

Lord Teach Us To Pray

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Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Last week we heard how Martha was upset with her sister Mary, who decided to sit at Jesus' feet...Jesus affirmed Mary's decision to learn at His feet, and we learned that Jesus wants us to come and sit at His feet as well... And so today, as we heard in our Gospel reading, He wants us to learn more about prayer; how to speak to God and have more of a prayer filled life with Him. Because let's face it, we need it....Not only can we share with Him our joys and thanksgivings but, as Henry Nouwen once said, "Through prayer we can carry in our heart all human pain and sorrow, all conflicts and agonies, all torture and war, all hunger, loneliness and misery, not because of some great psychological or emotional capacity, but because God's heart has become one with ours."

Where did you learn how to pray? Maybe a parent or grandparent taught you to pray before a meal or at bedtime. Maybe a pastor or a Sunday school teacher taught you. Or you might've read a book about prayer. Or maybe you heard someone else's pray and thought that it was so good that you wanted to use it in your own prayers. While some prayers are rote, others are spontaneous. They can be silent or spoken outloud, they can also be said in private, or they can be spoken together in unison. In the end, I hope that they're sincere and heartfelt prayers to God.

Jesus certainly prayed. According to the Jewish tradition, He would've prayed at least three times a day. He prayed alone. He

prayed on the top of mountains. He prayed before meals. He prayed with others. He prayed constantly. Not only did His disciples see and hear Him pray. But His disciples, who saw and heard Him pray, must've wondered about their own prayers. Because, as we heard in our Gospel, when Jesus finished praying, "...one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'" As Rabbis often did.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray by sharing with them, the familiar words that we call 'The Lord's Prayer.' Jesus encourages His disciples to enter God's presence. To speak to Him in prayer. To seek His Kingdom that it might come among them, so that His will might be done in and through them. To ask Him to provide for their daily needs, and to forgive them their sins, as they forgive others. And that they might NOT be deceived or misled but rather overcome any temptation. As someone once said, "The Lord's Prayer is the most perfect prayer...in it we ask, not only for all the things we can rightly desire, but also in the sequence that they should be desired....[it] not only teaches us to ask for things, but also in what order we should desire them." (T. Aquinas)

And yet, Jesus also encouraged His disciples to speak to God as a child would speak to a father. With a kind of boldness and trust, sharing the desires of their heart. Because He's interested in every part of our lives and is already intimately involved in every aspect of them. He cares for us and He wants to hear from us. So, Jesus says to His disciples and to us, "...Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you." ... It sounds so simple. All we need to do is ask, seek and knock. Many times, we don't receive because we haven't asked, sought after or confidently persisted enough in prayer. So, Jesus encourages us to Ask, Seek and Knock confidently to receive the desires of our heart. However while faith can move mountains, the words of the Lord's prayer DON'T include the words, "My Will be done." Rather, in the

Lord's Prayer, we're taught to pray "Thy will be done," meaning God's will,...not necessarily our own.

There's a story of a mother who sent her 5th grader to bed. After a while, she went to check on him, to make sure that he had gotten into bed. But when she did, she saw that her son was kneeling next to his bed praying. Not wanting to interrupt him, she quietly listened as her son prayed. And she could overhear him say, "Let it be Tokyo! Please dear God, let it be Tokyo!"...When he finished, he got into bed and waited for her to give him a goodnight kiss. She did so, and then asked him, "What did you mean, 'Let it be Tokyo'?" "Oh," her son replied, "we had a geography test today, and I was praying to God, that He would make Tokyo the capital of France..."

You see, while God promises to hear and answer us, but prayer is more about our relationship with God. He is God and we are not. And yet, His heart has become one with ours, and even He considers us His own, for the sake of His crucified Son...It's because of Him that we're able to call Him our Father. And His will is done when He breaks and hinders every plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature which would prevent us from keeping His name holy and letting His Kingdom come to us. While He never breaks His promises, it still doesn't necessarily mean that He'll make - Tokyo the capital of France.

By encouraging us to ask, seek and knock in our prayers. He wants us to ask and seek Him out for all our needs and desires, as well as the needs and desires of others. Because there are times when the answer to our prayers is delayed. So, He encourages us to confidently knock at His door in prayer. That He might continue to bless us, in even more ways, than we could ever have thought possible, or ever imagined... That His will might truly be done in and through us... That our relationship with Him might grow and deepen... And that we

might be able to see, that He is even more faithful to us, than we give Him credit. For, "...He is more willing to give than we are to receive; more willing to show us mercy than we are to be delivered from [our own] misery."

Today, Jesus wants us to learn more about prayer. He wants us to know how to speak to God and to have a more prayer filled life with Him. Because, let's face it, we all need it. And even though we might not always specifically receive, what or when we want something, we're still blessed to know that God does hear our prayers and answers them, as any father would for his own child. He wants to give us good gifts. And the best gift of all is His Spirit, who encourages us in our prayers, and through His Word, teaches us to boldly pray the perfect prayer. The Lord's prayer. The prayer that Jesus taught us to pray. That we might continue to deepen our relationship with Him, receive all that we need in this life, and live with Him, both now and always.

In Jesus Name, Amen