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**“Lord, Teach Us to Pray”**

 **Luke 11:1**

 **Thoughts about the Act of Prayer**

 “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing,” Martin Luther wrote. In his Small Catechism, he also states: “God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.” Prayer is conversation with God. It shows our love for our heavenly Father. Prayer may be simple or complex. Prayer can be silent or corporate. Prayer can be memorized or free-flowing from our heart. It is a conversation with God. Today, we will look at various forms of prayer that are used frequently by believers, as we seek to honor Christ, the Lord of the Church, with our prayers.

 We are all able to pray. Some forms of prayer are corporate and familiar to us as church people. Some forms of prayer are intensely personal, almost private, just like other conversations we may have. Yet, a conversation with God is not exactly like having a conversation with another human being. We always approach God with respect; He is our Maker and we are not His equal. He promises to hear our prayers because of Jesus Christ, His Son. Our sinful nature reveals our evil desires, even in our prayers. So, while we may ask for anything, our prayers may be tainted with selfishness. We understand God only provides His people what is truly good, and so we seek to pray according to His will. When we pray, God will answer, because He wants us to have His blessings at the right time.

COLLECT

 **Thoughts about — Collect**

 Today we begin with Scripture and a collect. A collect gathers thoughts that center on one theme, and has a distinct form. This type of prayer has been used for at least 16 centuries within the church. Though not all parts are included in every collect, this form of prayer includes an invocation, the basis for our request, a petition, the intended result of God’s giving, and a conclusion. Believers generally add their heartfelt agreement to the prayer with the Hebrew word “amen” which punctuates the thought of the prayer and expresses faith in God’s good and timely answer.

 **Read Nehemiah 8:6**

 *Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces
to the ground.*

Pray — Collect

Leader: Let us pray.

 Heavenly Father, Your words give us boldness and confidence to acknowledge You as our true Father and ourselves as Your true children. May Your Holy Spirit lead us to trust Your Fatherly goodness, call upon Your name in every need, and glorify You as the author and giver of every good gift, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

 [*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation,* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House 2017), 241]

“Today Your Mercy Calls Us” *LSB* 915, verses1**–**2, 4

1 Today Your mercy calls us
To wash away our sin.
However great our trespass,
Whatever we have been,
However long from mercy
Our hearts have turned away,
Your precious blood can wash us
And make us clean today.

2 Today Your gate is open,
And all who enter in
Shall find a Father’s welcome
And pardon for their sin.
The past shall be forgotten,
A present joy be giv’n,
A future grace be promised,
A glorious crown in heav’n.

4 O all-embracing Mercy,
O ever-open Door,
What should we do without You
When heart and eye run o’er?
When all things seem against us,
To drive us to despair,
We know one gate is open,
One ear will hear our prayer.

SCRIPTURE PRAYER

 **Thoughts about — Scripture Prayer**

 The Bible is filled with the prayers of His people. In fact, it is easier to find Biblical examples of prayer than Biblical admonitions of prayer. The Book of Psalms contains many prayers that we can use for ourselves or as a group. There are Psalms of praise, lament, contrition, and entreaties for the soul’s relationship with God to be pure, as God Himself
is pure. Other prayers are found within Scripture as well. These prayers are valuable to us, as God’s Spirit has given them in the pages of Scripture for our learning and use. When we pray prayers from the Old Testament in our worship services, as we do with Old Testament canticles
and Psalms, we often include the Gloria Patri *(Glory be to
the Father*...). We acknowledge and confess that God was and is still Triune, and that Jesus Christ, God’s Son even before His incarnation, also interceded for the saints
back then, as He does today.

  **Read 1 Samuel 1:9–18**

 *After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. And she vowed a vow and said, “O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.”*

 *As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. And Eli said to her, “How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you.” But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord.**Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.” Then Eli answered, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made
to him.”**And she said, “Let your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.*

Pray — Scripture Prayer

Leader: Let us join together to pray from Psalm 25.

**All: *To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust;
let me not be put to shame …. Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.Lead me in your truth
and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long. Remember your mercy,
O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been
from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or
my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!
Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who
keep his covenant and his testimonies. For your
name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great…. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely
and afflicted.The troubles of my heart are enlarged;
bring me out of my distresses.Consider my affliction
and my trouble, and forgive all my sins ….
Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me!* (Psalm 25:1–11, 16–18, 20a).**

 **Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever. Amen.**

“Create in Me” *LSB* 956

1 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence;
and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation;
and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.

VERSICLES

 **Thoughts about — Versicles**

 Responsive prayers are those prayers which engage groups to answer the petitions offered by another, or to complete the thought expressed. These responses are called versicles if they contain the words of Scripture, which are used in public prayers.

