

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
Sunday, August 15, 2021
Scripture: Psalm 86 and Matthew 6: 9-13

Sermon: Learning How To Pray

When was the last time you prayed the Lord's Prayer? I mean **REALLY** prayed the Lord's Prayer, like it meant something? Every Sunday we pray the Lord's Prayer, right?

We pray after the sermon and end with the Lord's Prayer. Have you ever really studied the meaning of the Lord's Prayer and the words we say every Sunday? Does the Lord's Prayer connect with your heart and soul in a way that deepens your prayer life? Is the Lord's Prayer more than a prayer you recite by memory?

As we learn to pray the Lord's Prayer with understanding, we journey to the very heart of our Heavenly Father. Jesus gave us this simple prayer so, that starting from wherever we are, we can be in the presence of God and experience his nearness. It is in this prayer that we come face to face with the One who created us and formed us in our mother's womb, as Psalm 139 tells us. We come face to face with our Savior who gave his life to redeem us. We come face to face with "Our Father" as he welcomes us as his children, as his sons and daughters. Every word in this prayer is important to us in understanding our Father and our relationship with Him and with those around us. It is truly a model prayer for the followers of Jesus.

Can understanding the meaning of the Lord's Prayer make a difference in how you pray? How much richer would our lives be if God's people would make this prayer central in their lives? How much deeper our walk with God would be if we lived this prayer everyday. We would have more joy, more power, more strength, more wisdom, and more understanding towards others around us.

If you want to learn how to pray look no further than Jesus' teaching on the Lord's Prayer that he gave his disciples as a model, a template for prayer. It is a prayer in which we are drawn closer to God and resting in his presence as we pray.

The disciples were no strangers to prayer. They had grown up in the synagogue and knew how to pray, yet something was different when Jesus prayed. When Jesus prayed people's lives were transformed and they all felt more connected to God.

They asked Jesus for a lesson on how to pray. They said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Why do we pray? We pray to show we always need God. We pray to seek to know God better. We pray to surrender to God's plan. Even though our scripture reminds us to pray constantly, most of us would confess we don't pray as often as we should. Most people pray when they are desperate and call out to God. Sometimes we say, "We've done all that we can do. The only thing left is to pray!" It's our last resort but prayer should be our first resort!

Today we read Psalm 86, which was written by David. It gives us a helpful lesson on prayer. It has fifteen requests to God with a strong sense of urgency. David cries out in great need for God to hear and act on his behalf. Then David has a statement of praise and extols God as the only true God, the Lord of nations. In verses 11-13 of Psalm 86, David asks God to teach him His way. David says, "Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever." David shows us in this psalm that our great needs should drive us to pray to our great God, who alone can deliver us.

Psalm 86 shows us that David knew the God to whom he was praying. Knowing God and his promises gives us hope and endurance in prayer. To be in God's presence we must know that He is a good God, ready to forgive us and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon his Name. (86:5)

We know that He is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth." (86:15) David uses the name, **Adonai** or Lord seven times, emphasizing God's lordship and sovereignty. God is great and does wonderful deeds; the Lord alone is God.

If you are struggling with overwhelming problems beyond your ability to handle them, God invites you sit with him and rest in his

presence and receive mercy and grace to help in your time of need. Remember, God is present everywhere and is always there for us. David knew this and writes to God about it in this psalm.

God's abundant love, grace and mercy should motivate us to come to Him in prayer with all our needs, great or small. We should pray because we all have great needs in this life.

Psalm 86 shows us David's close relationship with God. He could say anything to God in prayer. He poured out his heart to God. David was being honest with himself and with God in admitting that he was unable to clearly hear from God and that his heart was disconnected from God. David wanted to reconnect with God so that he may be able to worship, fellowship and commune with God with his whole heart. Because of our sin, we can be disconnected from God. At times we are in need of being reconnected back to God through faith in Jesus. Do what David did. David asked God through his prayer to remove everything that was hindering him from having a personal relationship with God. That is what we can do as well in prayer. We need to ask God for forgiveness of our sin and to unite our heart with his in prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We should come to God **praying earnestly** out of the anguish of our souls. We should **pray continually**. David says, "For unto you I cry all day long." The Apostle Paul tells us, in I Thess. 5:17, "pray without ceasing." **Pray with a thankful heart.** David writes, "I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart." Paul writes as well, "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." We need to believe that He is working even in our trials towards our ultimate good. **Pray in Humility to have a teachable heart** as a servant of God. We need to admit our weakness by asking God to give us strength. **Pray in faith**, trusting in God and knowing God will answer you in his timing and for your ultimate good. **Pray with sincerity of heart. Pray for forgiveness in your heart.**

President Lincoln came to know Christ personally through the burdens that he faced during the Civil War and the death of a son. He later said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had absolutely no other place to go."

