Luke 11:1 “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Do you find that request just a bit odd? Here are a group of people, disciples, raised in the Jewish religion, attenders of Synagogue, worshipers of the Lord God, men chosen to be followers of Jesus because of their faith…in other words, religious people and yet they ask Jesus to teach them how to pray? Do you think they never learned anything about prayer? Do you think they had never been involved in prayer before? What I want you to do is to think about and consider why these men, obviously men of faith, wanted Jesus to teach them how to pray?

I’ve thought about it and my only conclusion is this: Jesus’ prayers were different. The way Jesus approached God was different. The emphasis and point of Jesus’ prayers were different than anything they had ever heard before. So different were Jesus’ prayers that the disciples wanted to learn to pray HIS way!

What was so different about the prayers of Jesus? We can see some of the difference just by looking at the model prayer that Jesus gave the disciples to pray, the prayer we know as “The Lord’s Prayer.” Just so you know, I think the Christian church horribly mislabeled that prayer. I think it should have been called “The Disciples Prayer.” It was the prayer Jesus taught them to use, the model Jesus gave for them. And what a model this prayer is. It teaches us so much and revels so much about not only prayer but about our God and Lord. Let’s continue to look at these words under the theme: **PRAYER!**

Take a look at the address of this prayer: **“Our Father in heaven.”** Such a short, simple opening to a prayer. First, note who this prayer addresses. It is not some long drawn out fanciful, high sounding address, you know, like “Oh Exalted, Grand, High Master, dweller in the ethereal realms, powerful and glorious above all.” Did you notice that Jesus just calls God, “Father?” Simple, homey, connected and true. Because of faith, that gift of God, God is our Father. And while it may be true that he is exalted and powerful as seen in the fact that God is in heaven and the one who does rule over all things (why else would you pray to Him?). Jesus wants you to think in terms of “Father.” A dear Father. A person who loves you and cares for you. A person who has your best interests in mind and wants you to know His love, grace and mercy. Simple isn’t it: “Father!”

Then the next words: **“Hallowed be your name.”** We want this Father to be holy, but these words are not such that we are going to make him holy, but rather that God, our Father would be holy to us! I think Luther got it right when he explained this way: *“God’s name is certainly holy by itself, but we pray in this petition that we too may keep it holy.”* God is God! God isn’t holy or God because you make Him so, but because that’s what He is! He is holy. He is exalted. He is gracious, powerful and kind. God does not need you, rather you need Him. You need to grasp his awe, his majesty, his goodness and marvel. You need to act and behave in accord with is holiness and majesty. If you confess that God is God, do you act and live as if your will and desire is above Him? Again, simple words that we in our lives would act and live in the truth of the holiness and majesty of God!

**“Your Kingdom come.”** Again simple words. It is not our kingdom! It is not what we set the rules for. It is God’s kingdom. He is the Lord and ruler of all. He determines the how, what and where. What we are asking is that the kingdom of God be among us, be a part of us. For now, this kingdom is a spiritual realm, yes, the abode of faith in God. We are asking that God give us faith so that we believe in Him and His Word. That we follow Him, which means we follow His Word. And yet this isn’t a work righteous type thing. It is about knowing the grace and mercy of God. How God sent His Son and how Jesus died for all of our sins. It is about God sending the Holy Spirit to call us to faith and then how God promises to keep that faith strong and sure through the Gospel in Word and sacrament.

By the way, do you know God’s definition of faith, really of his kingdom among us? I’ll give you two passages. Hebrews 11:1. **“Faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced about things we do not see.”** Faith really is about another world and place. And then this section found in 1 John 5:11-13. **“This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”** Faith is not only about another world and place, it is about believing that you have what is found in that other world and place, namely eternal life. Eternal life is because of Jesus and not you. When we speak of God’s kingdom among us, it is speaking about believing and living to the glory and wonder of Jesus and what He is about. And, of course, we want this wonder and awe of Jesus for everyone. That all would hear and believe in the eternal life Jesus is.

The next petition. **“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”** Here I am going to share Luther’s explanation. Our catechism says, “*What does this mean? God’s good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also. How is God’s will done? God’s will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God’s name holy and letting his kingdom come. And God’s will is done when he strengthens and keep us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. This is his good and gracious will.”*

Again note that this isn’t about what you want to do, but rather about the will and desire of God. God does what He knows is best at all times. You and I cannot and do not change the will and desire of God at any time. Our job as God’s children is to learn to accept and live by that will of God. And just so you know, in the catechism question 247 and answers helps in grasping God’s will. It reminds us: *God’s will is: that his Word be taught in its truth and purity to all people, that all people believe in Jesus and be saved, and that we should live a holy life.”* Remember as Lutherans we don’t declare any and every feeling we have “the will of God.” The only way we can know the will of God is because His Word clearly and precisely reveals what is His will and what is not. Is it God’s will that you get a new car? Sorry, not revealed in his written Word. Is it God’s will that all nations, including infants be baptized and receive from Him the promise of faith and eternal life? Yes, that is written in his Word. We want God’s will among us!

