

Sermon Text – Sunday, July 27, 2025 – Pastor Paula Kraus

1st Reading: Hosea 1:2-10; 2nd Reading: Colossians 2:6-19
Scripture for Message: Luke 11:1-13 “Teach us”

If we, who are merely human, give our children the food they need, how much more will the Holy Spirit give to those who are beloved by God? This is what Jesus tells his disciples as he teaches them to pray. Jesus spent a lot of his time with his disciples teaching them. They followed him because he was teaching them, and they called him Rabbi or Teacher. However, we read in the Gospel writers’ accounts of Jesus’ life with the disciples, that they often forgot what they’d been taught – Jesus must repeat his instructions to them more than once.

Could the same be said of us? Have we forgotten what Jesus has taught us? Jesus’ instructions to his disciples are instructions for our lives as well, instructions for living as the beloved children of a living God. Instructions for following Jesus on the kingdom journey. Consequently, we should look at what we just read as more than “teaching us how to pray” but as an illustration of our daily walk with God.

So, what does Jesus teach and why? That is something we can explore today. In our scripture reading the disciples ask him to “teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” Maybe they had heard him praying and saw the effects his prayers had, and they wanted some of that for their lives. The prayer he gives them, Luke’s version, is quite simple, it contains everything you would want to say in a prayer – everything I have taught our elders to say in prayers. Jesus teaches to trust in God who answers prayers, although not always the way we desire our prayers to be answered. In his explanation and illustration of this prayer, Jesus teaches that God does not give physical things but gives of the divine self, God’s Holy Spirit. It’s important that we understand that “Through prayer we receive a greater peace about situations beyond our control and a more profound confidence in God’s providence, even when we cannot yet see the answer to our prayers.”¹

One can read what Luke records Jesus saying and think that, because they aren’t getting what they ask, they aren’t praying hard enough. One can think that, because the answer to their prayers isn’t coming the way they desire, God has abandoned or rejected them entirely. Maybe that is one reason so many people

¹ Lewis F. Galloway. “Homiletical Perspective: Luke 11:1-13” *Feasting on the Gospels: Luke, Vol 1*. WJK. 2014. 309-313

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fall away from God or give up their spiritual journeys. In his illustrations to the disciples, Jesus contrasts what “humans” do with the generous and divine grace of God. The earthly parent knows to give good gifts, but the “heavenly” parent gives the Holy Spirit (v. 13) an eternal and far better gift. Our prayers, then, incorporate for us the spiritual habits we need to align with God’s will. We bring our prayers to God so that they will be purified and brought in line with God’s wisdom and providence, so that in the end our prayer is “thy will be done.”

Jesus taught his disciples who God is through his words. In the Gospel of John, we can read Jesus’ words to his disciples. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. . . The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me who is doing his work” (John 14). Jesus gave his disciples parables as illustrations and offered them explanations to aid in their understanding of God. The only picture of the invisible God is the in face of Jesus.

Jesus taught who God is through his actions, his acts of healing and offering forgiveness. Jesus showed love and mercy even to outcasts, women, children and the unclean. Why? So that we can fully know the character of God who is the creator of all things and in knowing God through Jesus we can draw closer to God. Jesus makes God approachable. In all of scripture we catch glimpses of what others believed God to be, sometimes those glimpses portray a God of justice, mercy, and forgiveness but there are times when the perceptions of others give us a picture of a vengeful, wrathful God. Jesus came to us to show us the true God, a God who is all these things and more. Jesus shows us a God of love and asks us to love others in that same way. Jesus shows us the true God so we can embrace God’s forgiveness and grace, no longer is there separation between human and divine. What was read this morning from Colossians bears repeating, “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (2:9). Jesus bears the full image of God.

Likewise, