

July 28, 2019

Luke 11:1-13:

“Everything to God in Prayer”

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

No doubt, if you were paying attention, you noticed that there are some things missing in The Lord's Prayer as it is recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of Luke. "Thy will be done" is missing, but did you happen to notice that God's will being done is the subject matter of verses five through thirteen? "Deliver us from evil [the evil one]" is also missing, but if you read beyond our lesson you will discover that it is the subject matter of verses fourteen through twenty-six. "Father" is not "Our Father" in Luke, and there is no "who art in heaven," yet the addressee is mentioned as "heavenly Father" in verse thirteen. The lack of the word "Our" at the beginning of the prayer, and the fact that Jesus has returned from private prayer, emphasizes that the teaching on prayer in Luke is about private prayer. The prayer that we have memorized is from the Gospel of Matthew and is focused on liturgical prayer that the people of God say together in public worship.

The Lord's Prayer is the most excellent prayer and covers everything about prayer. All of the teachings of Scripture can be attached to the Lord's Prayer. Meditation of Scripture and prayer go hand in hand. There is nothing that you can pray about that doesn't somehow fit into the Lord's Prayer. Therefore, it serves as the complete outline for the entire prayer life of the Christian whether we are praying alone or together. The prayer can be used as it is or may be expanded and contracted at will. In fact, every prayer we deliver is an expansion or contraction of the Lord's Prayer whether we realize it or not. That's why we Lutherans add the words "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen." Those words are from a prayer of king David in 1 Chronicles 29:11 in conjunction with the offerings presented for the temple and are not a part of what we have in Matthew or Luke.

Hopefully our discussion so far is not only a beginning in answering the differences between the prayers recorded in Matthew and Luke, but I pray that it gives some insight in how to use the Lord's Prayer in the Christian life. There are many more things that we could say about this and the mechanics of prayer, but I would like to focus our attention in a different direction. All of the things that we have said so far and the many things we could say are important, but it appears to me that what is first and foremost in all of this is our relationship to our heavenly Father. Prayer is the way by which we communicate with God. It is about a connection that is likened to a child running to a parent. Luther writes in the *Small Catechism*: "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."

Prayer has been around since the days of Adam and his first children. It says in Genesis 4:26 that people called "upon the name of the Lord." The name of the Lord is everything revealed about the Savior. People were calling upon a name that was predicted and yet to be revealed. People prayed. The only thing that has changed is that we know the name "Jesus of Nazareth." No one comes to the Father but by him. In the New Testament Peter writes: "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you (1 Pet. 1:20)." Let's be perfectly clear. The situation has been and is the same throughout all human history. Humanity has fallen into sin and death and needs a Savior. It says in the book of Revelation that "from the foundation of the world, the lamb was slain (13:8)." It is in this way that God reveals his heart to us. And he bids us to speak to him in prayer.

What we see in our Gospel lesson and in Luke's larger portrait of Jesus about prayer is not primarily about getting things but about a relationship with God. Prayer and God's Word go hand and in hand. God speaks to us in his Word and Sacraments, and we are invited to speak to him in prayer. Lyle W. Lange writes, "Prayer is the communion of a believer's heart with God, a communion of his soul with the God of his salvation." He then quotes a few verses from hymn 454 in *The Lutheran Hymnal*:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death
He enters heaven with prayer.

The supreme example of a life of prayer was that of Jesus himself. He prays after the feeding of the five thousand, the night before he chooses his twelve apostles, in front of his disciples in the Upper Room, and in the Garden on the night before his crucifixion. There are more occasions we could mention for sure, but the one that I would particularly like to set before you is the prayer of our Savior on the cross. Luke writes: "Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!' And having said this he breathed his last (Luke 23:46)." These words are amazing when you consider that Jesus has experienced our hell on the cross. Despite the depths of this unspeakable agony, Jesus finishes it all in his life and sufferings, and commits himself into the hands of his heavenly Father. He prays.

Because of Jesus, we are invited to pray in the face of our sins and death. We are only able to approach our heavenly Father because of everything that Jesus has done. God connects himself to us through his one and only Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in the means of grace. And by his speaking to us in his word of forgiveness, we are able to pray. The content of our prayers are shaped and molded into a reflection of everything that Jesus has said and done for us. As we wrestle with sin and the disconnect that our sinful flesh still brings along with the terrors of death and hell, we are invited to cast it all on God through prayer by virtue of the connection made by Jesus on the cross - because we are forgiven! We are invited to pray like Jesus as we see in the words of David in Psalm 27:8-9, "My heart says to you, 'Your face, Lord, do I seek.' Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!"

Through Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and invited to pray. The command to pray is one of love. Since this is so, should there be any doubt whatsoever that God attaches a helpful and salutary purpose to all of our prayers? Herman W. Gockel writes (*Answer to Anxiety*, pg. 73):

Indeed, the Scriptures are filled with His promises to *answer* our prayers. The Old Testament "Call upon me in the day of trouble" is followed by the divine pledge "I will deliver you."

And the New Testament “Ask” is followed by the divine assurance “It will be given you.” If there is one thing the Bible makes perfectly clear, it is that the Lord not only expects us to pray but that He also *expects* us to *expect Him* to answer.

Everything to God in Prayer! That is the theme of our message today and it is from our sermon hymn that we just sang: “What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry **Everything to God in Prayer.**” Insofar as it is in keeping with the holiness of God’s name and the coming of his kingdom, you can be rest assured that whatever you ask, it will be given. It is the will of God that we should have the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Whatever you ask that is in keeping with his good and gracious will you can expect, and whatever is contrary to it will be withheld. God has delivered us from the evil one and all evil that has come with him. We have a friend in Jesus who has crushed his head for us, and by the crushing that Jesus has done, we crush his head as well! Risen and ascended to the Father’s right hand, he is our mediator, and he rules the universe for our salvation! Harold L. Senkbeil writes (*Dying to Live*, pgs. 142-143):

Jesus, our friend at the heavenly throne, is one who knows our heart intimately well. He knows our pain firsthand. He has walked the planet earth in skin and bones and knows the full range of human emotion. And not just the happier emotions; He is a man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief. He did not leave His humanity behind when He ascended to the Father’s throne. True man as well as true God, while He intercedes for us He knows our heart and feels our pain (Hebrews 4:15-16) . . . And so we come boldly to God as His children. We call upon His name in every trouble. We pray, praise, and give thanks to the Father in the Spirit through the Son: we pray in Jesus’ name.

Indeed! **Everything to God in Prayer** through Jesus Christ our friend!

Amen.

Pr. Brock Abbott