

THE LIVE WIRE

www.americanlutheran.net

PLUG INTO THE HIGHEST POWER

July 30, 2021

AUG.
22
NOON



PLEASE
RSVP BY
AUG. 13

A WORD FROM PASTOR ERICH

Probably the most honored, popularized and memorized passage of Scripture is the prayer that Jesus taught to the great crowds during His sermon on the mount (Matthew 6:9-13) and privately to His disciples (Luke 11:2-4). We call this prayer the *Lord's Prayer* even though it was never intended to be His prayer, but a prayer that He gave to His disciples to pray. Perhaps it should have been called the "Disciple's Prayer" or the "Christian's Prayer."

Jesus gave His followers this prayer to teach them how they are to address and speak with His Father. Unfortunately there has been some confusion about the *Lord's Prayer* as to how it is to be used. Some in the church see the *Lord's Prayer* as merely a liturgical part of corporate worship and funeral services, etc. They see it as essential to traditional services but not a necessary part of regular Christian prayer life. Others, who prefer contemporary worship, can be very resistant to saying the Lord's prayer in corporate worship. They fear that saying memorized prayers together run the great risk of becoming insincere, and too often degenerate into merely "religious" expressions.

Why did Jesus give us this prayer? What has caused His followers to so cherish it through the centuries? Jesus introduced it saying: "When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles (people without God) 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" And in Luke He introduces the prayer with these words: "*When you pray, say*: "Father, hallowed be your name" The disciples, in Luke's account, were very concerned about how to pray and urged Jesus to teach them how they should talk to His Father.

It's interesting how the Lord's Prayer has been so overlooked and misunderstood in the Church today. It seems to me, that for the most part, it is either only appreciated as part of church liturgical tradition or it is resisted as an insincere religious vestige of the past. However, I think Scripture is pretty clear on how we should receive this prayer: "When you pray say" According to Jesus it is the way He wants us to talk to His Father, our God and Heavenly Father. And this being the case, we must not only learn it well but understand it and mean it as we pray through it to talk to God. This said, I don't believe that Jesus literally means that we have to say these exact words every time we address God. Certainly, it would be hard to argue this in that the prayer Jesus gives to us in Matthew differs (word for word) from the prayer given to us in Luke. Also, it is clear from Scripture that God wants us to present our specific praises and requests to Him humbly expressed in our own words. However, we must never underestimate the importance and power of the actual words that Jesus has given us to speak to God, the Father. The bottom line is, when we speak to God, we must be *real* before Him. God expects authenticity.

To understand and fully appreciate the Lord's Prayer we must look at its parts. Jesus, in this prayer, offers us a method and basic template for our prayers to the Father. First, there is the address: "Our Father in heaven." This opening address can be misleading. At first glance it seems that we are addressing someone who is distant from us. However, *heaven* is in the plural and means in the air that surrounds us and, more generally, in the space that surrounds all things. St. Paul, when witnessing to the Athenians on Mars Hill used these words to describe God: "In him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28 ESV) David also speaks about the nearness of God: "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!" (Psalm 139:7-8 ESV) Our "Father in heaven" is not far from us; He alone is the one Father that we have who is always near us!

Next Jesus gives us five requests or categories of requests that we are to use when addressing the Father. (These are traditionally broken down into seven separate petitions, as laid out in Luther's Small Chatecism.)

1. That the name of God would be regarded with the utmost possible respect.
2. That his kingdom (His effective reign and will) would fully come into this world.
3. That our needs for today would be met.
4. That our sins be forgiven.
5. That we would be delivered from trials and difficulties.

These five requests are essential to our daily walk and talk with God. There is so much that can be said here. A short article only grazes the surface. But for one thing, I cannot but notice the daily confession built right into the prayer that Jesus gives us. Not to try and single out this particular request as more important than the others but it strikes me how often we don't hesitate to tell God our needs, or even praise His name, all the while forgetting to confess our sins to Him! According to Jesus, confession is to be a regular part of our prayer life. Again, every part of this prayer is equally important and has been given to us to teach us what our heavenly Father expects to hear from us.

Dallas Willard, as so many other Christian giants through the centuries (e.g. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley), found the Lord's prayer to be the cornerstone of all prayer. It was essential to his daily prayer life. But he also shared some of the same concerns mentioned above. To help keep himself from mechanically reciting the Lord's Prayer, he made several versions of it by taking the words of Jesus and carefully putting them into his own words. He would regularly switch them out to keep the Lord's Prayer fresh in his mind. He gives us an example of one of these prayers in his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*.

"Dear Father always near us, may your name be treasured and loved, may your rule be completed in us— may your will be done here on earth in just the way it is done in heaven. Give us today the things we need today, and forgive us our sins and impositions on you as we are forgiving all who in any way offend us. Please don't put us through trials, but deliver us from everything bad. Because you are the one in charge, and you have all the power, and the glory too is all yours— forever— which is just the way we want it!"

I recently spoke to a man who was struggling with how to pray. I asked him to take some time and put the Lord's Prayer into his own words. The next time we met, he was overjoyed to share with me his personal "Lord's Prayer" to God. It was a prayer guided by Jesus but from his own heart expressed in his own language. I could see that the barrier he felt between himself and God had largely been overcome. Again, God desires authenticity and wants us to be *real* before him. Jesus had the harshest words for the Pharisees because they were "play-actors" before God.

