

## Confirmation 2020-21 Session 18 – The Lord's Prayer

### Background Information

I don't want to see a show of hands. The following question is intended to make you think, not feel proud or ashamed. Ready? Do you pray to the LORD?

Prayer can sometimes feel more like an obligation than a privilege. Like stretching before a workout, or eating five veggies a day, Christians know prayer is essential, but a lot of us avoid it anyway. Reasons vary - we're afraid we might look stupid doing it, or we don't know what to say, we're not sure it does anything, or we just forget to do it. So, while prayer seems like it should be the easiest of the spiritual practices-it's just talking after all-we get stuck. And we're in good company: even Jesus's disciples asked, "Lord teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

The subject of this session is the Lord's Prayer. Now I am not one who believes that when Jesus responded to the disciples' request that he meant to say, "Write this down. This is THE way to pray" as if there was no other way to pray. Having said that, we have to admit, it's a pretty good prayer. What I think Jesus intended to do with the disciples was give them a basic primer on prayer.

Jesus taught his disciples that prayer is not about the words themselves, but about the relationship between us and God, and how we are affected by that relationship. That's why the prayer that we've come to know as the Lord's Prayer, is so focused on turning us away from ourselves and back to God. We pray to remember that God's name is holy, that God's kingdom is what's best for the world, and that God's will is vastly better than our own. We also ask for what we need (daily necessities, forgiveness, guidance, protection) rather than what we think we want (revenge, independence, praise).

## **Into the Lutheran Study Bible (LSB)**

Lets take a look at how Jesus answered his disciples request. Lets start in Matthew 6:5-15.

Lets compare how Luke recorded the same event (Luke 11:1-13).

## **Into Luther's Small Catechism**

Now let's read and discuss what Luther has to say about the Lord's Prayer in his Small Catechism. (pgs. 18-27)

### **What you need to know**

Prayer isn't a magic trick or a vending machine. We don't get what we want by asking God in the right way or by "praying harder." Instead, prayer is a practice that attunes our wills to God's will by turning us away from our often selfish wants and back toward God's desire for us.

While prayer can be intimidating-whether we do it publicly or privately-it's never about having the right words. God meets us in prayer, whether we're polished speakers or not. The Lord's Prayer shows us the prayer is a conversation with the one who knows us best. We don't need to impress God.

The Lord's Prayer as found in scripture doesn't precisely match up with the way we pray it today. This isn't a mistake or an oversight. Overtime, the church has worked to find the most accurate, faithful version possible, one that connects us to Jesus' teachings. There are also versions of the Lord's Prayer that are meant to help us hear it with fresh ears or meant to draw out nuances we might have missed after a lifetime of reciting it. As long as they turn us toward God, they are following the model laid out by Jesus.

Some may ask, how meaningful can a memorized and often repeated prayer be? The Lord's Prayer is not a part of our collective memory because the words themselves have power. Rather this prayer is a communal way of joining our thoughts and hopes-even the unspoken ones-to God's will for us our neighbors and the world, indeed, the Lord's Prayer is the most prayed prayer in the world.

## Essay Questions

*In 150 of your own words, briefly answer any three of the following questions below:*

1. Tell me about your own experience with the Lord's Prayer.
  - a. Do you know it?
  - b. Do you pray it?
  - c. Where did you learn it?
  - d. How do you use it?
  - e. What meaning does it have for you?
2. Compare and contrast the two different gospel versions.
3. Why do we add the doxology at the end of the prayer when Jesus didn't include it? This question will require some internet searching.
4. There are more modern translations of the Lord's Prayer. The top one on page 18 of Luther's Small Catechism, for example. Why do you suppose we say the King James Version in church? Defend your answer.
5. You may go days without thinking of God, but there's never a moment when God's not thinking of you.
  - a. How often do you estimate that you think of God?
  - b. What keeps you from thinking about Him?
  - c. How do you overcome this obstacle?
  - d. Do you believe God never stops thinking about you?  
Explain.
6. How do you typically address God as you begin your prayers?
  - a. Do you say "Our Father" or some other pronoun?

- b. The Aramaic word translated as "Father" is actually much more intimate, personal and familial. Most scholars think a more accurate translation is, "Daddy". What does this tell you about the kind of relationship Jesus is encouraging his disciples to have with God?

*Email your answers back to Pastor Jesse by email at [pastor@zionohio.org](mailto:pastor@zionohio.org) no later than next Sunday, February 7.*