

Text: Luke 11:1-13 (NIV)

¹One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” ²He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.” ⁵Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ ⁷“Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. ⁹“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Theme: Who Taught You How to Pray?

The disciple asked Jesus, “*Lord, teach us to pray.*” At first it seems like an absurd question. Everyone knows how to pray, or do we? Prayer is not something that we learn to do by ourselves. It is the same as learning a language. We learn how to talk as a child from our parents. We learn how to speak in prayer by listening to God’s Word. Today, I would like to ask the question, “Who taught you how to pray?”

I. Who taught you how to pray?

Maybe no one did. How many children grow up in homes today in which prayers are never said? The family gathers to eat. No prayers are said. Children do not learn any bedtime prayers. Family devotions are not a part of the home life. The children never see their parents in prayer, so they have no idea how to pray.

In addition many children are seldom in worship or Sunday School. They have very little idea what goes on here on Sunday morning. I once saw a survey in which children were asked who the most religious person is that they know, and one of the top answers was “Bart Simpson.”

How is Jesus’ name used most often in your house? Is it used to praise Him for His blessings, to call upon Him for His help and forgiveness or is it used most often in vain? Are we sometimes teaching the next generation how to mock and demean Jesus’ name, rather than how to pray in His name?

On the other hand there are times when we learn how to pray in the wrong ways. In Matthew 6 Jesus warns us against praying to be seen by other people. In Luke’s Gospel Jesus gives the example of a pharisee who prayed about Himself, so that everyone would see how holy he is. God does definitely doesn’t want us to seek glory and honor for us through our prayers.

We also should think that God will hear us if we use many words or just the right formula. Our

prayers need to come from the heart. But that doesn't mean that prayer is just pouring out our hearts to God. Then we mix up our wants, dreams, sighs, complaints and joys with prayer. God wants to hear everything that is in our hearts. In his book on the psalms, Dietrich Bonhoefer writes about that, **"The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart."** (Page15)

That is the key to learning how to pray. We want to learn from Jesus Himself. The disciple was right in asking, *"Lord, teach us to pray."* They had seen Jesus pray ever since He prayed while being baptized in the Jordan. Shortly before this they had seen Jesus pray before He fed the 5,000 and before His transfiguration. They saw Jesus pray, and they wanted to pray like Jesus.

That should be our desire to. We want to pray like Jesus. In order for us to pray like Jesus, prayer can't begin with our mouths. It has to begin with our ears and come from a renewed heart. Just as a child doesn't know how to speak when he is born, so we don't now how to talk with God until we learn His speech from the Scriptures. He teaches us how to talk with Him in prayer. We learn that prayer comes from a heart of faith in Him.

II. This is how He teaches us to pray.

He teaches us to ***pray with confidence*** by calling Him, "Our Father." In Romans 8:15 Paul writes that we have received the spirit of sonship, so that we can cry out, *"Abba, Father!"* Through faith in Jesus Christ we are the children of God. Martin Luther writes in the Small Catechism, **"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 Christians do not go before the creator and judge of all things unsure that He will hear us. No, we go in the certainty that He will hear us and answer us. We pray to God in the name of Jesus. That means that we are certain that our prayers are heard for Jesus' sake. Jesus said, *"I tell you the truth, My Father will give you whatever you ask in My name."* That is how certain we are that God hears and answers our prayers. Jesus says in our text, *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."* We can go to God anytime. He will always hear and answer (vss. 5-8) He will also give us the good gifts that we need, especially the Holy Spirit.

Jesus teaches us to pray ***for God's glory and praise***. The first two petitions are "Hallowed be Your name," and "Your kingdom come." Our prayers don't begin with me and what I want, but with God, His honor, and what He wants. We pray that His name will be holy among us, that we believe His Word and live according to it. We also pray that His kingdom will come into the world, which means that the Gospel will spread be believed. Do you remember to pray that God's Word will be believed, that you will grow in faith, and that God will be glorified by your own life, or are such things seldom in your prayers? Jesus shows that they should be first. He tells us plainly, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."*

Then He teaches us to pray ***for our daily bread***. In this petition we realize that everything that we have is a gift from God. He not only gives us spiritual blessings. He also gives us what our body needs too. We are pray for **daily** bread. We pray that God doesn't bless us with too much or give us too little. Proverbs 30:8,9 addresses this petition well where is says, *"Give me neither poverty*

nor riches, but give me my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown You and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of My God." Daily bread includes much more than just bread. It means everything that we need to sustain our life. In the Small Catechism Luther writes, **"Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."** We confess that all our blessings are from God, and we thank Him for those blessings too.

Finally, Jesus teaches us to pray *for deliverance from evil*. We are all sinners. We have deserved God's eternal punishment, but Jesus Christ paid for all of our sins. We pray that He would deliver us from our sins, and give us the forgiveness that He won for us. This is especially fitting this week. I heard two public confessions. One from a popular baseball player who lied and cheated. The other was from a New York politician who cheated on his wife. Both of them confessed to having "made mistakes." Those are sins, not mistakes. A mistake is something that happens by accident. We don't seek the forgiveness of our mistakes, but the forgiveness of our sins. We confess that we have done wrong and trust in God's forgiveness through Christ.

As God's forgiven people, we pray that God will give us the strength to forgive each other. But temptation still abounds in this world. We pray that God will help us recognize temptation and flee from it. In summary we pray, "But deliver us from evil." There are so many evils of body and soul in this life. Jesus came to redeem us from them all. We pray, that we will receive the salvation that He won for us—the forgiveness of our sins, His help, blessing, and peace in this life, and eternal life with Him in heaven.

Who taught you how to pray? I hope that someone did, and that they taught your how to pray like Jesus. When we learn from Jesus we can be sure that all of our prayers and petitions are acceptable and pleasing to God, because He Himself has taught us to pray in this way. That's why we end our prayers with "Amen," which means, "Yes, yes, it shall be so." May God give us such confidence before God because we have learned to pray from Jesus Himself. Amen.

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