

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

Jesus said, “In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

When Jesus teaches you about prayer, he’s teaching you about calling upon God’s name. He’s teaching you what it means to turn in faith toward God and have his ear so as to implore him that he would guard and keep you as his own in this life and unto eternity. It’s nothing other than living out the second commandment of rightly using the name of God which has been revealed to you in the Scriptures and placed upon you in the waters of Holy Baptism.

Prayer, then, is no joke. It’s not some form of amusement that has been formed out of the imagination of men. No, prayer is given by God and commanded by him. In this way too, prayer is not optional. To be a Christian and to pray go together. When God speaks to you about prayer, he doesn’t leave it up to your choice or convenience. God commands you to pray even to the extent that you are exhorted in his word to “pray without ceasing.” The first part of knowing why you pray is because God commands you.

Is it any wonder, then, that Jesus is seen praying all throughout the Gospels and in various situations. When Jesus prays, he does so as an obedient Son fulfilling what his Father commanded him to do and he does so as the Lord who cares for his people. He prays as one who knows who he is, hears what has been spoken, and prays to the Father who sent him and loves him.

Listen to you Lord. [Jesus said:] “In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” So, what does this all mean? How does this teach you about prayer, invite you pray, and give you those promises which you cling to in your God given faith as you pray?

First, examine yourself according to God’s law. Your old Adam doesn’t want to pray, he wants to live a life that doesn’t see a need to depend on someone outside of yourself. This is something in the church too. Even among those who are baptized prayer it is not practiced daily or just simply at meals. God commands you, though, to “pray without ceasing” among other commands to pray and Jesus, in the Gospels, speaks of prayer as “when you pray” to show that this is something his people. Christians pray, you are commanded, not suggested, but commanded to pray.

Lest you also forget, unbelief hates prayer too. You are tempted to think that what you have, what you do, is all because of yourself and what you determine. Your sinful flesh also wants prayer to be the way you think we are righteous before God. This is one of the most common things pastors hear when they confront people in sin. “I pray” is the creed of the old man when he wants to think he doesn’t need to hear the word of God and receive the sacraments. The glorious confession “I pray” gets perverted into the vile confession of “I don’t need Jesus because I am in the driver’s seat in terms of my standing with God. I pray.”

The second part of “why do I pray” is because God has promised to hear you and this really is vivid in the Gospel reading, “In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

God promises you that he hears your prayers and answers them. The world would tempt you into placing your trust in prayer to something other than God. You forget the promises of God when you turn prayer into manipulating the name of God rather than calling upon the name of God. You are tempted to think if enough people pray for you, or you pray hard enough you can really get God to hear and answer you. My personal favorite is the meme of Jesus sitting by the computer waiting for so many likes on Facebook. This is often what prayer gets turned into when you hear phrases like

the “power of prayer.” Prayer, though, is never a power. Prayer is speaking to God as children who are talking to their dear Father.

Another thing happens too when the devil puts into your minds the doubt that God will answer your prayers or that somehow you need to earn what you ask for in praying to God. The devil likes you to think “God will answer my prayer if I do this or don’t do that.” Prayer is taken out of the hands of Christ and placed into your own. Your sin gets rubbed in your face or you question God’s promises rather than believing as we rightly confess in the Small Catechism about the Fifth Petition “And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” What does this mean? “We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.” On the flip side you caveat them to make your will be the determining factor for the answer to prayer rather than the instruction of Jesus to pray, “thy will be done.”

Dear people of God. Don’t fall into these errors. Listen instead to Jesus. Prayer is something that rests solely and completely upon Christ and his work for you. Prayer is so much more comforting than what the devil, the fallen world, and your sinful flesh want to pervert it into. Jesus is teaching you that today and it can’t be stressed enough. He is teaching you what it means to pray to God and invites you to do so. This is a gracious invitation to hear and answers your prayers out of his mercy toward you in what he has accomplished by his obedient life, his atoning death, and his resurrection for your justification.

