

Greetings from God the Father and from our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and from the Holy Spirit. Amen

Praying with Confidence

John 16:23-33

In the gospel today, Jesus is speaking to His disciples the Thursday before that Friday, we call it Good Friday. He told them and us, for it is for us also, ***Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.***

A little girl and her grandmother went to church. Before they got into the car to go, the grandmother gave her granddaughter, Sally, two quarters. During the offering, the grandmother was hoping that the Sally would place one of the quarters into the offering plate. To the surprise of the grandmother, Sally placed both of the quarters into the offering plate. Coming home the grandmother asked Sally why she placed both quarters into the offering plate. Sally replied, if I placed both quarters in the offering plate, God would hear my prayer.

Do you feel that way some days, that God only listen to you because you done something “good for God,” in other words, you earned it. Or, you

think to yourself, if I go to church or have gone to church for 80 years, I have earned the right for God to listen to me. Or maybe your prayer goes like this: Dear God, I would like this, and this, and that, and these other things. There's the things I want, the things I need, the things I don't like that, God, You should really take care of, the things I like but don't have enough of, and there's these other things on my mind, and. well, you get the idea. Yours and my prayers are all about ME or I. They're about what I want because that's what my sinful flesh excels at.

We need to think about prayer in an entirely different way from the way that we usually think about it. When it comes to prayer, originality is not where you want to go. The creative realm is best left to the movies and to books and the arts. With prayer, there's nothing wrong with not knowing what to say. In fact, it's a good thing. After all, what you come up with yourself can only be against God's will since your sinful flesh is always concerned only with itself, not God.

You could read books on prayer. You could seek the wisdom of the many religions of the world. But how you pray by your resources or strength, all boils down to one source: your sinful nature. There is another source. The source is God. More specifically, it's God as revealed in the Bible. We need to be praying what God wants you to pray for. Jesus had

this very thing in mind when He gave His people His Holy Prayer, The Lord's Prayer . Jesus has actually given you the words to pray. He said, "When you pray, say, 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.'" He wants us to repeat His stuff! When the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, He gave them the words to say. He's not impressed with hearing something new. God desires to hear what He's already given us in His Word. In His Son. Books on prayer keep coming out. Shelves at Christian bookstores are lined with "how-to's." But really, how many pages can it take to say one simple thing: if you want to learn how to pray, get into the Word of God. If you want to prepare yourself for sharing the Gospel with others, spend time in God's Word. Read it. Dig into it. Study it. Hear it proclaimed. God will give you the words to say. He already has given you the words, they're in His Holy Word, the Bible. Not that it's not good to read books on prayer or evangelism. But being formed by the Word of God is how you will learn to pray and what to say to others is allowing God Word to mold you. As we turn to the Lord's prayer, we can pray in confidence, for Martin Luther tells you in his Small Catechism the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer "Our Father" expresses "that God loves us and wants us to pray to Him confidently and without fear." Therefore, you are to understand that you are God's true children and He is our true Father so that with all

boldness and confidence you may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father. **That is very comforting and gives you confidence.** Confidence because you are God's child because of Jesus' works and what He has done on the cross for you! That is the only reason you can have confidence in praying. Not because you have perfected the right method for praying but because of Jesus!

It's tough to be a Christian. We're supposed to have all the answers. Because you've been a child of God for a long time You who know that God is in control and is working everything out for good for you and others who believe in Him. Then when others turn to you for a prayer or answers, you are caught like the deer in the headlights.

To help you with the times you are like that deer in headlights standing there afraid, let's look into the Bible and continue looking in the Bible other days than just today. Today, we are talking about prayer. No doubt you've heard that the Psalms are the Prayer Book of the Bible. And that's certainly true. But isn't the entire Bible the prayer book of the Christian? No, it's not comprised of a bunch of prayers. But it's a book which teaches us to pray. It forms our prayers. I'm not saying that the more you're into the Word of God that you'll suddenly be a master pray-er. That you'll be able to fashion beautiful and well-sounding prayers. That people

will marvel at your eloquence in lifting prayers on high. No!, But you will be able to pray in a godly fashion. You will be able to pray according to God's will. You will be praying what God desires to hear from you. Because you will be growing in the Word of God. You will be saying back to Him what He has already said to you. You will be praying God-pleasing prayers, prayers according to His will. Think about it. The Lord's Prayer is the perfect prayer and a good one to fashion yours. Why did Jesus, in the Prayer He gave us to pray, give us the petitions He did? Why did He have us pray, for example, "Hallowed be Thy name"? Don't we already know that His name is holy? And even if we didn't have the Catechism to remind us, wouldn't we already know that we pray this petition that it may be kept holy among us also? Yes, we do, and yes, we would. But Jesus has given us this petition because we need to say it. We need to say it because we need to say to Him what He has said to us. If we didn't, what would we say? God tells you concern yourself with My Words, My will. Say back to Me what I have already said to you.

And you know the great thing about this? It's because He knows what you truly need. He gives you always the best you need! So when He shows you what to pray for, you see that it is actually really about you after all. When you think you're praying for what's best for yourselves, you're really

praying for what's NOT best for yourselves. But when we take God's words and make them your own, you actually ARE praying for what's best for yourselves.

Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to you in your Holy Baptism to help you – and He will help you in what you will say – then you may be confident in knowing that He will guide you in your prayers, and also as you give comfort to those who are hurting, for you to share the Gospel with those who are without a Savior.

And if you are still struggling then you can know that it is not just words that He has given you but the Word made flesh. His very own Son is with you always to end of the age. He is who you have when you feel we are on your own without an idea of what to say to God in your prayers. He is the one who offered up the perfect Word to His Heavenly Father-Himself, the Word in the Flesh. Our Heavenly Father hears you through Him. His prayers on the cross were perfect prayers, offered in your place, offered for you, for all. He Himself was offered for you and there is nothing better that you can hear of or continue to make known. You can pray with confidence in the Lord because of the Lord. For when you pray as the Lord Jesus has taught you, you can be confident that you are praying rightly in His name ... and the Father will always grant it ... for Jesus' sake.

And may the peace of God, which is beyond all human comprehension,
keep your hearts and minds through your faith in Christ Jesus. Amen