

July 24, 2016
Luke 11:1-13

Proper 12c
Prayer: Conversation with your Father

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

You are involved in Conversation every day. Conversations with friends, parents, spouse, children, coworkers, church members, and more. God created us to be social creatures. “Man should not live alone.” God says to Adam, “I’ll create woman.”

These conversations we have are all about one thing or another – weather, sports, kids, family life, politics, current events, and more. It’s great to have conversations. With each conversation partner there is a relationship whether it be as superficial as the checkout girl at Walmart or to the most intimate of conversations with your spouse.

In our text this morning, the disciple want to know how to pray. They are desiring structure, technique, and terminology. Jesus gives them that to an extent, but really he teaches them that the heart of prayer is our relationship with God our Father.

This prayer that Jesus gives us is familiar. We all know it. We pray it every Sunday. Perhaps you pray it everyday in your homes. It’s a prayer that stays on the lips of the faithful to the end. When I’ve been in nursing homes with those advanced in years and failing health, this is a prayer that they pray with me, when everything else that is familiar is gone with your mind. Does Jesus give us structure, technique, and terminology...yes he does. As I said above, Jesus is teaching His disciples, which includes you and me the heart of prayer.

It’s popular at a time of great tragedy and personal loss for someone to tell you – our thoughts and prayers are with you! Indeed they are! Indeed our thoughts and prayers are with people...and when people say that to you it points out a relationship. Jesus in this text, in teaching us to pray is speaking about relationship, namely that the heart of prayer is our relationship with God our Father.

The Lord’s Prayer doesn’t just provide structure. It also provide a framework that challenges the foundation of prayer.

Jesus challenges the disciples to rethink the nature of prayer. You see Christian prayer is very different than the prayers of the people of the world. They view prayer as a negotiation process with a superpower.

They see God a divine vending machine, giving them what they want when they want. Insert prayer into the prayer slot and receive your request at the bottom of the machine. They appeal via prayer to God’s ego with flowering speech and generous portions of praise. They are at times appealing to God’s greed with their promises and pledges. Like this...Dear God, I will serve you all my faith if you only take away... if you only give me...” They appeal to his sense of

justice by offering many prayers in the hoping of shaping God into action. "Dear God, you are against murder and hatred...please take away the violence..." Again and again...or it may end...end those that do the violence.

Sometimes our prayers sound like this as well. You've seen God as a divine vending machine. You've seen prayer as mere words, structure, technique and terminology. Sometimes this even happens when we pray the prayer our Lord has taught us. You see, when we pray this prayer, when we as God's people is not out of need, but out of relationship with our heavenly Father.

Our prayer is out of relationship, which is why we pray, "Our Father." We can call Him Father because he has chosen us as one of His dearly beloved Children. Our adoption as daughters and son into God's kingdom is indeed a gift from God granted to us through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only is prayer is a gift...but our relationship with God as Father and us as dearly beloved Children is a gift.

Our text doesn't stop with the words and structure of the Lord's prayer. Jesus goes on to speak in a parabolic form about prayer. He points that we should be bold in our prayers. We should be bold because of our relationship with God or rather God's relationship with us. In the first parable Jesus talks about a neighbor knocking on the door of his sleeping neighbor to ask for food. You see that the sleeping neighbor doesn't get up because he wants to get out of bed, he gets up because the knocking neighbor is bold. And notice, he doesn't open the door with a bat in hand, but with bread. This neighbor is confident in his relationship. God desires us to be confident and bold in our relationship with our heavenly Father; so confident we persist in the asking, seeking, and knocking.

In our Old Testament lesson, we heard how Abraham was pleading, begging. He understood the Lord's invitation to pray. He's not using God as some divine vending machine. He's not dictating to God what to do. He's coming to God, because he knows that God is merciful. He asks, seeks, knocks out of faith. He pleads and begs out of faith.

He pleads and begs because God invited Him to pray. Jesus also invites us to pray to him. For prayer always starts from the giver of every good and perfect gift. Prayer always comes from God first and then moves to the one who pleads, begs, asks, seeks, and knocks.

When God invites you to pray, he bestows that relationship upon you. He bestows Sonship on you through His Son. You are called one of His children when He calls upon you to pray in every circumstance. Abraham was pleading out of relationship with his nephew Lot, the neighbor to the sleeping man in our text was pleading out relationship with a friend who journeyed to stay with him but had no bread. He also pleaded out of relationship with His sleeping friend.

He encourages us to pray since He is our Father...but yet isn't that word oftentimes tainted in this world, with what we hear of earthly fathers or even perhaps experienced ourselves. You may have had an abusive father, one who was unfair, cruel and harsh. One who may have been

absent and uncaring. You also may have a caring father who you love greatly, gave you many fine gifts and took care of you, but is still sinful. Also know that your earthly father may have treated you with great care with all of your disrespect and pain. Those images will affect what we think about God as our Father at times and will perhaps deter us from praying.

Jesus in the last few verses of our text is pointing out that no matter what type of earthly father you have; your heavenly Father is even better. Even when sinful fathers give good gifts, God gives even better gifts. Many times though human fathers will not do hurtful and harmful things, but rather give good things to their own children, then “how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” That’s not a question! That’s a statement! Jesus tell us that the heavenly Father gives much more, even the gift of the Holy Spirit, to His children.

Through the death and resurrection of the Son of God, you have been chosen as God’s son and daughter. He has given you a great gift in your baptism...the Holy Spirit. He continues to make Him known to you in His Word and in the breaking of bread and prayer. God the Father has given you the Holy Spirit who creates, nourishes, and sustains faith in you. This faith the Father gives you through the Holy Spirit changes the relationship. It changes the way you look at the relationship you have with your Heavenly Father. Through this faith, Jesus Christ removes the scales of sin to see—really see—that your heavenly Father gives you everything – even the Holy Spirit to keep you for the day of everlasting life.

Oftentimes we pray foolishly and we need to thank God that He doesn’t answer those prayers in way that would do us harm, rather he answers them to our benefit.

You see, this very day, the Father continues to answer your prayer, through His good gifts to you, through the Holy Spirit. You have been given faith in the waters of Baptism. You have been declared a Child of God through Baptism. You have a perfect Father who will never do you harm, whether intentional or unintentional.

To close a brief story of the 16th President of the United States. Abraham Lincoln 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. This means his office, is open 24 hours a day for you. You may enter and be heard. You are God’s own precious child.

Dr. Luther in the Large Catechism 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 the world.’” John’s First Letter gives you that same assurance: ¹⁴*And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.*

¹⁵ 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. ¹

Why pray? Because we have a relationship with God...a very intimate relationship as God as Father. We pray, we have ongoing conversation because we are now precious children by faith in Christ...a faith given to us by the Holy Spirit who's given to us by the Father through the Son.

Dearly Baptized...you are God's own special child. God is your dear Father and gives you the most perfect gifts, through the death and resurrection of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. He gives you forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Since He gives you good gifts, keep on praying.

IN Jesus Name. Amen.

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

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (1 Jn 5:14–15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.