

# TEACH US TO *Pray*

## An Order of Worship for the Home

March 7, 2021

*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 continue our Covid adjustments related to gathering, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit [www.calvaryslz.org](http://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 143:7-10**

<sup>7</sup> Answer me quickly, O Lord!  
My spirit fails!  
Hide not your face from me,  
lest I be like those who go down to the pit.

<sup>8</sup>Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love,  
for in you I trust.  
Make me know the way I should go,  
for to you I lift up my soul.

<sup>9</sup>Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord!  
I have fled to you for refuge.

<sup>10</sup>Teach me to do your will,  
for you are my God!  
Let your good Spirit lead me  
on level ground!

### **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 my struggles in all of 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, and his gifts are yours.

Together: Amen.

## The Lord's Prayer: The Second Petition (Luther's Small Catechism)

### Thy kingdom come.

*What does this mean?*

The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

*How does God's kingdom come?*

God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

### 2 Timothy 1:8-14

<sup>8</sup>Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, <sup>9</sup>who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, <sup>10</sup>and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, <sup>11</sup>for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, <sup>12</sup>which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. <sup>13</sup>Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup>By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

### 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.

## John 3:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

## Message

### Thy Kingdom Come

*Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." (John 3:1-2)*

At night. Hidden. Seeking safety, but drawn to take this risk. Hedging his bets, but risking the cost of meeting with Jesus. Something about this teacher makes it worth the risk. Something about Jesus makes the cost and discomfort worthwhile.

*<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."  
<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:3-4)*

Yes, there's a question here about the practicalities, but isn't that always the question? There's a practical question about the definition of new birth. There are practical questions about the implications of anything new. There are practical

concerns for a successful, established teacher like Nicodemus facing the possibility of radical changes in his life and relationships.

If we think about it that way, this is not somebody else's conversation, is it? We're faced with similar practical questions. How can a man be born when he is old? How can a well-established person change? How can I change money habits once I'm retired? How can I make risky moves when I've got a family to think about? Jesus isn't suggesting changes which are uncomfortable, unpredictable, or risky, is he? That would be as crazy as an old person becoming a child again.

*<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' (John 3:5-7)*

Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be ready to lose what you think you've gained." Do not marvel that I said to you, "You're comfortable in all the wrong ways."

*<sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)*

That's the real risk, isn't it? The risk wasn't coming to Jesus under cover of darkness. The risk wasn't conversing with an accused blasphemer. The risk is losing control. The risk is handing over control to the unpredictability of God..

Jesus doesn't invite Nicodemus to enter the kingdom through more knowledge, or more structure, or more planning, or more contemplation, or more synagogue, or amassing answers to Bible trivia. Instead of more of what Nicodemus is comfortable with, Jesus calls him to let go.

Life in the Spirit is unpredictable. Life in the Spirit is not planned as you and I would plan. Life in the Spirit is risky by the measures of this world. Life in the Spirit is costly

by the values of this world. Yet, life in the Spirit only feels contrary to our lives, when our lives are resisting.

I love biking, and throughout this past year I've spent a lot of time on my road bike. I've got several routes I take from home, but sometimes I'm not sure which direction I want to head out. On those days, I'll check the wind direction and allow that to dictate my route. I'll ride into the wind at the start, so I can have the wind at my back on the way home.

I can make progress when I ride against the wind. In fact, I can move pretty fast even when riding into the wind. I can find a rhythm and get fairly comfortable. But when I make the turn and start heading home, I'm amazed. My legs are tired, but I ride faster. I may have been working hard for an hour, but now the work is easy. When my movement is aligned with the energy of the wind, things go much better. The ride is more fun. The ride is more fun.

The movement of the Spirit is not under our control. It's not dictated by this world. Yet, the movement of the Spirit is discernable. If we watch, we can tell which way the Spirit is moving. We know which way we're moving too. When our movement is not aligned with the Spirit, we're only able to change one of these two.

This is the heart of "Thy kingdom come." This is a prayer for the Holy Spirit. This is a prayer for the movement of God. This is a prayer that our lives would align with His movement.

However, we're a little like Nicodemus. We don't get it. We've got comfortable lives. We've got jobs and homes and relationships we've worked to establish. We're not really interested in moving in a new direction.

When we're comfortable and risk averse, here's what I think happens. We still pray "Thy kingdom come," but we assume the kingdom needs to come for the good of someone else. "Thy kingdom come" for the sake of heathens who really need to change their lives. "Thy kingdom come" because this world is a mess. "Thy kingdom come" for those people who need to be set straight.