 **Read 2 Samuel 7:18–29**

 *Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God. You have spoken also of your servant’s house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord God! And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God! Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it. Therefore you are great, O Lord God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O Lord, became their God. And now, O Lord God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do
as you have spoken. And your name will be magnified forever, saying, ‘The Lord of hosts is God over Israel,’ and the house
of your servant David will be established before you. For you,
O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation
to your servant, saying, ‘I will build you a house.’ Therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you.
And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant.
Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you,
O Lord God, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.”*

Pray — Versicles *LSB* 286

Leader: Hear my prayer, O Lord;

**All: let my cry come to You.**

Leader: In the day of my trouble I call upon You,

**All:** **for You answer me.**

Leader: Hide Your face from my sins,

**All:** **and blot out all my iniquities.**

Leader: Create in me a clean heart, O God,

**All:** **and renew a right spirit within me.**

Leader: Cast me not away from Your presence,

**All:** **and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.**

Leader: Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,

**All:** **and uphold me with a willing spirit.**

Leader: Because Your steadfast love is better than life,

**All:** **my lips will praise You.**

Leader: For You have been my help,

**All:** **and in the shadow of Your wings I will sing for joy.**

Leader: Teach me Your way, O Lord, that I may walk in Your truth;

**All:** **unite my heart to fear Your name.**

Leader: I give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,

**All:** **and I will glorify Your name forever.**

Leader: May all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You.

**All:** **May those who love Your salvation say evermore,
“God is great!”**

Leader: Save Your people and bless Your heritage!

**All:** **Be their shepherd and carry them forever.**

Leader: Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;

**All:** **listen to my plea for grace.**

“Now Thank We All Our God” *LSB* 895

1 Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mothers’ arms
Has blest us on our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is ours today.

2 Oh, may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessèd peace to cheer us
And keep us in His grace
And guide us when perplexed
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next!

 3 All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns
With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God,
Whom earth and heav’n adore;
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore.

SINGING A PRAYER

 **Thoughts about — Singing a Prayer**

 Martin Luther said, “He who sings, prays twice.” The time spanned by spoken prayer is shorter than that of sung prayer. The range of the voice, the changes in rhythm, and the melody add depth to a prayer that speech alone cannot attain. As St. Paul said to the Romans, *the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words*
(Romans 8:26b).

 Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before they went
to the Mount of Olives. Jesus taught prayer, and demonstrated it as well. Many times, we learn He went off
to pray. He always sought the Father’s will. He always emphasized the Father’s plan. He always taught the disciples to trust His heavenly Father.

 **Read Colossians 3:16***Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness
in your hearts to God.*

Pray and Sing — “We See Our Lord” Tune: Dunstan *LSB* 560

1 We see our Lord, hands clasped in prayers.

 God’s will is clear, so He prepares

 To carry sin which He now bears:

 The mercy which He shares.

2 Christ offered prayer while it was still.

 He spoke in earnest on the hill;

 Was fervent, with exquisite skill

 And did the Father’s will.

3 The Savior gave His life for all,

 Since by our sin we each did fall;

 His grace becomes our protocol;

 So on His name we call.

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 Tune: Dunstan, *LSB* 560, Public Domain

Meditation

 **Thoughts about — Meditation**

 “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work. It is the greater work,” wrote Oswald Chambers. God has done the great works for humanity. Creation, redemption, and sanctification are assured by the wondrous workings of our God. And yet we participate in God’s plan as recipients of His mercies and as active bearers of His grace. We are believers; therefore,
we pray. We pray when we are happy. We pray when we
are sad. We pray when we are in need. We pray when we recognize our blessings. We pray for ourselves. We pray
for others. Christians pray!

 Prayer is the active response to God’s care for us. We do not need words to express what is on our hearts, but words often help clarify our thoughts and emotions. When we do not feel adequate to speak with God as we pray, we may use words that others have used, whether from the Bible or from hymnals or other sources. And yet, God also understands our streams of consciousness. The Spirit intercedes for us in our groanings too deep for words, as we learn in Romans 8:26.
As we meditate, we take time to focus upon the great mercies of God our Savior, that we might show and
declare His love in our lives.

**Read Jonah 2:1–9**

 *Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, “I called out to the Lord, out of my distress*, *and
he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart
of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.’ The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head
at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was fainting away,
I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!”*

Pray — Meditation

 Take a few minutes to approach the mercy-seat of our heavenly Father, to praise Him for His gifts, and to seek His blessings. Remember to thank Him for Jesus, your Savior.

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus” *LSB* 770

1 What a friend we have in Jesus,

 All our sins and griefs to bear!

 What a privilege to carry

 Ev’rything to God in prayer!

 Oh, what peace we often forfeit;

 Oh, what needless pain we bear—

 All because we do not carry

 Ev’rything to God in prayer!

2 Have we trials and temptations?

 Is there trouble anywhere?

 We should never be discouraged—

 Take it to the Lord in prayer.

 Can we find a friend so faithful

 Who will all our sorrows share?

 Jesus knows our ev’ry weakness—

 Take it to the Lord in prayer.

3 Are we weak and heavy laden,

 Cumbered with a load of care?

 Precious Savior, still our refuge—

 Take it to the Lord in prayer.

 Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?

 Take it to the Lord in prayer.

 In His arms He’ll take and shield thee;

 Thou wilt find a solace there.

