



To God Be The Glory
Sermon Series: The Lord's Prayer
Luke 11:1-10

Rev. Michael D. Halley
Suffolk Christian Church

February 19, 2017
Suffolk, Virginia

Seventh Sunday After The Epiphany

Have you noticed as you have studied prayer that the disciples did not ask Jesus to show them how to teach or how to preach? They asked Jesus to teach them to pray.

And when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus gave them this wonderful model prayer that we know as The Lord's Prayer. In this prayer, Jesus gives us six petitions to make. The first three concern God:

- ▶ exalting God's name
- ▶ exalting God's kingdom (his sovereign rule in our hearts), and
- ▶ exalting God's will.

The Lord's Prayer, as a model of all prayers, puts our focus squarely and surely upon God first, in these first three petitions. It is only then that we have three petitions concerning our own selves:

- ▶ "Give us this day our daily bread"
- ▶ "Forgive us our debts [or trespasses] as we forgive our debtors", and
- ▶ "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil".

Do you pray as you should? As often, as fervently, as deliberately, as regularly? Probably for most of us the answer would be "No, I don't."

When we pray, we receive the gift of God Himself. Prayer is communion . . . prayer is being with God. God wants us to know Him and to

spend time in His presence. We will then discover that prayer is more than simply asking God for things; that prayer is not a selfish means to an end. Prayer is not intended to be an attempt to force the hand of God to do what we want. Rather, prayer is an act of submission to God. Prayer is meant to impress us with God more than it is to impress God with us or our needs.

We sometimes also struggle with how God answers our prayers. The great Christian author C. S. Lewis once confessed that he was grateful God hadn't given him everything he wanted. He said, "I don't know where I'd be if I'd gotten all I asked for!"¹

Prayer may not change our situation, but it changes us. We are to make our requests known to God. If our request is wrong, God says "No". If our timing is wrong, God says "Slow". If we are wrong, God says "Grow", and if our request is right, our timing is right, and we are right, God (usually) says "Go!"²

Praying this prayer places some demands on ourselves ... it is a risky prayer:³

- ▶ I cannot say "our" if I'm living only for myself.
- ▶ I cannot say "Father" if I don't try to act like His child.
- ▶ I cannot say "Who art in Heaven" if I am laying up no treasure there.
- ▶ I cannot say "hallowed be Thy Name" if I am not striving for holiness in my own life.
- ▶ I cannot say "Thy Kingdom come" if I'm not doing my part to hasten the coming of God's rule in our hearts and lives.
- ▶ I cannot say "Thy will be done" if I am disobedient to His word.

- ▶ I cannot say “on earth as it is in Heaven” if I’m unwilling to serve Him here and now.
- ▶ I cannot say “give us this day our daily bread” if I’m not relying on Him to provide for my needs.
- ▶ I cannot say “forgive us our debts” if I harbor a grudge against someone.
- ▶ I cannot say “lead us not into temptation” if I deliberately place myself in the path of sin.
- ▶ I cannot say “deliver us from evil” if I haven’t put on the whole armor of God.
- ▶ I cannot say “Thine is the Kingdom” if I am not loyal to the King as His faithful subject.
- ▶ I cannot attribute to Him “the power” if I fear what people may say about me.
- ▶ I cannot ascribe to Him “the glory” if I am seeking honor only for myself.
- ▶ I cannot say “forever” if my life is bounded completely by the things of earthly time.

Those who are devoted to prayer do things by prayer; they begin with prayer, not tacking prayer on as an afterthought, after decisions are made. When faced with a challenge, the first thing we should do is to go into prayer, not action. Those who are devoted to prayer give priority to prayer, and are never too busy to pray. Our level of Christian commitment might well be measured by the character of our prayer life.

Saint Augustine⁴ put it this way:

It was your Lord who put an end to long windedness, so that you would not pray as if you wanted to teach God by your many words. Piety, not verbosity, is in order when you pray, since He knows your needs. Now someone perhaps will say: "But if He knows our needs, why should we state our requests even in a few words? Why should we pray at all? Since He knows, let Him give what He deems necessary for us." Even so, He wants you to pray so that He may confer His gifts on one who really desires them and will not regard them lightly.

So, sisters and brothers,

Pray on, when rough and dark your pathway,
And you cannot see the light;
When every spark of hope has vanished,
And bright day has turned to night.
Pray on, for God doth surely hear you,
Noting well each sad request;
Pray then in faith, truly believing
That He always gives what's best.⁵

If you take only one thing away from here this morning, let it be a burning desire in your heart to pray, pray, pray. It may seem awkward to you, you may feel you don't have the words, you may feel like God doesn't want to hear from you. Pray anyway. You don't feel like it? Just pray. Long prayer, short prayer, in-between, it doesn't matter. Just pray. Don't know what to do? Pray. Wondering about life? Pray. Have a need? Pray. Don't understand the Bible? Pray.

In closing, I would like for you to join me once again in praying together this wonderful prayer Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against

us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen.

To God be the glory. Amen

+ == + == + == + == + == + == +

All Scripture references are from *New International Version*®, NIV®, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®, unless otherwise indicated.

+ == + == + == + == + == + == +

***Sunday Sermons from Suffolk Christian Church* are intended for the private devotional use of members and friends of the church. Please do not print or publish. Thank you. Suggestions for sermon topics are always welcome!**

-
1. Clive Staples Lewis (1898 - 1963) was a British novelist, poet, academic, medievalist, literary critic, essayist, lay theologian, broadcaster, lecturer, and Christian apologist (Wikipedia). He held academic positions at both Oxford University and Cambridge University. I was unable to locate the exact citation of this statement, tho it is widely quoted on the internet.
 2. From “The Lord’s Prayer for His Disciples: Introductory Message”, by Pastor Bob Leroe, <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/introductory-message-on-the-lords-prayer-robert-leroe-sermon-on-jesus-teachings-48154?page=1>. The Rev. Dr. Robert Leroe retired as pastor of Cliftdale Congregational Church, Saugus, Massachusetts, in March, 2016. He is a member of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (Four “Cs”).
 3. The following bullet points are from *Alone With God: Rediscovering the Power and the Passion of Prayer* (David C. Cook, 1981), by John MacArthur, pp. 149-150.
 4. Augustine (354 - 430) was an early Christian theologian whose writings influenced the development of Christianity. He was Bishop of Hippo, located in modern-day Algeria, in Africa. I

was unable to locate the exact citation for this quote.

5. From Our Daily Bread, quoted at “Prayer”, www.sermonillustrations.com.