

Pray Like This 11 Jul 2016, Westminster, Luke 11:1-13, C-12

Mt 6:6-9 Rev. Larry B. Bell

1. Announcements: NLT of Lord's Prayer, Joy to the World
2. Children: Do you pray? Lots of people have trouble talking to God. How about you? Tell you what, all you have to do is remember three words. Are you ready? Here they are: help, thanks, wow. [Anne LaMott's three essential prayers]
3. Growing up in the church, like many of us, I learned the Lord's Prayer at an early age. And I've been saying it in worship ever since, off and on. Most of our Mainline churches make it a part of their worship.
4. Then, as a teenager I stuck my nose up at anything involving rote memorization, and it wasn't until later that I came to understand that this is a beautiful prayer and there are good reasons to memorize and say it each week. There are good reasons Christians over the millennia have incorporated this prayer in their worship.
5. From time to time, it's important to look at the elements of our worship and remember the reasons why we do them. Otherwise, this beautiful, profound prayer from the mouth of Jesus may become a dull, empty habit, mindlessly repeated.
6. The disciples ask Jesus, *teach us to pray like John's disciples taught them to pray*. Jesus gives them a prayer that will mark them as followers of Christ.
7. *Pray like this*. When you pray begin by addressing God as *Our Father*. Jesus calls God "Father" 175 times in the gospels. Compare that with the Old Testament where God is called "Father" fifteen times total. Sometimes Jesus even uses the word *Abba*, which is Aramaic for "Papa." So Jesus is inviting them and us to address God in the same way, with the same trust that a child has for a parent. This must have seemed so strange since they were

used to a distant God whose name is too holy to pronounce! Jews even today use G-d to refer to God. It's how they keep the name of God holy. But Christians follow the example of Jesus. *Pray like this*. Come to God like a child, call him "Papa," reach out to God like a child reaches out to a parent.

8. I think I was six years old when a hurricane blew through our neighborhood. I remember my mother calling my father at work to ask him what to do. She took us down in the basement and we stood against the concrete wall until it blew over. The next morning, there was a lot of damage to the trees, the barn and the TV antenna. We were OK and the house was OK. Strangely enough, I don't remember being afraid at all. Come to Christ with the trust of a child.
9. The second phrase, *hallowed be thy name* is an imperative. In other words: *let your name be hallowed, let it be made holy* in modern English. Peterson translates it *Reveal who you are*. We live in a world in which many refuse to acknowledge God's reality. So we pray that God may be revealed for who he is. But this is also for us—that the veil might be lifted and we might see the holiness, the glory, the reality of God.
10. *Hallowed be thy name* is really the key for the whole prayer. How is God to be glorified? How is he to be made holy? By bringing his kingdom to earth. By making his will done on earth as it is in heaven. By living in the confidence of knowing our needs for tomorrow will be met. By having our sins forgiven and finding a way to forgive the sins of others.
11. When we pray *thy kingdom come, thy will be done*, we look at the mess of the world and the mess of our lives and realize how much we need the Lord to straighten things out and how much we need to be a part of that holy work. We long for a day when the wrongs

of this world will be set right. God's will is not done on this earth. Another week, another shooting. Lord, help!

12. There's not a lot we can do about a suicide bombing in Afghanistan. But there are things we can do to bring God's kingdom to this earth wherever we happen to be. So we don't sit around and wait for the second coming. As we pray, we receive visions of a better world. Prayer changes us and we do what we can to bring in God's kingdom.
13. We pray for the world and we pray for ourselves. Lord give us what we need for today. Give us bread, food and shelter. Give us jobs. Help us to live productive lives. Feed us physically and spiritually.
14. *Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.* We admit that we do not always follow the right course. We make mistakes, big and small. And so we bring them to God. As God forgives us, we are able to forgive others in humility.
15. *Lead us not into temptation.* Lord, keep us out of trouble. When temptation comes our way, help us to do the right thing and turn away. Preserve us, keep us safe, help us to make the right choices.
16. So in this prayer we come to God with the trust of a child. We pray that God's name might be made holy, that he might be glorified in our own lives and in all creation. We pray that the kingdom of God may come and that we may do our part to bring that kingdom to this present life. So we bring our sins to God for forgiveness while forgiving others. We pray for our physical and spiritual needs and for God's guidance in times of temptation. It's all so that God might be revealed and that his name might be made holy in all the earth.
17. Then there is this beautiful picture of a parent and a child. A loving parent will not give a child a scorpion if she asks for an egg, or a

