

Rogate

St. John 16:23-33

10 May, Anno Domini 2026

Beloved children of the Heavenly Father,

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

You simply cannot be a Christian and not pray - daily, hourly, even constantly. Prayer is the confession that God alone is God and that all good, everything we need for this life and for eternal life come only from Him. When we don't give thanks to God or cry out to Him in every need, we are denying Him because we are confessing that success or help come from someone or something else - the government, our own efforts, doctors. Truly our very lives are an act of prayer, a communication of all that God has said and done. How we speak and conduct ourselves, the way in which we spend the time God has given us, the entertainment we choose - these all say something to God and something to the world about God. They either confess faith in His Holy Word and a desire to walk according to His will, or they confess that we neither believe nor trust in God. This is why the apostle James writes "Be hearers of the Word and not doers only."

When we speak cruel or vulgar or untrue words, rather than words of truth and compassion and building up, we confess that the words which God speaks are worthless and insufficient. When we give our bodies to drunkenness or adultery or immodesty or disrespect, rather than to sober-mindedness, works of mercy, and prayer, then we confess that we believe that we are not God's creatures and that our bodies have not been sanctified to be temples of the Holy Spirit. We confess that the Law of God is not good and true and binding. When we fill our eyes and ears with sexually impure images and songs that teach false doctrine or mock the Christian faith or when we substitute play for worship we confess to God and the

world that we love the world more and that the Divine gifts are unimportant and unnecessary for both them and us. We are always praying, whether or not we have folded our hands, bowed our heads, and closed our eyes.

Prayer is commanded by God in the Second Commandment as the right way to use His Name which He has revealed to you, and anyone who confesses the Christian faith confesses that they live alone by the merciful provision and forgiveness of God. We have neither life nor daily bread nor salvation unless God graciously gives it as a gift. We are creatures who are sustained by our Creator. As Dr. Luther writes in his explanations to the First and Second Articles of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures...He daily and richly provides me with all that I need to support this body and life...He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil...He has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil."

It is precisely the recognition that we have nothing good nor can we do anything good without God's help that drives us to cry out to Him - to pray, to ask Him to help us, to save us, to provide for us. And even more than that, we know that we are not simply praying to an unknowable power out in the universe like karma or luck. Christians give no credence to such pagan nonsense. We know God! He has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture as our merciful Creator and Redeemer. In Holy Baptism He has adopted us as His beloved children that He would be our heavenly Father. As His children, as those who depend upon Him for every good, we ask. We ask for help. We ask for deliverance. We ask for mercy. We ask because we know He gives. We don't ask because we think we are worthy. We ask because we know He is good.

We know our heavenly Father's great mercy and love which He revealed in Christ Jesus who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. When a Christian prays, he is praying to his heavenly Father who has offered His only-begotten Son to redeem poor, miserable sinners like us from eternal judgment. Such a prayer is

not driven by fear of God but love of God. That is the prayer that pours forth from faith.

Refusing to pray, forgetting to pray, doubting in prayer, or living contrary to the Word of God - these all flow from the terrible unbelief that still lurks in our hearts that perhaps Christ wasn't enough or that God doesn't care as much as He said He does or that God doesn't actually listen or that His Word doesn't really matter.

Repent. God, in deed and truth, does hear your prayers. He hears them because He loves you and has promised to hear and answer you. He has poured out the Blood of His beloved Son on the cross to purify you as He Himself is pure so that with all boldness and confidence we would march up to our Heavenly Father and ask.

And that is exactly why we should pray. We know we have needs and God has promised to hear His beloved children and to answer them.

We certainly can't pray for evil. That is to not pray in Jesus' Name, according to what He has said and done. But if we are not praying for evil, then we ought to know that God the Father loves for His children to tug on Him to get His attention and lay their joys and heartaches, their successes and failures, their needs and their thanksgivings before Him. The prayer of God's children, even if it isn't asking for the very best thing, is pleasing to God because it is a confession that He is God and that we are waiting and expecting everything good from His hand according to His own promise.

And what joy that prayer isn't a one-way conversation. God your Father speaks. But are we listening? Do we even know how to listen? The truth of the matter is that too often we are looking for God to speak in ways other than He has promised. Crying out to God should be followed with reading the Scriptures which should then be followed by more prayer. God speaks in Holy Scripture. That is where you are to hear Him. Don't wait for a still small voice in your head or a thunderous booming from heaven. Go to the Scriptures. Read and meditate on what God has said. Ask that God would teach you and guide you by His Holy Word. Learn and

meditate on the Ten Commandments. Learn with joy and eagerness the duties of your stations in life. In His Word you will learn that God promises you your daily bread even when the means of that daily bread isn't the one you were expecting. Or your Father has appointed a time of fasting for you. In the Scriptures you will learn that suffering is not sent by your heavenly Father to do you harm but to train you and strengthen you, to discipline you away from all that is evil and draw you back to Himself. In His Word you will see how God moved all the nations of the world, even those that hated and denied Him, to carry out His good and gracious will for His Church. In the Bible you will read of the saints who have gone before you - their successes and their failures, their endurance and their stumbling - and how God kept them in even the darkest of hours when martyrdom was upon them.

You will see throughout the Bible how God's saints cried out to Him and He did exactly as He promised to you - He heard them and answered them. Never once has God refused the prayers of His children. That would be a denial of Himself and would make Him a liar. That doesn't mean He gave His children exactly what they asked. And thanks be to God that He didn't! Imagine if Jesus granted the prayer of Peter who told Jesus that He would never go the cross and die! Recall St. Paul's prayer that God would remove the thorn He had placed in Paul's flesh and God's answer was simply "My grace is sufficient for you." Why? To keep Paul from become prideful about the salvation He had been granted and the heavenly wisdom He had received from Christ. God forbid that we always get exactly what we ask for. Our thoughts and desires are clogged up with sin. Our hearts are often bowed down to the earth and we often give little or no thought to our life in Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, pray. You have need. Your heavenly Father loves you and will provide for you all things pertaining to life and godliness. He will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Let your thoughts, your words, and the works of your hands be a constant confession that your every hope and trust for this world and the next are in God your heavenly Father and in His beloved Son who has sealed the promise of God and opened the way to the Father through His precious Blood.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keeps your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.