Jesus didn't hesitate to answer His disciples after they asked Him how they should pray to God. He simply gave them the words of Lord's Prayer. Whether we say these words, read or memorized from one of our many translations or carefully put them into our own words, we must never overlook the gravity and importance of this daily prayer. What a beautiful way to begin the day!

To live is Christ,

Pastor Erich Sokoliski

BENEVOLENCE

C NORTHERN ARIZONA DREAM CENTER is a ministry the Benevolence Committee has been funding in 2021. John Dunkel brought this ministry to our attention at our March meeting. The Center houses and supports girls as they age out of foster care.

O “The housing really helps prevent the young adults from being exploited, from going into deeper substance abuse, from trafficking,” Cool said. “When they age out of foster care and they’re homeless, the statistics are so stacked against them that they may be trafficked, they may become addicted; they may be incarcerated.” Studies of youth exiting the foster care system at 18 have found 20% instantly become homeless, 50% will become substance-addicted and seven out of 10 young women will become pregnant by age 21, she said.

R “When there’s housing, we’re able to step in and be a part of preventing trafficking, exploitation, substance abuse. Housing is the most critical thing for these young women in order for them to have a different life, and a better life, that isn’t all based on surviving,” Cool said. The Dream Center has leased two residences in the Quad Cities area. Young adult women apply to the program after they’re referred by their caseworker from the Arizona Department of Child Safety.

N Once accepted, residents pay nominal monthly rent for a bed in a home with up to three other former foster kids, supervised by a “house mentor.” They’re required to either work, go to school or take some combination of the two. They must also take care of assigned chores around the house and meet with their own mentor, who provides additional advice and support as they start to pursue their goals. The goal is for residents to move into permanent housing within a year and a half, but it’s expected that some will take longer, while others can do it in less than six months. Cool and Henwood said they hope to expand the program to serve young men leaving foster care, once enough funding can be raised.

E The Northern Arizona Dream Center’s founders Alisa Cool and Amy Henwood were involved in a similar work in the Philippines that houses girls who have been victims of sex trafficking. In 2017 the friends began to talk about how they might support a similar cause in the US. They began research in the Prescott community by talking to juvenile probation, Henwood said, as well as the county attorney and others involved in the foster care arena. All of these folks said housing is the most basic and important element. “So it was from there that we believed, and actually felt God leading us to open a home for at-risk youth in Yavapai County and Northern Arizona.

PRAYER

In James 5:13 -18, Paul writes: Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? ... The prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. There is prayer for anyone who would come up front after each service. Every Sunday there is someone from the prayer team who would be happy to pray with you. You can also fill out a prayer request form located in the lobby of each service. They are prayed for after the last service and throughout the week by the prayer team. If you would like to be part of the prayer team, call Dee Isham at 928-778-6735. We would love to have you join us on the prayer team.



WOW is right around the corner!

Registration tables will be around between and after services on **Aug. 15, Aug. 22 and Sept. 5!**

BOOK LOOK

As promised, I am reviewing some of the latest finds for the library. The library cart is outfitted with the following books plus various genres from our shelves. The cart is in the library during the week, but comes out on alternate Sundays to the narthex and outside the fellowship hall. Please remember

to check your shelves and other places at home for books, DVDs or audio-books you’ve had more than three months.

The God I Love – *A Lifetime of Walking with Jesus* – memoir by Joni Eareckson Tada – In her memoir, Joni paints a beautiful, intimate, and moving portrait of a woman who knows firsthand that no matter what the circumstance, God is always faithful, Always faithful. He is the God worthy of your love. “Joni’s life message of hope allows everyone to see the goodness and mercy of God and is a magnificent tapestry declaring the glory of God,” according to Charles Colson. In addition to this newest book to the library, we also have other books by Joni.

We Will Not Be Silenced - *Responding Courageously to Our Culture’s Assault on Christianity*, by Erwin W. Lutzer – in the foreword, Why You Should Read This Book, Dr. David Jeremiah writes “If I could, I would put this book into the hands of every Christian in America.” He explains that the book examines and explains every cultural issue we are facing. Nothing is left out. Most importantly, it covers issues related to the church and how it is responding to all of this. Lutzer asks, “How do we live courageously in a culture where people who shout the loudest win the argument? How do we live during a time when Christianity is openly being remade to blend more comfortably into a secularized culture?” He goes on to say that he writes not so much to reclaim the culture as to reclaim the church.

One Night Two Souls Went Walking – In this novel by Ellen Cooney, a young interfaith chaplain is joined on her hospital rounds one night by an unusual companion: a rough-and-ready dog who may or may not be a ghost. As she tends to the souls of her patients—young and old, living last moments or navigating fundamentally altered lives----their stories provide unexpected healing for her own heartbreak.

You Belong Here Now by Dianna Rostad - a novel which follows three orphans in 1925 as they take a train ride west from New York City where in the Big Sky Country of Montana they decide to “abandon ship/train”, hoping for a better life where beautiful wild horses roam free. They do indeed find a better life although it’s not perfect. At first the daughter of a successful cattleman wants nothing to do with the three youngsters, so she decides to work them without mercy, hoping they’ll run off. However, the orphans persevere because anything is better than their previous lives.

Reviewed by Vonna Reynolds