

Sermon Series: "Name Your Need"----Lord of Life Lutheran Church—2/4/2001

Title: Teach Us How to Pray"

Text: Luke 11: 1-4

Introduction: Heaven is full of answers to prayers for which no one ever bothered to ask. (Billy Graham)

Theme: Prayer is a learned habit which finds its power and motivation in Jesus who gave it to us as a gift of grace and a responsibility of a disciplined relationship to our Heavenly Father.

Just "Do it!"

- Prayer is not a program or a process but a life-style
 1. **ILLUS.: SIMPLE ANSWER TO PRAYER**
 2. We find Jesus praying often; do we often find ourselves praying (vs. 1—while he was praying in a certain place)
 - a. At the beginning of his ministry-- are you at a beginning in your life? (job, marriage, school, parenting, retirement)
 - b. Before important decision (picking disciples) are you about to decide? (surgery, major purchases, career changes)
 - c. When he was pressed (mountain after 5000 feeding)— is life's pace frenetic and supersonic?
 - d. During his temptations— are you currently vulnerable to or under attack? (lying, sexual temptations, worry)
 - e. When he faced death (Garden of Gethsemane)-- are you scared to death of death?
 3. **ILLUS.: DON'T LEAVE GOD OUT**
- If you want to learn how to pray, find someone who does it well and imitate them.
 1. John the Baptist had taught his disciples how to pray which raised a spiritual envy in Jesus' disciples
 2. Jesus' disciples watched him pray; listened to him teach about prayer; but wanted to put it into action— **QUOTE (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) : LEARNING TO PRAY**
 3. Have you always admired and envied a spiritual giant of prayer than stop wishing for it and start doing it— **ILLUS.: THE APOSTLE JOHN WAS KNOWN AS "OLD CAMEL KNEES"**

Fundamentals of a powerful prayer life

- Jesus wanted prayer to be a regular routine rather than a rote ritual
 1. Jesus is recorded as having prayed the Lord's Prayer two different ways
 2. **PRINT AND READ MATTHEW 6: 9-13 AND LUKE 11: 2-4 SIDE BY SIDE**
 3. Jesus decries meaningless and purposeless prayer, "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words." **Matthew 6:7**
- Jesus modeled prayer as a relationship built on awe and affection (vss. 2b "Father, hallowed be your name.)
 1. Coming with a humble respect of God—selfish demanding is out and pleading for understanding is in
 2. Coming with no fear but clinging and seeking the Father's attention because he loves you and you love him
- Jesus illustrated that prayer starts with a reordering of our priorities (vss. 2c-3 "Your kingdom come. Give us. . .)
 1. **ILLUS.: PRAYER WITH AN ACCENT**
 2. Seeing that often the most important answer to our prayer is **NOT** the thing we are praying for
 3. *So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:31-33*
- Jesus taught that prayer is all about a reconciliation and a rescue (vss. 4 "Forgive us. . .do not lead us into temptation)
 1. Jesus opened the door through his death & resurrection
 - a. *If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2*
 2. Prayer is all about being honest with God
 - a. Coming in confession knowing that we can't fool God; yet, not staying away because we have sinned— **ILLUS.: SEEING SIN FOR WHAT IT IS**
 - b. Knowing that all we have to do is ask for forgiveness and it is ours
 - c. *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" Psalm 103:12*
 3. Asking God to stop sin cold in our lives before it ever happens
 - a. **Preventative praying**—asking God to take temptation out of the road before we even get there— **ILLUS.: LOCKED UP TIGHT**
 - b. **Declarative praying**—telling God that you will seek to avoid that which you know will tempt you
 - c. **Redemptive praying**—at the moment when we are under siege we must not be slow to act and ask in prayer

-- **ILLUS.: IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

Simple Answer to Prayer

A well-known author and authority on prayer was giving a seminar. During the question-and-answer period, a man raised his hand and boldly asked, "Doctor, how should I pray?" "It's very simple," the noted expert responded without hesitation. "Ask God."