POSTURE

 **Thoughts about — Posture**

 Ordinarily, we are taught to pray with our hands folded
and our heads bowed. But it is proper to pray with arms outstretched toward heaven or lying prostrate on the floor. We kneel or stand for most prayers because this emphasizes God’s great importance and our great need. We can pray anywhere, at any time, and about anything. The manner
of our prayer may be formal or informal, prepared
or extemporaneous.

 The Bible suggests many postures to encourage prayer.
For example, we read:

 *I prayed with head bowed on my chest* (Psalm 35:13b).

 *So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord* (2 Kings 4:33).

 *If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and
heal their land* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

 *As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying
before the God of heaven* (Nehemiah 1:4).

 *Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!* (Psalm 141:2).

 *When I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you
in the watches of the night* (Psalm 63:6).

 **Read Matthew 6:5–18**

 *“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is
in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

 *“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows
what you need before you ask him.*

 *Pray then like this:*

 *“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

 *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

 *“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites,
for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

Pray — Posture

 Use a posture of prayer that is not customary for you
as you pray for God to forgive someone who has hurt you. Spend several moments of time in this task.

“Savior, Thy Dying Love” *LW* 374, verses 1**–**2

1 Savior Thy dying love
Thou gavest me;

 Nor should I aught withhold,
Dear Lord, from Thee.

 In love my soul would bow,
My heart fulfill its vow,

 Some off’ring bring Thee now,
Something for Thee.

2 O'er the blest mercy seat,
Pleading for me,

 My feeble faith looks up,
Jesus, to Thee.

 Help me the cross to bear,
Thy wondrous love declare,

 Some song to raise, or prayer,
Something for Thee.

PERSONAL PRAYER

 **Thoughts about — Personal Prayer**

 “Prayer is inseparable from the spiritual life of a believer; it is the heart-beat of his faith. A person, who has become a child of God, desires to speak to, commune with, his Father
in heaven; he prays.”

 [Edward Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House). 1939]

 For years, my family has offered table prayers to thank God for His blessings as we are seated in restaurants. Sometimes, I even ask the waiter or waitress if there are any concerns for which we might pray on their behalf. It is often helpful to speak out loud the thoughts we pray, yet this is difficult for many. But like many things in life, practice at praying out loud makes it become easy, and gives us a sense of accomplishment. Praying out loud also shows others the importance we place on prayer, and gives a testimony
to Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

 **Read Philippians 4:4–8**

 *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.* *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;**do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds
 in Christ Jesus.*

 *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things*.

Pray — Personal Prayer

 Find a partner and pray out loud for the next several minutes. Take turns offering gratitude and asking for blessings. Remember spiritual needs and physical needs, for God provides for our whole being.

SING “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” *LSB* 649, verses 1**–**2

1 Blest be the tie that binds

 Our hearts in Christian love;

 The fellowship of kindred minds

 Is like to that above.

2 Before our Father’s throne

 We pour our ardent prayers;

 Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,

 Our comforts and our cares.

Corporate Prayer

 **Thoughts about — Corporate Prayer**

 Martin Luther wrote: “Prayer is a strong wall and fortress of the church.” He understood God’s effort and said something that makes me wonder about my own spiritual priorities. He said, “Work. Work. I have so much to do that I shall have to spend the first three hours in prayer.” The church together is a people of prayer, just as Christians are individuals of prayer.

 When we pray, God hears more than we say, answers more than we ask, gives more than we can imagine. God offers His answers in His own proper time and in His own righteous way. The church offers many prayers to teach the young,
to encourage the faint-hearted, to remember God’s hand
in past and future circumstances, and to bless the saints.

 **Read James 5:13–18**

*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.* *Is anyone among you sick?
Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray
over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.**And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will
be forgiven. 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.* *Elijah was
a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that
it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did
not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven
gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*

Pray — Corporate Prayer

KYRIE *LSB* 285

Leader: O Lord,

**All:** **have mercy.**

Leader: O Christ,

**All:** **have mercy.**

Leader: O Lord,

**All:** **have mercy.**

LORD’S PRAYER

**All:** **Our Father who art in heaven,**

 **hallowed be Thy name,**

 **Thy kingdom come,**

 **Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;**

 **give us this day our daily bread;**

 **and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

 **and lead us not into temptation,**

 **but deliver us from evil.**

 **For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING *LSB* 287

Leader: The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us
to everlasting life.

**All:** **Amen.**

“Christians While on Earth Abiding” *LW* 434

1 Christians, while on earth abiding,
Let us never cease to pray,

 Firmly in the Lord confiding
As our parents in their day.

 Be the children's voices raised
To the God their parents praised.

 May his blessing, failing never,
Rest upon his people ever.

2 Bless us, Father, and protect us
From all harm in all our ways;

 Patiently, O Lord, direct us
Safely through these fleeting days.

 Let your face upon us shine,
Fill us with your peace divine.

 Praise the Father, Son, and Spirit!
Praise Him, all who life inherit!



**“Lord, I can’t say it in words …
Can you please just listen to my heart?”**

*O Lord, in distress they sought you; they poured out a whispered prayer when your discipline was upon them* (Isaiah 26:16).

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