**Sermon for Proper 12-C**

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Aiken, South Carolina**

07-27-25

Luke 11:1–13

Whatever one’s beliefs, whatever one’s concept of the spiritual realm, everyone seeks to interact with that realm through prayer.

 It’s an instinct unique to the human race, because people are body and soul beings, who have been created by God to be in fellowship with him.

While the fallen human nature has created for itself all sorts of gods, and superstitions, and rituals, as it seeks to interact with and manipulate the spiritual, Christian prayer is unique.

Christian prayer stands alone, apart from all other prayers and prayer habits, for when the Christian prays, he is actually speaking to the one, true and living God. Prayers to anyone or anything else fall upon the deaf ears of false gods.

Such prayers are actually an invitation to the deceitful spirits; demons, to lead one ever farther away from the one true God, the Trinity; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the one and only true God.

During his earthly life, Jesus prayed to God the Father. Ascended to heaven and seated at the Father’s right hand, Jesus still intercedes for us to the Father.

 Jesus Christ is the one and only mediator between God and man, and he pleads his own life, suffering and death to the Father on your behalf.

God has declared you righteous because he looks at you through Jesus his Son, who has, fully and completely, atoned for all of your sins, and clothed you in his own righteousness. In this way, he has made you a beloved child of the Father.

Seeing how Jesus conversed so easily and frequently with his Father, his disciples asked him to teach them to pray; to help them enjoy this same kind of closeness with God.

 Jesus gave them the perfect prayer, the model for all Christian prayer. It is complete in itself; there is nothing that is not covered in its petitions.

How does this Lord’s Prayer begin? Jesus says that we can address the eternal, Almighty creator of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible, as our Father.

God invites us to approach him, not as some dark, foreboding presence, surrounded by fire and lightning, but as our Father, and we, his child. How comforting is that?

This is the relationship that God desires with all mankind, and this is the relationship that he has established with all mankind through his eternal, only begotten Son.

So, God the Father invites us to approach him, and ask him for those things that we need, beginning with his kingdom. *Your kingdom come.*

 In this petition, we simply ask that God would reign supreme; that all in heaven and earth would be ordered according to his divine will.

Along with this, we ask that he would provide for our daily needs. Nothing extravagant; only what is needful from day-to-day, and moment to moment.

 We acknowledge that our Father in heaven is the supreme judge, to whom we must all give an account of ourselves, and so we plea *4and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.*

As God’s children, whose faith is in the redemption that Christ has accomplished for us, we repent of our sins, and ask our Father’s forgiveness.

As God’s forgiven children, we also acknowledge that we have been called to forgive those who have wronged us. It is God who judges; and it is God who executes justice; not us.

*And lead us not into temptation.*  God does not tempt anyone. Why, then, would Jesus include this petition in the prayer that he taught his disciples?

Because the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature all work together to draw us into things that are not pleasing to God.

 Our self-centered nature can rationalize anything into being not so bad, and really, not even wrong at all.

But those things that are not pleasing to God he calls sin. Sin separates us from God, from our salvation, and from a right relationship with each other.

 The petition *lead us not into temptation,* is a plea to God our Father that he would not leave us to our own devices, but instead keep us close to him, and keep us from straying.

This he does, through his word and sacraments, which bear with them the Holy Spirit, who creates, regenerates, and sustains faith within us, and a new will, that guides us in the ways that we should go.

But even before we come to God with our prayers, he already knows our needs, and he is already taking care of them. What, then, is the purpose of prayer, when God is all-knowing, and already knows what we’re going to say?

Prayer is a product of our faith; faith in God who is our Father, who loves us, who has saved us from hell, and continues to provide for all of our needs.

Prayer is the acknowledgement of these things. Prayer is our confession that God is in control, and the expression of confidence that he will see us through all things.

To pray to God is to commend everything to him, and to thank him for loving us, even in the midst of our sufferings and uncertainties, knowing that his will is always best, and that he works all things for our good.

The world is filled with people praying to false gods, and giving themselves over to the deceptions of evil spirits, as they seek to manipulate the spiritual forces to their own sinful will.

The one whose faith is in Jesus Christ prays to the one true God, our Father in heaven; not to move his hands to do our bidding, but rather, in the confession that he holds us in his loving hands, and he moves all things for our good, even unto eternal life in heaven with him. Amen.