Don't Leave God Out

The baseball game was tied with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning. The batter stepped into the batting box and made the sign of the cross on home plate with his bat. Yogi Berra, Hall-of-Fame catcher for the New York Yankees, was behind the plate. A Catholic as well, Berra wiped off the plate with his glove and said to the pious batter, "Why don't we let God just watch this game?" "Letting God just watch. Whatever the theology when applied to the outcome of a baseball game, it's terrible theology when applied to the way we live our lives and carry out the work of the church."

Learning to Pray

"Lord, teach us to pray!" So spoke the disciples to Jesus. In making this request, they confessed that they were not able to pray on their own, that they had to learn to pray. The phrase "learning to pray" sounds strange to us. If the heart does not overflow and begin to pray by itself, we say, it will never "learn" to pray. But it is a dangerous error, surely very widespread among Christians, to think that the heart can pray by itself. For then we confuse wishes, hopes, sighs, laments, rejoicings—all of which the heart can do by itself—with prayer. And we confuse earth and heaven, man and God. Prayer does not mean simply to pour out one's heart. It means rather to find the way to God and to speak with him, whether the heart is full or empty. No man can do that by himself. For that he needs Jesus Christ.

Citation: James Burtness, *Shaping The Future: The Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*.

Prayer with an Accent

As song leader for my church in New Hampshire, I was preparing for Sunday. I planned on playing my guitar, but my electronic tuner was missing. "Maybe I left it in the car," I thought. Heading to the garage, I asked the Lord out loud to help me find my "tuner." Nothing was on the back seat of the car, but when I reached under the front seat out rolled a can of tuna. My husband followed my laughter to the garage. "Honey," I said, "The Lord definitely heard my prayer--New England accent and all."

Seeing Sin for What It Is

According to a radio report, a middle school in Oregon faced a unique problem. A number of girls began to use lipstick and put it on in the bathroom. After they put on their lipstick, they pressed their lips to the mirrors leaving dozens of little lip prints. Finally the principal decided something had to be done. She called the girls to the bathroom and met them there with the custodian. She explained lip prints caused a major problem for the custodian, who had to clean the mirrors every day. To demonstrate how difficult it was, she asked the custodian to clean one of the mirrors. He took out a long-handled brush, dipped it into the toilet, and scrubbed the mirror. Since then there have been no lip prints on the mirrors. When tempted to sin, if we could only see the real filth we'd be kissing, we wouldn't be attracted to it.

Locked Up Tight

One night I went into my 8-year-old daughter's bedroom to pray with her before she went to sleep. In the course of her prayer she said, "Jesus, please lock the doors if they haven't been locked." I held back a chuckle at her unexpected request and thought nothing more about it. The next morning I opened the front door to find the keys outside in the lock. I stood amazed at how the Lord led my little girl to pray--and thanked him for his protection. Citation: Susan Starnes, Louisville, KY. "Heart to Heart"

In the Presence of God

The most holy practice, the nearest to daily life, and the most essential for the spiritual life, is the practice of the presence of God, that is to find joy in his divine company and to make it a habit of life, speaking humbly and conversing lovingly with him at all times, every moment, without rule or restriction, above all at times of temptation, distress, dryness, and revulsion, and even of faithlessness and sin.

Matthew 6:9-13

"This is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven,

let your name be kept holy.

¹⁰Let your kingdom come.

Let your will be done on earth

as it is done in heaven.

¹¹Give us our daily bread today.

¹²Forgive us as we forgive others.

¹³Don't allow us to be tempted.

Instead, rescue us from the evil one.

Luke 11:2-4

Jesus told them, "When you pray, say this:

Father,

let your name be kept holy.

Let your kingdom come.

³Give us our bread day by day.

⁴Forgive us as we forgive everyone else.

Don't allow us to be tempted."