In this way, then, you see prayer rightly only through the lens of Jesus. To pray in Jesus’s name is to pray in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The mediation of Christ forms your prayer and carries your prayer before the throne of God because he is the one who has made peace between you and the Father. Prayer is all about Jesus and his sacrifice for you which gives you access to the Father. It’s to pray through the blood of the atonement which has satisfied God’s wrath against you and reconciled you to the Father. It’s no wonder that this Gospel reading ends today with Jesus saying what he does about peace because peace is a word of forgiveness and a word connected with this death of Christ for you on the cross. Jesus said, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Now, there will be those times when you see what the answer to your prayer is in this life. Sometimes it might not be right away. In the Bible the example is given of the persistent widow. Think also of the Canaanite woman who was, seemingly ignored, then rebuked and called a dog by Jesus. In humility her prayers looked to the promises of God who alone shows mercy in Christ.

In your life there may be prayers you are still praying that don’t seem to be answered yet or the devil is trying to get you to doubt God and think they are falling on deaf ears. That doesn’t mean for one instant that God has stopped hearing and answering your prayers. But you see it’s precisely in these times like this that the Lord places before you these promises like he does in the reading today, “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” So, as you pray, you cling to words and in doing this you fix your eyes on Jesus and see that joy that only he can give for he is crucified for you and is risen from the dead. He is the God who hears and promises to answer your prayers and he is the God who is risen from the dead and will raise you from your graves too.

The boldness of prayer is the boldness of trusting the promises of God even when the answer to your prayer might be “no.” You look to God who alone is good, righteousness, and knows what you need even before you ask him. Everything rests in him who has created, redeemed, and sanctified you to be his own dear children. As you pray in this way and in this faith the Lord sustains you and strengthens you through his word and sacraments fixing your eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of your faith and the one who gives you peace and has overcome the world.

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter—Rogate—May 5, 2024

Jesus goes on in the Gospel reading to teach you the ramifications. “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

This echoes the last two weeks where Jesus talks about his work going to the Father, offering up himself, dying to satisfy the wrath of God, rising from the dead, and ascending to the right hand of the Father. Through faith in Christ, you have salvation, and you have access to God as you pray in this life. Jesus goes on further, “His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

What wonderful words of Jesus to hear this morning as you see who you are in Christ. Even though he tells the disciples they will be scattered and leave him alone, Jesus will not be alone for he is with the Father. And for you this means that you stand before the throne of God as one who is in Christ, hidden in him, and clothed with him. In this world, then you have peace because Jesus is the one who overcame the world. Prayer realizes this and lives in it because you know you have deliverance from the tribulations of world and look forward to the life to come. When you pray to God you are praying as his children. You are praying as those who bear the name of the Holy Trinity and made clean by the blood of Christ.

When you pray there is great confidence and boldness in your prayer. To pray the Lord’s Prayer and call God, “Our Father” to call him, your Father is nothing insignificant. And not everyone can call God their Father. Only those who are in Christ can pray the Lord’s Prayer rightly and with confidence. That’s you. You are in Christ, and you have the boldness to pray “Our Father” and it’s a wonderful thing before God. It’s sweet incense before his throne because your prayers are carried through Christ crucified, the one in whom the Father is well pleased. When you pray, you are heard as children, dear beloved children of God. And God cares for you. Whatever is going on in your life being times of trial, trouble, suffering, thanksgiving, and/or great joy the Lord hears you. There’s nothing insignificant in your life that God doesn’t care for you or not listen to your prayer. A little kid thanking God for his dog and for the Lord to keep it safe is just as heard as the congregation who prays together for the country. All these things are heard because all are prayed in Christ who is the mediator between God and man, the one who is your Redeemer.

Thanks be to God today, then, for the gift of prayer. Christians pray. Dear Christians on this Rogate Sunday pray to your Lord. Pray this day and every day. Teach your children, grandchildren, friends, and all who call upon him to pray to Jesus as beggars who look to the Lord in his mercy. Pray boldly and confidently knowing that God commands you to pray, and he promises to hear you. Behold Jesus crucified and risen and know this all most certainly true.

The Son of God, true God, and true man is yours and that means everything. In Christ you have it all as God commands you to pray and promises to hear you. And hear you he does now as you pray and on that final day into eternity where your faith ends, and you see him face to face just as Jesus is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.