

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Luke 11:1-13

Key Verse: 11:2

“He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.””’

In the last passage, Jesus told busy Martha, “only one thing is needed.” It is Jesus. Sometimes we feel that we need many things. But only one thing is needed. It is Jesus. When we have Jesus, we have everything. Jesus gives us eternal life in our souls. Jesus gives us the kingdom of God as our inheritance. Jesus gives us holy mission, the meaning of life and absolute purpose of life.

Today’s passage is the Lord’s Prayer. This prayer appears twice in the four gospels, once in Matthew 6:9-13 and here in Luke 11:1-4. This short prayer has been offered countless times down through the generations. Dr. Samuel Lee often led us to sing this prayer at the end of worship service. It remains the model prayer for God’s children. We want to learn what the contents of our prayer should be and how to pray. May the Lord plant the words and spirit of this prayer in our hearts.

First, “Lord, teach us to pray” (1).

Look at verse 1. “One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’” There seems to be no special occasion for this prayer. And that is the beauty of it. Jesus prayed when there was no immediate reason to pray. Jesus prayed because he loved to spend time with God. In fact, Jesus prayed often, as Luke’s Gospel shows us. Jesus prayed when he was baptized (3:21). Through this prayer, Jesus enjoyed God’s love. Through this prayer, Jesus received the Holy Spirit. Through this prayer, Jesus prepared for his earthly messianic ministry. After that, there was a powerful work of God through Jesus in the Galilean district. Innumerable people came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Jesus worked hard to help them all, one by one. Even so, Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (5:16). In this way he kept his direction and maintained his vine and branch relationship with God.

As Jesus’ gospel ministry advanced more and more, it began to challenge the entrenched religious establishment with its power and purity. Then the religious leaders plotted to eliminate Jesus. Jesus did not fight with them. Instead, Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God (6:12). The next day he chose his twelve disciples and designated them apostles. While in Galilee, Jesus trained them in many ways, climaxing in the feeding of the five thousand. Then he wanted to help them make a confession of faith in him as the Christ. He prayed for this, and Peter did so (9:18). But right after that Peter revealed his deeply rooted desire for ease and his love for worldly glory. Then Jesus took Peter, James and John up onto a mountain to pray (9:28). As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Through this transfiguration, Jesus revealed his glory to his disciples and planted spiritual desire in their hearts to share in his suffering and glory. Moreover, Jesus himself was fully strengthened to go to Jerusalem as the Lamb of God. Indeed, Jesus was often in prayer. It was the power source of Jesus’ life. And it was essential in raising his disciples.

Since Jesus, the Son of God, prayed so much, shouldn’t his disciples pray? But before this, there is no record of it. Surely, Jesus wanted his disciples to pray (6:28). But it seems that until now, he did not push them to do so. He showed them his example and he prayed for them patiently. Especially, his prayer before his transfiguration opened their eyes to the power of prayer. At last, one of them said, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Jesus helped his disciples to pray through his influence and example. At last, the desire to pray grew in the disciples’ hearts.

Second, Jesus teaches the contents of prayer (2-4).

Jesus taught his disciples what to pray. We call this “The Lord’s Prayer.” Let’s read verses 2-4. “He 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.””’” We can divide the Lord’s prayer into two segments. The first segment, consisting of verse 2, is God-centered. The second segment, consisting of verses 3-4, is for our needs. Let’s think about the prayer topics Jesus gave us.

Look at verse 2 again. “He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.”’” The first word Jesus taught us to pray is “Father.” Coming to God in prayer is a personal matter, like a little child coming to his father. It implies the unconditional love of the father and the simple trust of the child. To Hebrew people, this was a revolutionary teaching. They thought God was too holy to approach and too remote to find. They did not even call God’s name as it was, but used representative words to talk about God. But Jesus taught us to call God “Father.” Prayer begins by accepting the love of God and putting our trust in him as our Heavenly Father. How can sinners call God “Father”? It is possible because Jesus died for our sins and rose again from the dead. His blood cleanses our consciences and enables us to serve the living God (Heb 9:14). When we accept Jesus’ death and resurrection in our hearts, God gives us the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:15 says, “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. She was very glad to see him and hugged him so tightly that he had difficulty breathing. Then he said to her, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (Jn 20:17). In Jesus’ grace, we can call God “Father” with absolute assurance that we are his precious children. This is the beginning of prayer.

