

5.17.2020 The Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-13)

Over the last several weeks we've considered many examples of people who experienced the peace of God, which passes all understanding, while in the midst of life's most difficult circumstances. We talked about Martin Rinkhart, the man who wrote *Now Thank We All Our God* while serving as a minister during the horrors of the Thirty Years' War. We talked about Horatio Spafford writing *It Is Well With My Soul* while passing over the location where his four daughters were lost at sea, David writing the Twenty-Third Psalm when he was in the valley of the shadow of death, and Job declaring "*I know that my Redeemer lives*" after losing his family, his fortune, and his health. As we considered these examples, we discovered that God's surpassing peace is not found in what you know, but in Who you know, not in where we are, but in Who He is.

It is only through intimate communion with God that we find true peace in this uncertain life, and while the examples we considered clearly illustrated that fact, we never really talked about how to develop such an intimate relationship with Almighty God, but in our New Testament lesson this morning we find the key is prayer. Our reading today began with Jesus "*praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray*" (Luke 11:1). Jesus' first disciples would often see Him go to some place where He could be alone and pray (Luke 5:16), and seeing this they realized that He lived a life of dependence upon, and communion with, God our Father, a Divine life and a human life that was connected intimately with God through prayer.

Can you imagine the excitement that the disciples felt as they waited to hear His teaching on prayer? This certainly promised to be the greatest of gifts, His most important teaching. I wonder, do we feel that sense of excitement and awe when we think of the Lord's Prayer, or has two thousand years and a lifetime of repeating this prayer turned it into something far less than what it was meant to be? I wonder, as I hear us pray...

(person)- 'Our Father who art in heaven...'

(God)---Yes?

(person)- Don't interrupt me. I'm praying.

(God)---But you called me.

(person)-Called you? I didn't call you. I'm praying. "Our Father who art in heaven..."

(God)---There you did it again.

(person)-Did what?

(God)---Called me. You said, "Our Father who art in heaven." Here I am...What's on your mind?

(person)-But I didn't mean anything by it. I was, you know, just saying my prayers for the day. I always say the Lord's Prayer. It makes me feel good, kind of like fulfilling my religious duty.

(God)---All right. Go on.

(person)-"Hallowed be thy name..."

(God)---Hold it. What do you mean by that?

(person) By what?

(God)---By "hallowed be thy name"?

(person)-It means... it means... I don't know exactly what it means. How should I know? It's just a part of the prayer. By the way, what does it mean to you?

(God)---It means honored, holy, and wonderful. It calls for respect and reverence.

(person)-That makes sense. I guess that I never really thought about it before. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

(God)---Do you really mean that?

(person)-Sure, why not?

(God)---Then what are you doing about it?

(person)-Doing? Nothing, I guess. I just think it would be great if you got control of everything down here like you have up there.

(God)---Have I got control of you?

(person)-Well, I go to church.

(God)---That isn't what I asked you. I'm wondering how you are using those gifts I have given to you. With how you spend all that time and money, whose kingdom are you building anyway - yours or mine?

(person)-Oh, come on! I'm just as good as some of those people at the church.

(God)---Excuse me. I thought you were praying for my will to be done. If that is to happen, it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. Like you, for example.

(person)-Well, I see your point. There are some things that I could stop praying for - and just simply start doing. And I do have some faults - I could probably name quite a few.

(God)---So could I.

(person)-I haven't thought about it very much until now, but I really would like to cut out some of those things. I would like to, you know, really be free.

(God)---Good. Now we're getting somewhere. We'll work together, you and I. Some victories can truly be won. I'm proud of you.

(person)-Look, Lord, I need to finish up here. This is taking a lot longer than it usually does. "Give us this day, our daily bread."

(God)---You need to cut out the bread.

(person)-Hey, wait a minute! Here I am doing my religious duty, and all of a sudden you break in and remind me of all my faults.

(God)---Praying is a dangerous thing. You could wind up changed, you know. That's what I'm trying to get across to you. You called me, and here I am. It's too late to stop now. Keep praying, I'm interested in the next part of your prayer...(pause).

Well, go on.

(person)-I'm scared to.

(God)---Scared? Of what?

(person)-I know what you'll say.

(God)---Try me and see.

(person)-"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

(God)---What about Charles?

(person)-See? I knew it! I knew you'd bring him up! Why Lord? Time after time I gave him all a friend has to give - and he just spit in my face! He's told lies about me. He owes me money. He's ungrateful and completely self-centered!

(God)---But your prayer? What about your prayer?

(person)-I didn't mean it.

(God)---Well, at least you're admitting it. But it's not much fun carrying around that load of bitterness, is it?

(person)-No. But I'll feel better as soon as I get even.

(God)---You won't feel any better. You'll feel worse. Revenge isn't sweet. Think of how unhappy you already are. But I can change all that.

(person)-You can? How?

(God)---Forgive Charles, and I'll forgive you. Then the hate and sin will be his problem and not yours. You will have settled your heart.

(person)-You're right. You always are. And more than I want revenge, I want to be right with you....(pause)...(sigh). All right. All right. I forgive him. I ask you to help him find the right road in life. I pray that he would come to know you - your peace - and your love.

(God)---There you go! Wonderful! How do you feel?

(person)-Well, not bad. Not bad at all. In fact, I feel pretty good! You know, I think I'm going to sleep really well tonight.

(God)---You're not through with your prayer. Go on.

(person)-All right. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

(God)---Good! Good! I'll do that. Just don't put yourself in a place where you can be tempted.

(person)-What do you mean by that?

(God)---Don't turn the TV to a channel that you know you shouldn't, and be careful with that computer - the enemy often waits for you there. Also, about the time you spend talking with your friends, if you are never able to influence the conversation to positive things, perhaps you should re-think the value of those friendships. Another thing, your neighbors and friends shouldn't be your standard for "keeping up". And please don't use me for an escape hatch.

(person)-I don't understand the last part.

(God)---Sure you do. You've done it a lot of times. You get caught in a bad situation. You get into trouble and then you come running to me, "Lord, help me out of this mess, and I promise you I'll never do it again." Do you remember all those promises and bargains you have tried to make with me?

(person)-Yes, and I'm sorry Lord. I really am. Until today I thought that if I just fulfilled some religious duty - that if I prayed the Lord's Prayer every day and went to church on Sunday, that I could just - you know - go and do what I liked. I was wrong, and I'm sorry.

(God)---Go ahead and finish your prayer.

(person)-"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever." Amen

(God)---Do you know what would bring me glory? What would really make me happy?

(person)-No, but I'd like to know. I want now to please you. I can see what a mess I've made of my life. And I can see how great it would be to really be one of your disciples.

(God)---You just answered the question.

(person)-I did?

(God)---Yes. The thing that would bring me glory is to have people like you truly love me. And I see that happening between us. I see a new beginning - a new kind of intimacy, a real friendship - and you know, there is no limit to what we can do together.

-Author Unknown

Many of us say the Lord's Prayer every day, but do we truly pray it every day? Do we make Jesus' words to the Father our own, or are we simply fulfilling some religious duty, so that we can feel better about ourselves and move on. This prayer that our Lord taught us to pray is meant to be an intimate conversation with God our Father, through His Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. So, let's make the decision to approach it that way. Let's decide that we're going to pray these words more fervently, and more personally, than we ever have before, believing that when we do, we will see a new beginning, a new kind of intimacy, a real friendship with our Father who art in heaven.