

TEACH US TO *Pray*

An Order of Worship for the Home

February 17, 2021
Ash Wednesday

This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.

There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit www.calvaryslz.org to give online.

Invocation

Reader 1: We invite you, Father,
Reader 2: Teach us to pray.
Reader 1: We ask you, Jesus,
Reader 2: Teach us to pray.
Reader 1: We desire your presence, Holy Spirit,
Reader 2: Teach us to pray.
Reader 1: We need you, God...
Reader 2: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Reader 1: Teach us to pray.
Together: Amen.

Psalm 51:1-12

¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy

- blot out my transgressions.
- ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
- ³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.
- ⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- ⁶Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- ⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
- ⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
- ¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Confession & Absolution

*Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith.
Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered.*

Christian Confessing: My prayers are weak and faltering. My thoughts waver and my words wander. Some days I enter prayer oblivious to my

own sin and the holiness of the God I approach. Other days, I struggle to pray on account of the guilt I feel. I fail in the action of prayer. I fail in the attitude of prayer. My struggles in prayer reflect the struggles in all of my life. I need forgiveness. I need faith. I need a Savior.

Christian Responding: Know for certain, that your God loves you. He meets your weak prayers with his strength. He meets your faltering prayers with the certainty of his promises. Jesus is your Savior, and he grants you forgiveness. He sends his Holy Spirit to strengthen your faith. He invites you to pray to your Father in confidence. Your heavenly Father gives good gifts to his children. You are his child. These gifts are yours.

Together: Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was

buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Message (includes our Gospel text, Luke 11:1-13)

Teach Us to Pray

During Lent we're going to talk about prayer. Actually, we're going to do more than just talk about prayer. We're going to learn. We're going to dig into prayer and seek to understand it better. And we're going to invest. We're going to spend time praying. We're going to spend energy praying. We're going to give ourselves to prayer.

As a guide, we'll explore The Lord's Prayer. We'll also use Martin Luther's explanations of the Lord's Prayer from his Small Catechism. The themes laid out there will guide our time together in messages like this. Those themes also give shape to the daily devotions we've shared in print and online.

We won't get into those catechism topics just yet. Today, I want to start with Jesus teaching his disciples about prayer. The words of the Lord's Prayer are recorded in two places in the Bible – the gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke. Matthew places the prayer as part of the Sermon on the Mount. Luke records this prayer in another setting. Why the difference? It's likely that Jesus taught this prayer, or something like it, on more than one occasion. I'd like us to look at Luke's story today.

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1)

Right off the bat we see why the disciples asked the question. They saw Jesus praying. They knew Jesus had a rhythm of prayer. There was an intentionality about his prayer life. His prayers weren't limited to spontaneous moments during the day. He was praying "in a certain place." So, his disciples ask, and we ask too. Did you notice, this request from the disciples is the title of our daily devotion book and this Lenten series? It's our request as fellow disciples of Jesus: Teach Us to Pray.

² And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread,

⁴ and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation." (Luke 11:2-4)

Did you notice that Jesus gave his disciples what they asked for? They said to Jesus, "Teach us to pray." Jesus responded with words and phrases. He gave them an action step. He gave them an activity which would require time. It would require some amount of conscious focus. He gave them a discipline. Fits pretty well with the teaching series we just finished, huh?

This is the action of prayer. Jesus gives his disciples something to do. He might have stopped right there. In fact, sometimes I wonder if we think Jesus did stop right there. Sometimes I wonder if we think that going through the actions is what prayer is all about.

If we stop reading here, we might believe that prayer is just a matter of reciting the right words and phrases. If we stop reading here, we can walk away thinking that a script is what Jesus gave us for prayer. But... if we stop here we miss out. Jesus didn't stop here. He kept teaching. He taught the *action* of prayer, and then he continues by teaching the *attitude* of prayer.

⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three

loaves,⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him';⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'?⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. (Luke 11:5-8)

Did you catch the word “impudence” in that section? How many times have you used that word in your life? Probably not too often. The man banging on his friend’s door in the middle of the night is answered for his impudence, and we’re invited to bring that same attitude into our prayers!

