

Rogate
St. John 16:23b-30
May 9th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Shall Pray the Father for You

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Holy, Righteous, and Gracious God, Who hast sounded in our ears Thy divine and saving oracles, enlighten the souls of us sinners, that we may be not only hearers, but also doers of Thy Word, growing in faith unfeigned and blameless conduct unto life everlasting; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

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

Our Lord + Jesus when He ascended to sit on the right hand of the Lord God heavenly Father began to intercede for us poor sinners. He prays to the heavenly Father that He would not look at our sins, but that He would rather look at the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and look at the mark of the spear in His side that atoned for our sins and the sins of the whole world. Our Lord intercedes for us in Heaven, but He also has given us a wonderful gift. We too can pray and ask the heavenly Father. We may be unworthy of the things for which we pray, but our Lord + Jesus pleads to the heavenly Father on our behalf so that He would not deny our prayers on account of our manifold transgressions. He may pray for us in Heaven, but we have the wonderful gift of being able to pray for ourselves here on Earth.

This is one of the reasons why we gather here in this place often. The Divine Service—the Liturgy which we observe—is a form of corporate prayer. When we gather together, and wherever two or three gathers together in the Lord's Name, our Lord + Jesus is here with us. We gather together to place our requests before the throne of our heavenly Father. Our praying of the Liturgy puts the focus on one thing: our sins have been atoned for by the sacrifice of our Lord + Jesus Christ. This is our entire focus whenever we gather together as the Church. We gather together as the Body of Christ to reflect upon the great gift that our sins have been paid for by the Lord + Jesus. Every time we pray, "Lord, have mercy" we are remembering that our Lord + Jesus paid the penalty of our sins. Every time we pray the Name of the Triune Lord God—the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost—we are remembering that we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but we have been called by the Lord God to be His chosen people, that He has placed His Name upon us, and has washed us clean of all of our sins and iniquities.

These prayers are prayed throughout the Liturgy. We get to have a whole hour, or so, of hearing of what our Lord + Jesus has done for us poor, miserable sinners by His death on the tree of the holy cross. This is why it is so important for us to gather with other Christians in the place as often as we can. We get to gather together as the Body of Christ, and share in the glorious news that all of us sinners have had their sins paid for; that we are all members of the Church, and that our home is in Heaven, where we will be reunited in Heaven for all eternity as we sing and pray the eternal Liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom. What we do here in this place whenever we gather is just a foretaste of the

glorious Liturgy that we will rejoice in hearing and singing for all eternity.

This gift of prayer has been left for us by our Lord + Jesus. We do it corporately as the Body of Christ in the Church, but we also have been given the promise that whatever we ask the heavenly Father in our Lord's Name, He will give us. There are those, however, who doubt this great truth. They doubt because the things for which they prayed are not given to them immediately. Sadly, too many people do not pray for the things that they truly need. We waste too much time praying for earthly things. We treat our heavenly Father like the child treats his parent in the checkout lane when he is surrounded by all the candy and goodies. We beg our heavenly Father for the junk food of this life. The child asks for candy and goodies, but we are no different; it is just that our "candy and goodies" are much larger and more expensive—cars and boats, and fine clothes, a nice house, and the like.

It is okay to pray for such things, but if our prayers are only for these things, we have missed a great opportunity to prayer for the things which we truly need. This life will pass away, and the things of this life will pass away. None of the earthly things we possess in this life will be taken with us into the next life. All of the earthly things for which we pray will be eaten by moths, will rust, and thieves will break in and steal from us. If they are not taken from us in this life, they will not be in our possession in the next life. This is why it is better to pray for the things that will never be taken away from us.

Our individual prayers should mimic our corporate prayer. Our daily prayers that we pray throughout each day should reflect the Liturgy which we pray when we gather together in this place. What do we pray for in the Liturgy? In the Liturgy our prayers always focus on our greatest need: the forgiveness of our sins. Our whole life of prayer should revolve around this fact. We are poor, miserable sinners. We daily sin much. We are indolent in our prayers. We neglect our Lord's holy Word. We bring shame to ourselves by what we think, say and do. We do not live our lives as "good Christians." (Which is really a misnomer, because a truly "good Christian" recognizes that he is a miserable sinner and is on his knees often confessing his sins, and looking for absolution from the heavenly Father.) We are driven daily into either despair over our sins—our daily breaking of the Ten Commandments—or we are driven into pride, thinking that our keeping of the Law is to be praised by other people. If your focus is on how well you are behaving—on how good of a Christian you are—then your focus is on the wrong thing.

The same is true if we are wallowing in despair over our sins. Our focus should always be on the Christ. It is He Who has paid the penalty of our sins. It is He Who has fulfilled the Law perfectly. It is only Him Who has done these things. It is only Him Who could have done these things. Our focus in our daily lives, like it is in the Liturgy when we gather, is to be completely upon the Christ. This is the wonderful thing about the Gospel, for it puts our whole focus and attention upon the works and merits of the Christ alone. Anyone who wants to put the focus on our works or our keeping of the Law, is not preaching the Gospel. This is why our Lutheran Confessions talk about works of supererogation. A work of supererogation is a work that one does above and beyond the Ten Commandments. In other words, they are the works which we make up in order that we may praise ourselves for being such "good Christians." Examples would include, rosaries, the keeping of certain fasts and holy days, all so that we can say to ourselves, "Look how well I am doing."

Such things take our focus off of the Christ. They are a worthless salve which does not truly heal. These things put our focus on ourselves and the works of man—on our works. I will keep saying it, because we need to keep hearing it, that our salvation is not found in our works and keeping of the Law. Our salvation is found only in the works and the merits of the Christ. This is why our prayers, too, should be focused upon the Christ. Our prayers should especially be focused on the Christ when our sins have been placed before us; when the accusations of our sin fill us with such guilt that we do not think that we can bear it. The comfort for our sins and transgressions is found in the works and merits of the Christ. We pray to the heavenly Father to hear our prayer and forgive us of all our sins and

iniquities. The heavenly Father hears our prayers, because the Lord + Jesus, the Christ, has paid the penalty of our sins by His perfect and innocent suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross.

He pleads on our behalf from the right hand of the Father by showing Him His hands, feet and side. He made atonement for our sins. He paid for the sins of the whole world. This is why we can cling to Him in faith. We can cling to His works and merits as means of our salvation. We can cling to the cross of our Lord + Jesus, for by it our sins have been atoned. We can therefore, by the power of the Holy Ghost, make our requests known to the heavenly Father, for His Only-Begotten Son has promised us that whatever we ask in His Name the heavenly Father will give to us. Let us not doubt that our Lord God will grant us the comfort of the holy Gospel, in which we hear of what our Lord + Jesus has done for us; that He has paid for all of our sins; claimed us as His own dear brothers and sisters through faith; and placed us into the holy Mother Church, where we have been begotten with the gift of life and salvation. Let us daily give thanks to our heavenly Father in prayer for this wonderful gift. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, our heavenly Father, Who by Thy Son hast promised to give us whatsoever we shall ask in His Name, we beseech Thee, grant us the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may make known our requests unto Thee in faithful prayer, and desire of Thee that which is well-pleasing to Thee and profitable for us, lifting up holy hands without wrath or doubting, and being firmly assured that Thou wilt hear our prayer; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!