snake if he asks for a fish. In the same way, with God, we should ask, seek and knock. If we persist, God will give us good things.

18. It's a beautiful picture, but how should we understand it? Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz? Or more seriously, what about that young mother dying of cancer, asking God to be healed? When a little girl and her father get run over in a boating accident, how is God answering that prayer? These are tough questions.
19. In 2012 we were in DC with Annette's family over July 4th when a derecho hit the area and there was no power for days. We had about a dozen family members coming. What were we going to do? Leah said, *if you are a praying person, this would be a good time for it.* I said *I don't really believe in God as a magician.* What was God supposed to do? Wave his magic wand and make the electric poles stand up straight and mend the broken wires? No. God will help us to find a way through our problems as we persevere in our prayers. And so He did. Neighbors helped neighbors and we came through it just fine.
20. Whenever I preach, I pray. Does God write the sermon for me? No. I have to put in the work. It takes me longer than some others. By God's grace it comes together.
21. *Ask and it shall be given, seek and you shall find.* Maybe it's in the asking that we discover the answer.
22. Do miracles sometimes happen? Yes and no. Sometimes, by God's grace, we are sometimes healed delivered from bad situations. I've got two bad shoulders. I've traveled around the state, asking, seeking, knocking. When this is all done, if all goes well, I will have two functional shoulders. Thanks God. But I'll never pound another nail for the rest of my life. That's a tough thing for a carpenter.
23. I had something happen our last day we were in Poland.

24. We were visiting Annette's ancestral village in Poland. I wanted to find her grandfather's birthplace, which I thought was located in a hay field by a creek. It was about 8:00 PM and everyone else was tired out from sight seeing, but I wanted to keep looking. So I was alone.
25. As I was crossing from one hayfield to another, all of a sudden, I found myself falling feet first into a pool of water. Where was I? What happened? When I floated to the surface, I saw that I had fallen into an old well. I was still two meters below the surface of the ground, floating on the water. Shaken, out of breath, I considered my next step. I tried a feeble call for help, but the stone walls around me soaked up the sound. There was no one close by anyway. Eventually I knew they would miss me and try to find me, but that could take hours. Lassie was nowhere to be seen. *Help, God!*
26. So what could I do? First I found a ledge to stand on. Then, step by step, with my back against one side and my feet against the other, I pushed myself up the stone wall, out of the hole and onto some nettles. Ah, life and fresh air! *Thanks, God.*
27. I lost my glasses and my hat. My camera was completely submerged along with the rest of me. But I was out of the hole. This could have turned out much worse. Somehow, I managed to drive back home with no glasses. As my wife doctored me up, she said, *Don't do that again!*
28. Did God suspend the laws of gravity so that I could crawl out of that hole? Did God prevent me from falling in the hole to begin with? No. Did he give me a calmness and presence of mind that allowed me to keep my wits about me in a bad situation? Yes. *Thanks, God. Let your name be holy.*

29. Does God hear our prayers? Absolutely. Does God suspend the natural laws of the universe to answer a prayer? No, I don't think so. In that case, what is the point of asking, seeking and knocking? Is it to get stuff? No. God is not a vending machine.
30. The point of asking, seeking and knocking is to orient our lives upward. The point of prayer is to glorify and to make holy the name of God. The point of prayer is to seek divine guidance. The point of prayer is to connect with our creator, our papa, our savior. Glory to God! Amen.