How wonderful it is that we can call God “Father.” Our Father God welcomes us with loving arms. He is ready to listen to us, counsel us, and care for our needs. Our souls find true rest in him. Sadly, however, there are many young people who have a negative concept of “Father” because their human fathers were unfaithful. God is not like that. God never abandons his children. He is our Everlasting Father. Everything else may become unstable and shaky. But God is Almighty and unchanging and his love endures forever. Heaven and earth may pass away, but his love for us remains faithful forever. In any circumstance and condition, we can come to God and call him “Father.”

Something else happens when we call God “Father.” We all become brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no generation gap or racial separation. Missionary Daniel Yang calls God, “Father.” His daughter Sarah Won calls God “Father.” And his grandson, David Won Jr., calls God “Father.” Charles Womack calls God “Father,” Pastor Kevin Albright calls God “Father,” Dr. James Kim calls God “Father,” Maria Horvath calls God “Father,” and Maria Peace calls God “Father.” Sometimes we feel sorry to leave our physical families behind to follow God’s calling for our lives. But as Jesus promised, we become part of God’s spiritual family with brothers and sisters as numerous as the stars in the sky. At one time, the Coca Cola company wanted to unite all people in the world on the basis of drinking Coke. It didn’t work. But when we call God “Father” we can have true brotherhood among all mankind. Moreover, when we call God “Father,” we become stewards of God’s world. We can sing, “This is my Father’s world.”

The second phrase of prayer is “hallowed be your name.” When we call God “Father” we become representatives of his name, just as children bear their father’s last name. Then we must pray that God’s name may be hallowed, that is, revered and most highly honored. We cannot take lightly the privilege of calling God “Father.” We must recognize him as the holy God. We must seek his honor and glory from our deep hearts. Our Lord Jesus showed us the best example. Just before his arrest, Jesus prayed, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you” (Jn 17:1). Jesus was ready to die on the cross to reveal God’s love and saving grace to all mankind and thus glorify God. As God’s children, if we render glory to God we can rejoice and have a sense of victory (1Pe 4:13). But if we cause God’s name to be dishonored, we must swallow the agony of defeat and repent.

The third phrase of prayer is “your kingdom come.” This means that God’s divine rule comes into our hearts and our nation and the whole world. Jesus said in John 17:21, “...the kingdom of God is within you.” When we repent of our sins and believe Jesus’ saving grace, he comes into our hearts to rule and the kingdom of God comes (Mk 1:15). Jesus drives out sin and Satan, and brings God’s peace, joy and love. The happiest man is the one who has the kingdom of God in his heart. But the kingdom of God is not only in our hearts. We must pray that the kingdom of God may come on earth as it is in heaven—that is, that every shred of the devil’s power may be subdued, defeated and destroyed and that God’s divine rule may come on earth as it is in heaven. At the College of Dupage (COD), there are 32,000 students. Many of them have lost spiritual discernment and a moral standard. They are easy prey of the devil. But Missionaries Monica Barry and Gideon and Mary Bahn have been praying to raise 1,200 Bible teachers from COD. Now God is sending Missionary David Kim to direct COD ministry as an independent chapter. We must pray that the kingdom of God may come to COD as it is in heaven. This is not mere positive thinking. It is the expression of our faith in God. When St. Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus, there was a great work of God. Many people publicly confessed their sins and burned their sorcery scrolls (Ac 19:18-20). We must believe and pray

that 1,200 COD students may bring their drugs and bad movies and burn them in a big fire as their sincere repentance before God. We must pray and believe that 1,200 Bible teachers will be raised at COD. We must pray that the kingdom of God may come to COD as it is in heaven; that the kingdom of God may come in America as it is in heaven; that the kingdom of God may come on earth as it is in heaven.

