

*And Jesus said to them, “When you pray, say... (Luke 11:2)*

Sometimes we think that because something is simple, it's easy. But, just because something is simple doesn't mean that it's easy to do. Prayer is like this, isn't it? Prayer is so simple! It is just coming before God with your words – talking with God. What could be simpler than that? Sure, it's simple, but it's not always easy to do. Even more, something 'simple' like prayer is something that we assume that all of us should naturally know how to do. But, consider, even Jesus' disciples – who walked around with him for three years, who saw him in the flesh, who listened to his Word – even they had to ask Jesus, *Lord, teach us to pray* (Luke 11:1). Prayer is something that needs to be taught. Prayer is something that we need to learn, something that our Lord needs to teach us.

For what does our Lord Jesus teach us to pray? It's more than just for our needs. We often do pray for our needs – and that's great! But, sometimes our wants – especially for those worldly things that might give us pleasure or power – suddenly become our needs. And that's a problem. Of course, sometimes there are *good* things that we pray for that God doesn't give us. Is this because he doesn't hear? Is this because he hates us? Of course not. God might simply have a different plan in mind.

The solution is this: First, ask for what you need, and ask confidently. Don't be afraid to bring your requests before God. But, ask according to God's will, not your own will. Jesus, of course, is the prime example. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knew what was about to happen – he would be betrayed, arrested, crucified, and killed. It caused him so much anxiety that he began to sweat drops of blood. So, he prayed, *Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me* (Luke 22:42). It certainly wasn't evil for Jesus to ask for salvation from suffering. Yet, he still prayed, *not my will, but yours be done*. That's because Jesus knew that God had other plans. And, indeed, God didn't allow Jesus to be saved from crucifixion. But, that's not because the Father hated the Son, or because he didn't hear. No, his suffering would mean salvation for the world. Sometimes, God has greater plans.

This is why Jesus gives us the Lord's Prayer. Because God has made us his own, we come to him as dear children come to their dear Father. Luther wrote in the Large Catechism, “Here I come, dear Father, and pray, not because of my own purpose or because of my own worthiness. But I pray because of Your commandment and promise, which cannot fail or deceive me... He places [his words] on our lips for how and what we should pray...and we may never doubt that such prayer is pleasing to Him and shall certainly be answered.” We pray because God promises to hear us and give us his grace! We pray because of every treasure he has given us in Christ, including the Lord's prayer!

May God grant us grace in this effort, that we may come to him in confidence, as dear children come before their dear Father in heaven!

-Pastor Squire

“Amen, that is, so shall it be. Make strong our faith in You, that we may doubt not but with trust believe that what we ask we shall receive. Thus in Your name and at Your Word, we say, ‘Amen, O hear us, Lord!’” (“Our Father, Who from Heaven Above,” *LSB* 766, v. 9)