

Luke 11:1-13

This morning we are going to be focusing our attention on **prayer** - and more specifically, on the **Lord's Prayer**. Prayer is extremely **important** for the Christian. Just as every human being needs to breathe oxygen in order to keep his physical body alive, so also a **Christian** needs to **pray** - in order to **communicate** with **God**. There are lots of different ways to carry out that communication. Some are very **loosely** organized, while others are highly **structured**. For example, when the disciples came to Jesus and said, "**Lord, Teach Us To Pray**," they were **already** praying! But Jesus went on to give them **another** example of prayer - an example which has become very familiar to us through repeated **use** - both in our **private** prayers, as well as in our **public** worship. We know it as The **Lord's Prayer**. The **parable** which Jesus added at the **end** of our text showed His disciples that **all** prayers are to be **persistent**. Let's take a look at His **example**.

*"Jesus said to them, when you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.'"* That doesn't sound quite **right**, does it? In part, that's because the more **complete** version of this prayer is found in **Matthew's** Gospel - yet, even **there**, the petitions don't match up **exactly** the same way. I think there's a good **reason** for that. Jesus is showing us that we shouldn't get too tied up with the specific **words** of this prayer. Although it **can** be used just as it **stands**, it can and should **also** be used as a **pattern** for **other** prayers.

With that in mind, let's take just a few minutes and explore the basic **structure** of this special prayer. I like to compare the Lord's Prayer to a **letter**. A letter is made up of three parts: an **introduction**, in which you greet the person to whom you are writing - followed by the **body** of the letter, in which you spell out whatever you want to communicate - and ending with a **conclusion**. The Lord's Prayer **also** is made up of three basic parts: an **introduction**, when we **address** the person to whom we are speaking - followed by the **body** of the prayer, which in this case is made up of seven **petitions**, or seven **requests** which we are making - and ending again with a **conclusion**, a doxology of praise. Before we look at the **introduction**, I would like you to notice something about the **body** of the Lord's Prayer. The **proportions** of that body are particularly **striking**. Of the seven petitions, **six** of them ask God for **spiritual** blessings - things which God has clearly promised to us, like the **forgiveness of sins** and **eternal life** in heaven.

Only **one** petition asks for **physical** blessings. Perhaps we should bear that kind of proportion in mind when we offer God our **other** prayers as well!

Now, on to the prayer **itself**. In the **introduction** of the Lord's Prayer, sometimes also called the **address**, Jesus already tells us a couple of important things about **prayer**. First of all He shows us what a great **privilege** we have in prayer. Then secondly, He shows us the great **power** which we tap into through prayer. The great **privilege** of prayer is indicated by the first word, "**Father**." Because God is our Father, that makes **us** members of His **family** - and as they say in the American Express commercials, "Membership has its **privileges**." As children in **God's** family, we have a large number of privileges, not the **least** of which is the privilege of **prayer**. God invites us to come and talk with Him at any time, from any place, and about any thing.

I remember, not too many years ago, when a pastor or teacher could talk about how **comforting** it was to know that God is our **Father**, and that we can speak to Him just as a child speaks to their **earthly** father - boldly and confidently. We could go on to explain that the title **father** brings a certain **security, joy, and strength** into a relationship. We could talk about how **wonderful** it is to know that this is the relationship which we have with our God. Statements like that could be made without any **reservation**, or without any further **explanation**. But things have **changed**. Because of the prevalence in our world of fathers **deserting** their families; of fathers verbally, mentally, and even physically **abusing** their families; of fathers who seemingly don't **care** about either the physical or spiritual needs of their families; there are thousands of people in our world today who don't want anything to **do** with the idea of a **father**. Sometimes they will even turn away from **God**, just because Jesus tells us to **address** our God as our Father.

