life can get in the way of prayer. Martin Luther said, “I have so much to do today that I’m going to need to spend three hours in prayer in order to be able to get it all done.” The busier we are the more we need to pray.

Let me open out time in prayer. Many of you have been taught the Lord’s Prayer, possibly since childhood, it is found in Matthew chapter 6, if you know it join in with me, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Amen.

(Matthew 6:9-13) What did we just pray? Many religions teach praying memorized prayers and praying in repetition because they say it deepens spirituality – Jewish, Catholic and Muslim. The first question that comes to my mind is, does praying memorized prayers or in repetition deepen ones spirituality? Does chanting prayers in unknown tongues deepen ones spirituality? Reciting the prayer of “Our Father” over and over – does it deepen ones spirituality?

On the other hand if we prayed this prayer with understanding and not out of tradition or purely from memorization it has deep meaning. It begins with the recognition of God in Heaven and that his will is done on earth as it is done in heaven. Christians represent God here on earth and we are to do his will. We look forward and long for the coming kingdom of God. With the resurrection of Christ we begin living in his kingdom here on earth by having a relationship

with him and we desire the return of Christ for eternity – living forever in God’s presence with no more suffering and knowing more and more of God forever. Though Christ our debts or sins have been forgiven and through Christ we are reconciled us back to God. Knowing the depth of our sins and our unworthiness and yet experiencing complete forgiveness through Christ is a miracle and blessing. Jesus instructed us to also forgive others, which is not easy, but then Christ did not do the easy thing, he gave his life that our sins might be forgiven. In prayer we plead to God to strengthen us, so that we might sin less and love more and forgive more easily. Christ gives us the precious gift of the Holy Spirit and when we submit to the Spirit - he does indeed empower us to not give into temptation and sin. Finally, we know our destination is heaven we are able to live in this broken and evil world delivered by Christ and knowing his peace amid strife. Luther said, **“Pray and let God worry.”** God can take our worries and replace them with his peace.

This is the reason Jesus taught just prior to teaching this model of prayer that it was to be heart felt and not just repetitions. Reading from verse 5, **“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”**

⁷“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

God sent Jesus so that our sins are forgiven enabling us to have a relationship with him. It is not repetition of rote prayers, but the heart felt conversation of

pouring out our hearts to God and hearing him. It is God who heals our hearts and guides us on a path of life coming ever closer to him and more distant from the sins of the world. A life seeking to know God the Father intimately through God the Son, who was seen and lived a perfect sinless life, was crucified and rose from the dead. It is the living Christ who gives us the words to live by, the words of eternal truth, and the very words you hold in your hands. Salvation is not gained nor favor increased with God by the mere reading or saying prayers. Luther felt ones prayer life was critical and it was time-spent opening the heart to speak and hear from God privately and in community. He said, **“To gather with God's people in united adoration of the Father is as necessary to the Christian life as prayer.”** Luther understood from the Bible and his own experience why Christ gave his believing followers the gift of the church. As messy as church can be - there is power and blessing and strength and protection in coming together with brothers and sister in Christ to worship.

Now turn in your Bible to John chapter 14, beginning at verse 12 Jesus says, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”** (John 14:12-14)

I want to take a few minutes and focus on verses 13 and 14. Jesus says, **“Whatever you ask in my name...”** **“Whatever”** means there is no restriction to what we can ask and seek from God. God wants us to ask him anything or whatever is a concern of our heart. Jesus continues, **“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do...”** Whatever we seek from God that is in his will he will do. John wrote in his first letter that when we pray **“this is the confidence that**

we have toward ~~him~~ God, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” (1 John 5:14) When we pray God transforms our selfish hearts over time into hearts that seek not our own will, but seek his heart and his will. If we believe in and know God then we know nothing is impossible for God.

If we ask for the humanly impossible and it is the will of God we will see God act and do the impossible. We need to ask in His name and what we ask needs to be the will of God. But when we pray and ask how do we know what is the will of God? Jesus gives us the answer in the last half of verse 13, “**that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**” We live for the glory of God the Father by having accepted Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Living our lives as Jesus has taught brings God glory. It is Jesus that gives us the authority and privilege to come to God directly in prayer.

God the Father says through Jesus, God the Son, “**If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.**” So, if we ask God for anything in his name and within his will and for his glory through Christ – He will do it. God will answer and our response to God’s answer must always be, “Yes Lord I will obey.” Our prayers are not to be for personal gain, but for the glory of God. We should seek God’s blessings so that we may use his blessings to bless others so that they may see God glorified in his Son and understand our lives are lived so very different from the world because of the saving power and grace of Jesus.

We have looked at prayer and talked of prayer this morning. Let us now spend a little time seeking God in prayer. Luther said, “**Prayer is a strong wall and fortress of the church; it is a goodly Christian weapon.**” Let us lay the concerns of our hearts before God and listen to his answer. Let us also pray as a goodly Christian weapon against evil and for our protection. I will bring us to close in a moment. Now spend a moment with God.