This is the attitude Jesus encourages in prayer. When you’re impudent you’re willing to lose your dignity. You’re willing to ask for things to which you have no right. When you’re impudent you drop your pride and pretense. You start asking like a beggar because you realize you are a beggar. When you’re impudent you get desperate. You act as if you have no other options.

The man in Jesus’ story could have refrained from waking his neighbor. If he was thinking about his own reputation, he would have held back. If he was thinking about his own status, he would have stayed home. If he was considering his right to ask for this gift he would have kept quiet. He didn’t do any of these. Instead, he was impudent enough to bang on the door and ask his neighbor for a favor he did not deserve.

What is Jesus teaching his disciples about prayer? He’s giving them the *action* and the *attitude*. The action is words, phrases, themes. The action takes time and attention. The action is a discipline which we learn.

The attitude is impudent. The attitude is all-in. The attitude is as if nothing else matters.

I could be wrong, but I get the impression that what Jesus taught wasn't just for disciples back then. I think this teaching may have been written down because it has meaning for disciples today too. If that's true, let me ask you, "How are you doing with these actions and attitudes?"

Do your prayers take time? I mean do they actually take time from other things you could be doing? Do your prayers demand your focus, or do you allow your mind to wander while you recite words and phrases? Prayer is a discipline, so how disciplined are you in prayer? Have you got the action of prayer locked-in?

What about the attitude of prayer? Do you lose your dignity in prayer? Do you come to God recognizing your place as an unworthy beggar, or do you come confident in yourself? Do you realize that having your prayer heard by God is more than you deserve? Are you aware that expecting an answer goes further yet?

When we really examine our prayers, you and I have to admit that we make a mess of the action and the attitude. We get both of these wrong. Our minds wander. Other responsibilities receive our time. Our pride makes us more comfortable than we deserve. We lose sight of the awe and wonder appropriate to conversation with the almighty God.

We get prayer wrong. We get the action wrong. We get the attitude wrong. Yet, our God sets our prayers right. That's the most amazing part about prayer. That's what Jesus reveals with his next words.

⁹And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. (Luke 11:9-10)

Learn to pray. Spend time. Be disciplined. Find the right words to express your need. Couple that with impudence. Become a beggar before God. Ask for what you need knowing full-well that you don't deserve it.

Do this trusting that your God will make your prayer right. You'll get prayer wrong, but he always makes it right. You'll trip up in your words, and you'll fall short in your humility. You'll get prayer wrong, but your God will make it right.

When Jesus told his disciples he was going to die, Peter told him to stop talking like that. He asked Jesus to pursue a different story. Peter's conversation with God went wrong, but God made it right. He made it right by dying on a cross for all of Peter's wrongs.

God died for all of your wrongs too. Jesus died for all the parts of life you get wrong, including prayer. He died for the wrongs, and he made them right when he rose again. In the resurrection we see the ability of our God to take the biggest wrongs and make them right. We see that our God can take immeasurable wrongs and make them right.

That's what your God does. He takes what you get wrong and he makes it right. That's why he invites you to pray. He knows you'll get it wrong. He doesn't want you to get it wrong. He invites you to get the action right. He encourages you to get the attitude right. He wants you to get it right, but he knows you'll fall short. You'll get prayer wrong, but he always makes it right. That's the promise Jesus emphasizes with this picture.

¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:11-13)

If you then, who get prayer wrong, come to your heavenly Father, do you not know that he will make your prayer right? Pray with discipline. Pray with impudence. Pray and trust your God to make your prayer right.

Amen.

Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Offering Prayer

If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.
Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.
Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.
Reader 2: Receive our offerings.
Together: Receive us as your own.

Blessing *(Philippians 4:4-7)*

Reader 1: The Lord is at hand;
Reader 2: do not be anxious about anything,
Reader 1: but in everything by prayer and supplication
Reader 2: with thanksgiving let our requests be made known to God.
Reader 1: And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
Reader 2: will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.
Together: Amen.

As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at www.calvaryslz.org. We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.