However, we need to always bear in mind that our God is the **ideal** father. He is the **pattern** after which all **earthly** fathers should **model** themselves. Unfortunately, **not** all fathers have **done** that. Some have wandered far off track, and have messed up their **own** lives, as well as the lives of the members of their **families**. I think it is fitting for each of us to include a special request in our prayers for our **own** fathers, as well as for **all** the fathers of the world - a request that God would guide and direct them to follow **His** perfect pattern as closely as possible - a request that fathers would strive to **lead** their families in the way that **God** would want them to go. Such prayers would certainly have a **positive** effect for **everyone**. Such prayers are our **privilege** to offer, as children in God's family.

Now for the **second** quality of prayer which Jesus points out in the Lord's Prayer - its **power**. Through prayer we can plug into a **tremendous** power source. The Bible tells us, "*With God **all things** are possible - Nothing is **impossible** with God.*" He is the **Almighty**. He is the **Maker** of heaven and earth, and **that** my friends, is **power** - power which cannot be even remotely duplicated by **anything** in this world! We get a preliminary indication of God's power from His **address** - **heaven**. Maybe I'm stretching the point a bit, but it seems to me that there is a certain amount of **prestige** associated with the **names** of different **places**. For example, up in the Twin Cities they have the **Mall of America** with big, high-prestige stores like Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Nordstrom's. Just the **names** of those stores leave us with an image of **class** and **glamor**. By comparison, most of us are more familiar with shopping at places with names like K-mart, Walmart, Shopko, and Target. There's nothing **wrong** with those names, but they don't project the same kind of **image**, do they? Rather, they sound much more **down-to-earth** and **common**. And actually, that may be **exactly** what we are **looking** for.

I also find it **interesting** that the same name can mean different **things** to different **people**. For example, New York City or Hollywood may sound **wonderful** to you if you are striving to get into **show** business, but they may sound **horrible** to you if you don't like to feel **crowded**. Moving to Green Bay or Madison may sound **horrible** to you if you live here in the **Manitowoc** area and you've been hearing about all the **crime** in those places. But it may sound **wonderful** to you if you are coming from **Chicago**, or **Gary, IN**, or **Miami, FL**, where the crime rates are still much **higher**. However, when Jesus drops the name **heaven** on us, **nobody** has mixed emotions about it. **Heaven** is where **God** dwells. Heaven is the place to **be**. We want **heaven** to be our eternal **home**.

The fact that God is our **Father** - the one in **heaven** - emphasizes the **power** which He possesses. When God **created** the world and everything in it, He **displayed** His tremendous power. But His power is **equally** evident through the way that He daily and richly **preserves** and **provides** for His creations, both **spiritually** and **physically**. That's certainly brought out in the 4th Petition of the Lord's Prayer, where we ask God to "*Give us **each day** our daily bread.*" God wants us to come to Him **repeatedly** - literally, day-by-day - for our **own** needs, as well as for the needs of **others**.

That's where Jesus' **parable** comes in. Jesus said to His disciples, "*Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him **at midnight** and says, 'Friend, lend me*

*three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’”* I’m sure you must have noticed that it was an **unexpected** guest, arriving in the middle of the night, who made it necessary to seek **help**. In turn, this visit caused **another** unexpected visit to be made. Although the friend’s request for food was **rejected** at first, eventually he got what he needed because of his **persistence**. The point is, if a human being, who is **not** inclined to help, is moved to respond by persistent prayer, then most **certainly** our heavenly Father, who **is** inclined to help, will respond when we come to Him again and again with our needs.

God gives us **everything** we need - our life, our faith, and even a very special **Brother**, our Savior Jesus Christ. And if there is ever anything **else** which we should need, the Bible assures us that, “*Our **help** is in the name of the **Lord**, the Maker of heaven and earth.*” The help is **there** for us - available for the asking. For God, there is never an **inconvenient** time - He never **lacks** anything - He is never **bothered** when His children come to Him - and He is never taken by **surprise** either. God has promised that **whenever** we ask, He will not only **hear** our prayers, but He will also **provide** us with the **best possible answers**. May the **Lord Teach Us To Pray**, just as He taught His disciples. Amen.