Now we come to the second segment of the Lord's Prayer, concerning our needs. Verse 3 says, "Give us each day our daily bread." We cannot ignore the bread problem. We need bread. So we must ask God for our daily bread. We must depend on God to meet our needs and give thanks to him when he does so. Then we can be free from anxiety and grow in faith. Recently, Dr. Isaac Baek faced a job problem. He brought the problem to God in prayer. Not only did God solve his job problem, but God used this problem to further the pioneering of the University of Chicago. Most of all, Dr. Baek learned faith in God.

We must pray, not only for "my" daily bread, but for "our" daily bread. We live in the universal love of God and must be concerned about all people of all nations, even in regard to their bread problem. Last Christmas, we collected offering money and sent it to Afghanistan and North Korea. As a result, many hungry children were fed. Dr. Lee prayed that God might use us to take care of the whole world materially and spiritually. May God help us do so.

Verse 4a says, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us." As we need daily bread, we need daily forgiveness. We must remember that we are sinners. Without daily forgiveness we cannot stand before God. Some people see dirty images on the computer or television that stain their minds with sin. Sin separates us from God. Jesus invites us to repent and receive the grace of forgiveness so that we may be right with God. We must ask forgiveness not only for our personal sins, but for corporate or national sins as well.

When we receive Jesus' grace of forgiveness, we must also forgive everyone who sins against us. From time to time, we experience that our Bible students sin against us by breaking their Bible study appointments or not preparing their lessons or writing their testimonies. Sometimes we are tempted to hold a grudge against them for it. But Jesus teaches us to forgive everyone who sins against us, including our Bible students. When we remember Jesus' grace, we can forgive others.

Verse 4b says, "And lead us not into temptation." Temptation is the power of the devil to lead us into sin. We should not be eager to confront temptation. Rather, we should ask God to lead us not into temptation. The devil is like a roaring lion who prowls around looking for someone to devour (1Pe 5:8). We cannot defeat him with our own strength. We must ask God's help to overcome the devil's temptation.

Third, the attitude of prayer (5-13).

Knowing what to pray is important. But it is not enough. To be effective in prayer, we must have the right attitude of prayer. Simply speaking, Jesus teaches us to believe God's love and be persistent. Look at verses 5-8. It is not easy to awaken a sleepy man at midnight to ask for three loaves of bread. It requires boldness and persistence to keep waking him up until he is so irritated that he gives the bread. He does not do so for the sake of friendship, but because he is overcome by persistent asking. We need this kind of persistence in prayer. Prayer is a spiritual battle. Prayer cannot be done according to our feelings. In fact, we must pray persistently until we overcome our own feelings and thinking and come into the presence of God.

How can we be this persistent? We must believe God's love and his promises. Let's read verses 9-10. "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." Consider the prophet Elijah. In the third year of a famine, Elijah asked God to send rain on the land. Then he told his servant to go and look toward the sea for the sign of rain. There was nothing. Elijah continued to pray, then said to his servant, "Go back." This happened seven times. The servant might have been tired. But Elijah persisted in prayer, believing God's promise. Finally, a cloud as small as a man's hand rose from the sea. It turned into a rainstorm that drenched the land. During preparation for the '99 MSU Conference, Dr. Lee led us to pray for good weather. After prayer, a heat wave was broken; cool weather came and blessed the conference.

The best example is our Lord Jesus Christ. He prayed for Simon Peter to grow as a shepherd for the early church. But Simon was slow to accept Jesus' teaching about his death and resurrection. He argued with Jesus the night of the Last Supper to proclaim his loyalty, and then denied Jesus three times. But Jesus prayed for him that his faith might not fail and believed that he would stand as a shepherd for his church (Lk 22:32). God answered Jesus' persistent prayer for Peter.

It is so important to believe that God will answer our prayer. To encourage our faith in prayer, Jesus told us that human fathers, though they are evil, know how to give good gifts to their children. Jesus concluded, "...how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (13) The best gift of God is the Holy Spirit.

Today we studied the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer begins by calling God, "Father." Let's read verses 2-4 again. May God richly bless you through the Lord's Prayer.