We assume the kingdom has already come to us. We've already changed. It's an event exclusively in the past (as if God's done changing us.) We have this "been there, done that" attitude when it comes to the unpredictable, risky, costly movement of the Spirit. If you don't think that's true, let me ask you this. When did you last do something risky at the prompting of the Holy Spirit?

- When did you last give away more than you thought you could afford?
- When did you last seek out friendship with someone you don't agree with?
- When did you last share honestly about the hurts you carry?
- When did you last ask for forgiveness from another person (without offering an explanation for your actions)?
- When did you last promise to be there for someone, no matter what?
- When did you last risk?

I love Luther's explanation of this petition, because he reminds us pointedly what our request is all about. "Thy kingdom come" is not for someone else. It's for us. He writes, "we pray in this petition that it may come to us." Then, he goes on to remind us that God's kingdom comes to us by His Holy Spirit so that we do two things: "we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives."

I think we often stop at that first one, and assume the second is some sort of boundary. Here's what I mean:

It's as if you were sailing on the ocean, and you capsized in a violent storm. You're lost without hope, and then your Savior arrives and pulls you from the sea. Thank God for his saving work!

But then we imagine that Jesus brings us to a harbor where we are safe, and tells us not to go to the sea anymore. This matches what Luther says about believing, but this is not a picture of leading godly lives.

**Jesus didn't only save you *from* something.  
Jesus also saved you *for* something.**

You've been brought to the safety of a harbor, but you've not been brought to your destination yet. You're called back out to the sea. You're called to what's risky. You're

called to what's unpredictable. You're called to be driven by the wind of the Holy Spirit to the places He is going. You're called to be part of His work in the world. When we pray "Thy kingdom come" we're asking God to take us back out to sea.

There will be times when we need the comfort of a safe harbor. We need to resupply at the port now and again. But, I wonder how often we get a little too comfortable there. We tell stories about adventures at sea, but we haven't been on any adventure lately. We retell the stories we've heard about risks others have taken, but we haven't taken a risk in years. We reminisce about being driven by the wind, and yet talk as if the wind has stopped blowing.

The Spirit has not stopped moving. Have you? Have you been playing it safe, when you're called to be riding the waves, driven by the wind? Have you traded the adventure of the Spirit for the comforts of this world?

If that question bothers you, you're not alone. Nicodemus was in a similar place. Jesus pushed him to assess his comforts and his calling. Jesus is pushing you to do the same.

Still, Jesus doesn't send us to risks he has not faced. Jesus allowed himself to be driven by the unpredictable wind of the Spirit. He knew the cost of sacrificing comforts for the sake of calling. At the start of his ministry, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert. He fasted for forty days. That was a sacrifice of comfort. He was tempted by Satan, face-to-face. That was a greater sacrifice of comfort.

At the close of his earthly ministry Jesus was led by the Spirit to suffer and die. He sacrificed comfort for calling. He showed us what risk truly looks like. He showed us a life and death driven by the wind of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus chose calling over comfort, and you are his calling. He gave up all comforts for your sake. He went to the cross for every time you've chosen comfort and ignored your own calling. He took your place and he took your consequence. He died for you.

Three days later his body was lying in a tomb where the air was still and heavy with the weight of death. There was no wind in that place. Nothing moved.

Then... there was movement in the air. There was stirring as breath and life entered that tomb. Jesus lives again, and he shares this new life with you. He shares his breath with you. By his sacrifice you are forgiven. By his life you're made alive.

You're born into this life. You're born by the Spirit. You're called by the Spirit. You're empowered by that same Spirit.

The same day Jesus rose from the dead, he came to his followers.

*...he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." (John 20:22-23)*

That's risky. That's unpredictable. The all-powerful God is calling you and I into his work in this world. This is the risky, unpredictable calling of God. He doesn't do what the world expects, and he calls you to do the same.

You'll answer the call, and take the risks it may entail. You'll do it, just like Nicodemus did. Toward the end of John's gospel, after Jesus died, we see Nicodemus once again. The crucifixion gave him the courage to take a stand. He took the risk of caring for Jesus' body as he was laid in the tomb. My guess is that a few days later he was ready to take even greater risks. Nicodemus was pushed beyond the comfort of the harbor. He was ready to be called by a new wind.

**You were saved from sin.**

**You were saved for this calling.**

You're ready, because you're not a people who were saved in order to stay in port. You have a calling which takes you out beyond the harbor. You have a calling to be driven by the wind wherever it may take you. You are called to give control to the Spirit.

This is life in the kingdom. This is life in the Spirit. Are you ready to pray, "Thy kingdom come"? Do that now. Pray for God's Spirit, his calling, his kingdom. When you're ready to answer his call say, "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. Amen.

## 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](http://www.calvaryslz.org). We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.*

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