

### **Luke 11:1-13**

Pentecost 10 + Proper 12C + July 28, 2019  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church + Boise, Idaho  
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When You Pray

The Word of the Lord from Luke 11:2: Jesus said, “When you pray, say: ‘Father.’” This is the Word of the Lord.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

When you pray, say “Father.” If you want, you can use all sorts of names and titles that He has given you to use. You could call Him “Almighty God” or “Holy God” or “King of kings” or “Ruler of all,” just for starters; and you could pray to the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit – or all three. But when Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, He starts with this: “When you pray, say: ‘Father.’”

Why? Because you can. God wants to be known as your Father. He says this because He wants to assure you that you’re His child – you! That’s a big deal from both sides of the relationship.

On the one hand, God makes Himself known as your Father. Not a bigger version of your biological father: no matter how hard we dads try, we’re still far from perfect caregivers and role models. At best, we’re short-tempered and stinky at times; and frankly, sometimes fathers are just plain horrible and abusive. I run across people who say, “I shudder to hear that God is my Father, because my dad was a terrible man.” So it’s worth our time to say that God is better than earthly fathers – He is the One who sets the standard for fatherhood that dads are to exemplify. Fathers are supposed to get an idea of the love required of them by studying the love of God for His people.

And God loves His people! That’s the point of the title, “Father.” Just as amazing is that He calls you His children. You hardly deserve to be called children of God, right? You say yourself in the confession of sin at the start of the service, with words like “poor,” “miserable,” “sinful and unclean.” If that’s how things stand, then you’re not His children: you’re His enemies to be defeated, and He’s going to win. But things don’t stand that way for a reason, and the reason is Jesus. The Father’s only-begotten Son took your place as the poor, miserable, unclean sinner – took your place as the enemy of God. He bore all your sins to the cross and suffered God’s wrath. Because He has taken your sins away, you’re forgiven. And instead of calling you His enemies, God calls you His children.

Because God’s only Son died in your place, you are now a child of God.

So when you pray, say, “Father,” And when you say, “Father,” always remember that He is only your Father for the sake of Jesus. You cannot separate prayer from the Gospel and expect to be heard. God doesn’t hear your prayers because you’re cute or funny or eloquent or because your behavior is getting better. He hears your prayers because you’re His kid, and you’re His kid solely for the sake of Jesus.

So when you pray, say, “Father;” and, says Jesus, pray, “hallowed be Your name.” You know how this is explained in the Small Catechism: “God’s name is kept holy when the

Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it.”

In other words, as you rejoice that God is your Father, you pray that He would keep speaking to you. You pray that He would faithfully send His Word so that you might read it, hear it and meditate upon it. This petition is shooting fish in a barrel, because God has already promised to keep sending His Word. The weak link isn't Him. It's you! You're the child who's prone to stop listening. You're the one who's constantly tempted to go your own way, act defiantly, play with matches in the middle of the street and get into stuff that you shouldn't. Put simply, you're a problem child; but God still faithfully calls Himself your Father, and He still sends forth His Word to move you to repentance and to give you forgiveness.

And why does the Lord forgive you by His Word? Because His Son has died so that you might be forgiven. You cannot pray “hallowed be Your name” apart from Jesus. But because of Jesus, God still sends His Word and keeps His name holy among you. And by His Word and by His name, He makes you holy too.

When you pray, say, “Father... Your kingdom come.”

God's kingdom is coming. There's nothing you can do about that, and it's not necessarily good news because kingdoms expand by invading nations and crushing enemies. When a new kingdom arrives, it's only a good thing if the new king likes you. For you, as a sinner, to pray that God's kingdom come would be foolhardy, because there is no room in God's kingdom for sinners: their place is outer darkness with the devil and all his angels. Yet you pray to God, “Your kingdom come,” as if you're certain that the conquering king knows you and likes you. The wonder is that He does, and you know it! As Jesus will say in the next chapter, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk. 12:32). You know that when the kingdom of God is revealed in glory, you have a place in it – a favored place. You know that, even now, you're part of the kingdom of God because you're already His child.

And why are you the King's child? Because His Son has died to make it so. Were it not for Jesus, you'd be mad to pray for God's kingdom to come. But because of Jesus, there is no better prayer to pray.

When you pray, say, “Father... Give us each day our daily bread.”

It's remarkable: God gives daily bread to everyone, and He gives daily bread to you. He doesn't make you earn it or grovel for it first. He doesn't even wait for you to ask – and you have to admit that He'd hear a lot more meal prayers if the food didn't appear on the plates until we prayed. But even if people never thank Him – *even if they thank other gods instead of Him*, He still provides daily bread. As I said, it's remarkable: even as He is occupied with preserving all of creation (including the light of the farthest star and the health of the smallest sparrow), He still makes sure that you have adequate food and clothing.

And why does the Lord continue to give daily bread and preserve creation? It's not because of your gratitude or because you're good at not taking it for granted. It is for the sake of Jesus, that you might be sustained and that more might hear and repent and be saved. God the Father provides daily bread for the sake of Jesus, the bread of life. So when you

pray for daily bread with thanksgiving, know that God promises to provide it; and know that He promises to provide it to all because Jesus has died for all.

When you pray, say, “Father... forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.”

The great thing about this petition is that, like all the others, you pray what God has already promised to do. You’re not hoping to catch the Lord in a good mood in which He feels like forgiving. He promises to forgive your sins – unless, of course, you’d rather run off to your room and hold onto them while they kill you.

He promises to forgive you, and why? Because Jesus has already paid the debt with His own blood: you can pray this one because of Jesus too. By the way, note how great is God’s forgiveness: as He sets you free from sin, He sets you free to forgive others – to bear a grudge is not what His children do. But what if you have trouble forgiving someone because they’ve caused that deep a hurt? Do you have to earn God’s forgiveness by forgiving others? No. You confess your inability to forgive for the sin that it is, and you rejoice that God has forgiven you for that one too. As the Father continues to nurture you with His Word, He heals wounds; and it’s by His grace that you can then forgive others.

When you pray, say, “Father...lead us not into temptation.”

You are attacked by temptation all the time, and too often you’re deceived or seduced into sin even before you realize. If you take sin and its consequences seriously, it’s the most frustrating thing. If you don’t take it seriously, your heart is hardening and your faith is dying without you even knowing it. But as you battle temptation, you do so with the knowledge that God is your Father: He’s not a king conducting some loyalty test to see if you’re really quality material, nor is He quick to dump you if you fall to temptation. He’s your Father who picks you up and dusts you off with grace, who restores and keeps you as His child despite your sins.

And why? Because His Son died for all of your sins, even the ones you haven’t done yet. Parents don’t get rid of toddlers because they figure the kids are going to misbehave again. Your Father does not get rid of you either, because you’re His child at the price of His own Son’s death. So you know that God strengthens you against temptation by His Word to the point where you have no excuse; and yet when you do sin, He still forgives and keeps you. And once again, He forgives and keeps you for the sake of Jesus.

So goes the Lord’s Prayer. Every petition is built on God’s promises, and every petition declares God’s undeserved love. His promises and His love for you are sure, because they are built upon Christ. Apart from Jesus, there are no guarantees; but redeemed by Him, you can expect God to hear and answer your prayers in the way that is best for you. He will not answer His children with a snake or a scorpion. Instead, He gives you His Holy Spirit to keep you as His child – just as He gives His Word and kingdom and daily bread and forgiveness and strength against temptation.

So when you pray, pray to your Father in heaven. And pray with confidence, because for the sake of Jesus, you are His holy child.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen