

Sermon, October 15, 2017 – Seventeen Sunday after Pentecost
Ask, Seek, Knock- Prayer Sermon Series.

Theme 4 – Your Prayers Matter Various Verses



Dear Friends in Christ
Once again we continue with the series on
Prayer.

We have the need to pray, as a congregation, as families, as individuals. We have learned how to trust God's answer to our prayer, and today we shall learn that Your Prayers Matter. And because your prayers matter, we need to remember that God not only invites us but even commands us to pray.

Although God's command to pray is really a Gospel invitation coming from God's grace to us in Jesus Christ, even in the Old Testament, God says: "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." (Jeremiah 33:3)

Almost anywhere you can find an assortment greeting cards with a variety of topics covered, you can find "Missing You," "Friendship," "Please Write," "Keep in Touch," and even "General" and when we receive one of those cards, it does make an impact in our lives, doesn't it.

Now, imagine for a moment that God is going to send you a greeting card. The card is going to express how God feels about how often you are in touch with Him through prayer. What would God's card say? What picture might be on the cover? The answer sometimes depends in our condition, don't you think so?

YOUR FATHER WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

But your Father wants to hear from you always, therefore your prayers matter, it is either God's command or invitation, depending how you see it or the text you read regarding prayer. Now, independently on how you see it, you will notice that there is always a promises attached to those verses.

For example and for our knowledge and growth here are some verses regarding prayer, and as you read or hear them, depending on your circumstance, you will see them either as a command or as an invitation:

The first one is Psalm 50:15 where God tells us: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

Now from Isaiah 30:19: "For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you."

How about from Philippians 4:6–7 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." "

Now from 1 Timothy 2:1–4 "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in

high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

But there is more, from James 5:16 “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Through these verses we can see that God wants, commands and invites us to pray, because he wants to hear from you.

WHAT CAN WE TELL HIM?

Yes he wants to hear from you. And now you know that, but you also know that he knows all your needs, right? If so, then what can we tell God that he doesn't know?

Some people may wonder what is the purpose, or the good purpose of prayer for that matter, if God already knows ahead of time the content of our prayer why should I pray then. The purpose of prayer is not to inform God. He is, after all, all-knowing. And if so, we can spare ourselves the burden of having to tell God what's going on! Right? Yes!

But God desires to have a conversation with you, desires that you would talk to him, that you would converse. Sure, but, what can you say to God when he knows everything?

The Scriptures tell us that we are to voice our adoration, we are to confess our sins, we are to give him thanks and as for our needs, that is to make supplications. Actually, all of it are part of what you might already know, that is A.C.T.S. It is an outline that will help us in our conversations with God. The word ACTS stands for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Although this guideline has been used for years, the Lord's Prayer contains only three of the four elements, but if you look at other prayers in the Scriptures you will find other parts as well.

Let's think on each section on this day. What can you say when it comes to adoration?

A – for ADORATION

There may not be much difference between adoration and thanksgiving, although adoration is praising God for being God, for what He is rather than for something He has specifically done for us. The Psalms give us several examples we can use, like Psalm 48:1 that tells us: “Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain!”

Or this other one Psalm 47:1–2, where the Psalmist writes: “Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! ² For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.” This psalm/prayer gives adoration to God simply because He is God, the mighty king of creation.

The last example is from Psalm 46:1–3 where we hear: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ³ though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”

Does this psalm sound familiar? It should where this psalm is the bases for Luther's famous hymn, a “A Mighty Fortress is our God”

Adoration then is praising God for who he is and what he does.

C – for CONFESSION

How about confession; what can you say? It is confession of sins. It is the recognition that sin blocks us from God, but forgiveness removes the barricade and restores us to God, therefore we need to confess, and you can do that as you pray. Tell God what you have done and ask for his forgiveness, even give thanks to God for the forgiveness of your sins. Yes but we do that in our corporate worship right? Yes we do, yet we too can do in your prayers, just as Jesus taught us to pray: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”.

Or the way how to pray, as he taught through a parable when he said: (Luke 18:10–14): “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Through this parable Jesus teaches us that God accepts and forgives those who humbly confess their sin. God’s grace in Christ, which has removed the sins of the whole world, is what moves us to confess our sins and ask to be right with him again.

T – for THANKSGIVING

If adoration is praising God for who He is, thanksgiving is thanking God for what He has done, is doing, and will do for us in our lives and for us.

For example, hear how the apostle Paul gives thanks in his prayers, he says this to the Philippians: “I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:3–6 NIV)

The apostle Paul gives thanksgiving to God for the Philippian Christians because of their partnership in the Gospel, that is, they too were evangelists and supporting the work of Paul as missionary.

S – for SUPPLICATION

How about for supplication? When Jesus taught us to pray “Give us this day our daily bread,” He was showing us that we are welcome to ask our Father for anything we need—even physical needs. It may be true that we tend to overload our prayers with supplications at the expense of adoration, confession, and thanksgiving. But that doesn’t mean we should shy away from praying for our “daily bread.”

Jesus taught us to make supplication, in fact to beg. In the Gospel of Luke 18:1–5 we read that Jesus told them his disciples a parable “to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ² He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterwards he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’”

God’s goodness is certainly great, actually beyond any human understanding, that longs for our asking according to his will, God welcomes, desires, and longs for our

prayers; the judge, of course, did not want to hear the prayers of the woman, but God does.

And of course Jesus assures us of that when he said: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:7–11)

God wants us to ask, seek, knock, as you see the love of God, our heavenly Father, is complete and perfect love.

God’s answer to prayer doesn’t depend on how we pray but on His relationship with us.

CONCLUSION

So, do your prayers matter? They matter more than what you imagine or think about. God desires your prayers, your conversations with him, he desires to hear your voice, your heart. That’s why he invites, even commands you to do so.

This is good news, the good news that in Christ all your prayers are heard and answered, after all Christ Jesus broke down the barricade that our sin raised against our heavenly Father. Therefore, we have nothing to fear when we go to Him in prayer. Rather, because God first approaches us through His Word and Sacraments, we are freed to offer Him our adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication in Jesus’ name.

Amen.