

Rogate

John 16:23-33

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

There are two men I consider my fathers in the faith. You heard one of them preach at my ordination. Pastor Crown was my vicarage supervisor and someone I learned so much from. If you watched my call service, you heard the other one preach. Pastor Hill was my first Lutheran pastor and has had more influence on me than any other man in my life. I was privileged to be able to stay with him several times. I was able to participate in their family's daily devotions. They read a chapter in the Bible and then prayer requests are announced around the table and then the Lord's Prayer is said without any mention of the prayer requests that were just requested.

I must admit, this felt really weird to me at first. Upon much reflection, I understood how perfect this practice was. St. Augustine expresses it this way: "If you shall peruse the words of the prayers of all the saints of God which are extant in the whole Scripture and chiefly in the Psalms, you will find nothing which is not briefly contained and concluded in this Lord's Prayer."¹ I would also include the prayers of all the saints who have lived since the time of Scripture.

Today is *Rogate* Sunday. *Rogate* means "to ask." Jesus commands you to ask your Father in heaven for what you want in Jesus name and He will give it to you. (Jn 16:23-24) Jesus is talking about prayer. Prayer is part of the 2nd commandment, but Jesus is explicit here. Pray to your Father in heaven. Jesus gives us the Lord's Prayer in two places, Matthew 6 and Luke 11. In Luke, when Jesus is asked how to pray, He says, "When you pray, say..." (Lk 11:2) He's not giving you a pattern in Luke, but He's giving you the very words to say to your Father in heaven. We are to pray the Lord's Prayer daily. In fact, if you pray it every time the Small Catechism suggests you should, you would pray it a minimum of 4 to 8 times depending on how many times you eat during the day. You could only say the Lord's Prayer the rest of your life and have all your requests covered.

¹ Martin Chemnitz, "The Lord's Prayer," Chemnitz's Works, Vol. 5, pp. 19-20

The Lord's Prayer is really the perfect prayer:

Our Father who art in heaven - God gives you His name in your baptism so that you have the right to call Him Father!

Hallowed be Thy name - God reveals His character through His Word so you care about that Word being taught properly and about living holy lives according to that Word.

Thy kingdom come - God brings His kingdom through His Holy Spirit whom He gives to you as a gift so that you might repent, believe, and have eternal life in Him.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven - God gives you an eternal perspective so you know what is good, right, and salutary for your life here in time and there in eternity.

Give us this day our daily bread - God knows that you have needs for your body in this life and gladly provides them for you daily just as He provided for the children of Israel in the wilderness! (Mt 6:25-34)

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us - daily, you are richly blessed with the abundance of God's grace, so you likewise shower that grace upon others.

And lead us not into temptation - daily, God protects you from your evil sinful nature by giving you a new nature that loves God and spurns evil.

But deliver us from evil - daily, God richly protects you against your mortal enemies of sin, death, and the devil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. - God gives you assurance of your salvation in the Word and Sacraments so that you fear nothing in this life.

Now, you might have objections to reciting the Lord's Prayer frequently:

"Pastor, that's too Roman Catholic!" - Too bad! Our synod has a history of rejecting things that are good for us because they are "too Roman Catholic!" Lutherans are *Evangelical **and** Catholic!* We have the best of both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions. The goal of the Augsburg Confession was that "we embrace and maintain the future of one pure and true religion under one Christ, doing battle under Him, living in unity and concord in the one Christian Church." (AC Preface.4) Sadly, this never occurred. The Roman church rejected pure doctrine from the Scriptures, but that doesn't mean everything they did or believed was wrong. We keep the practice and doctrine based on Scripture and reject the rest. Praying the Lord's Prayer frequently is recommended by our Lord Himself, so we keep this wonderful practice!

"Pastor, aren't we supposed to be genuine in our prayers?" - Amen! Indeed we are! We agree with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my portion; I promise to keep Your words. I entreat Your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to Your promise!" (Ps 119:57-58) The Lord's Prayer gives you the words to entreat God's favor with all your heart **and** it teaches you how to entreat God's favor at the same time! Do not neglect this precious gift!

"Pastor, doesn't Jesus condemn vain repetition!" - Again, amen! Indeed He does. The word Jesus uses for His condemnation is the word we get babbling from! The heathens turn prayer into a work and suppose that if they say it rightly, repeatedly, and with great fervor, they will be heard! It's possible for the Christian to turn the Lord's Prayer into that kind of babbling, but don't blame the Lord's Prayer for your own sinful use of it. Repent and use the words Jesus gave you rightly. I recommend slowing down the pace you say the Lord's prayer so you have time to meditate on the words you are saying. Since Jesus gave these words for you to use, you know

that they are perfect! You could spend a lifetime meditating on these seven petitions!

So are you bound to only the words of the Lord's Prayer?

In the Matthew account of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus says, "pray then like this." (Mt 6:9) Jesus gives you the freedom to speak other words than the ones He models for you. The Psalms are awesome prayers in and of themselves. There's not an emotion you'll feel in your life that's not contained in the Psalms. The Old Testament is full of other prayers like the song of Moses (Ex 15:1-18) and the song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10). When you use these prayers not only do you know that they are God pleasing, but you are being taught a Christian vocabulary.

Christians speak, pray, and sing differently than non-Christians. God reveals Himself through the Word. The Word speaks differently than the world speaks. You develop a different kind of vocabulary than the world. Doesn't Paul say the word of the cross is folly to the world? (1 Cor 1:18) The Christian uses the Words of God when he prays to Him, praises Him, and proclaims the wonders that He has done!

So are you bound only to the words of Scripture?

Certainly not. Jesus tells us to ask God for whatever we want! (Jn 16:23) Are you going to mess this up from time to time with your old sinful man? Indeed, but ask anyway! Your Father in heaven loves you! (Jn 16:27) Each and every one of you individually. He cares about you more than anything else in all of creation! (Mt 6:26, 30) Each and every one of you individually. He wants to hear from you! Each and every one of you individually! If you ask for something sinful in ignorance because of your weak flesh, don't worry. God will not give you anything harmful! (Lk 11:11-13, Mt 7:7-11) So pray. And pray often!

Paul instructs us to: "rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thes 5:16-18)

We are all guilty of not rejoicing enough, not praying enough, and not giving thanks enough! Oh that our Lord would renew in us a dedication to His Word:

⁹⁷ Oh how I love your law! (תֹרַתְךָ)

It is my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸ Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, (מִצְוֹתֶיךָ)

for it is ever with me.

¹⁰¹ I hold back my feet from every evil way,

in order to keep your word. (דְּבַרְךָ)

¹⁰² I do not turn aside from your rules, (מִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ)

for you have taught me.

¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste, (אִמְרֹתֶיךָ)

sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Ps 119)

So pray! Pray the Lord's Prayer. Pray the Psalms. Pray the Hymns. Pray in your own words. God who has made you a child in baptism promises to hear you. He promises to answer you. You may not get the answer you want, but you will always get the answer you need.

In Jesus' name. Amen.