**“Give us each day our daily bread.”** When I was a vicar in Minnesota it was my guiding Pastor who shared with me what I had not heard before. There are seven petitions to the Lord’s Prayer. Do you realize that six are about spiritual things and only one is about earthly things? In other words, there is a six to one ratio found here. Six spiritual things to one earthly request. I am going to guess that most of us get that backward. Our prayers are filled with lots of earthly wants and desires and we forget the spiritual. That is not the model Jesus gave us. Our first and greatest concern is to be our spiritual life, not our earthly wants! That alone, is a great message to grasp.

In truth, when it comes to our bread, we ask God to take care of us. Note we ask for bread one of the real basics of life. Bread, food, sustenance that we may continue to live. We don’t ask for storehouses of bread or even great supplies of bread but rather for “daily” bread. What did Jesus teach on this? Luke 12:22ff. **“For that reason I tell you, stop worrying about your life, about what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Certainly life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap; they have no warehouse or barn; and yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than birds!...Do not constantly chase after what you will eat or what you will drink. Do not be worried about it. To be sure, the nations of the world chase after all of these things, but your Father knows that you need them. Instead, continue to seek the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you.”** What is your first priority, the things of the world or the treasure of God found in Jesus our Savior from sin?

Did you catch how Jesus emphasized the importance of his words? That was the point of the little story he told about the neighbor and his need. He brought that story back around to the Father and our text concluded with these words: **“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”** Notice it concludes by saying God will give his Holy Spirit when you ask, seek and knock. Spiritual things are the most important.

Our next words: **“Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”** First of all, how can you hear or say these words and not grasp the wonder and marvel of Jesus. The whole point of Jesus was to come and grant us by his redemption, the forgiveness of sins. If your church is mostly busy with teaching you how to live and what to do (of course “in Jesus name”) that is the saddest thing there is. Your church should be busy teaching what Jesus has done for you. How Jesus lived the perfect life you could not. How Jesus then took your place in damnation, suffered the wrath and anger of the Father for all the sins of all the world and then, just because you believe in this gift of Jesus, God gives you total and complete forgiveness. That is what our Christian faith is about. It is about the wonder and marvel of Jesus, Savior from sin. The Son of God who died and rose from the dead that we might know who He is and what He has done without any doubt. I always marvel at that, how Jesus came for the whole purpose of atoning for our sins and yet church after church spends all of its time telling you how to act and live and be. We couldn’t keep God’s law to begin with and yet churches are going to make Jesus all about obedience, living right, following him, being the best you can be and on and on. Forgiveness in Jesus is the main message!

Now it is true, that message changes our lives. How can we be forgiven so much and then not be forgiving ourselves? Yet first, we must grasp that we need this forgiveness. We need to see how we constantly fall far short of perfect will of God that we be HOLY! We need to see how it is only in the forgiveness of sins, being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus so that God the Father because of Jesus considers us HOLY that we are saved. God has and does forgive in Jesus! That is the heart of God’s holiness, his kingdom, and his will among us: Jesus and the forgiveness of sins He provides.

Almost done. **“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”** Seriously, pay attention here. This petition and what it says reminds us all the more of why we need Jesus, the Father, the Holy Spirit, and everything this prayer has already said. We need God’s holiness and power in our lives so that his kingdom and will be accomplished among us. We need that promise of his daily care of our earthly needs and that reassurance of the forgiveness found in Jesus. Why? Because this world is filled with temptations and evil. If we try to stand on our own, this world will chew us up and spit us out. It is everything said before this that will get us through and overcome temptation and evil.

What is a temptation? It is the attempt of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh to destroy our faith and confidence in the Father and his sending of the saving Son. The devil will use whatever he can to try and destroy your faith. He has no boundaries and he is not going to play fair. He will use this world, which is in his back pocket for now and he will use your own foolish and sinful human self in order to try and destroy your eternal soul. We pray here that God, in Jesus will protect us, guide us and as God promises, make everything serve for our eternal good and salvation. Only God can help us overcome and win the victory against temptations.

What is evil? All the bad things that happen in this world because this world is filled and rotten with sin. Think of the implication of our modern world denying the existence and truth of evil! Think of how many times when evil has happened in this world, the world turns and blames God even though the world denies the very existence of God. Sin is like a death dealing cancer and if you don’t apply Jesus you are going to succumb to its destruction.

God has overcome sin in Jesus. That doesn’t means he has ended sin, yet. Oh, he will, when Jesus returns again and a new heaven and earth for eternity is given us, but for now, until then we need Jesus to help us win the battle. Trust Him. Trust his promises. Simply put: (Luke 21:33) **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”** Your sins will be forgiven in Jesus. You will be granted eternal life and salvation. This world and what it can throw your way are but momentary and temporary troubles that Jesus has overcome for you. Again, trust in God and his Word!

There you have it, thoughts on prayer. May your prayers be modeled after the wonder of what Jesus has taught! Amen.