That is where we need to be, kneeling before God, in prayer, because it is in our weakness that we become stronger on our knees.

John Piper, pastor in Minneapolis, Minnesota, professor and author of several books, wrote: “My heart’s desire is to be used by God for the hallowing of his name and the coming of his kingdom and the doing of his will. To that end I pray for Health—give me daily bread, Hope—forgive my debts and Holiness—deliver me from evil.”

Returning our attention now to the Lord’s Prayer we notice that it has two parts. The first part has three petitions (verses 9-10) and the second part (verses 11-13) has three petitions. The first three are: Hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We are asking God to bring about these three things. The second three petitions are: give us this day our daily bread; forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Look closely, the first three petitions are about God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will. The last three are about our food, our forgiveness, our holiness. The *first three* call our attention to God’s greatness and the *last three* call attention to our needs.

Let’s look at the words in the Lord’s Prayer this morning.

The word **OUR** reminds us that we do not pray alone, but in fellowship with God’s people scattered around the world.

- ❖ We pray to **OUR FATHER** who loved us and gave his Son for our salvation.
- ❖ We affirm that Our Father is **IN HEAVEN** where he reigns supreme over the entire universe.
- ❖ We ask that God’s name be **HALLOWED** by the way we live so that others will look at us and give glory to our Father in heaven.
- ❖ We are praying both for the King and the **KINGDOM TO COME** and while we wait, we pray for courage to be “**KINGDOM PEOPLE**” who reflect the values of the world to come.
- ❖ We pray for **GOD’S WILL TO BE DONE** even if it means that our will is not done.
- ❖ We acknowledge that God’s will is not yet **DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**, but we do our part by sharing the gospel and showing forth the love of Christ to those we meet every day.

- ❖ We pray for **OUR DAILY BREAD** because we depend completely on the Lord for what we need, and we share what we have with others because God has blessed us so richly.
- ❖ We pray that our **DEBTS MIGHT BE FORGIVEN** because we are sinners in thought, word, and deed.
- ❖ We also **FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS**, knowing that we cannot have fellowship with the Father while we harbor bitterness and resentment in our hearts toward others.
- ❖ We pray that God will **NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION** because we realize our weakness and we know that without God's help, we will lose the battle every time.
- ❖ We put on the armor of God by faith, asking God to **DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE**.
- ❖ Because we believe that **YOURS IS THE KINGDOM**, we eagerly anticipate the day when the kingdoms of the earth will give way to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
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- ❖ Because we believe that **YOURS IS THE POWER**, we do not give up in the face of difficult trials but instead live in faith that the Lord has a purpose and will give us whatever we need to face the challenges of each day.
- ❖ Because we believe that **YOURS IS THE GLORY**, we have chosen to live for God instead of for the praise of others.
- ❖ We confidently believe that these things are true **FOREVER**.
- ❖ Therefore, we say **AMEN**, so be it, Lord.

We'll know we have begun to learn what this prayer is all about when we become "Lord's Prayer People." They are the people who have taken this prayer and made it their own and interwoven it in their everyday lives. They are people who not only say this prayer, but also believe it and live it and share it with others.

May we be "Lord's Prayer People" and so bring glory and honor to the One who taught us to pray.

Spend time with God each day in prayer, being in his presence, resting in his grace and mercy and taking time to slowly pray the Lord's Prayer concentrating on the words and their meaning until each petition becomes the desire of your heart.

Spend time in prayer wherever you are, knowing that God is ever present with us wherever we go.

OUR FATHER is always ready to listen and to speak to our heart.
LORD, teach us to pray!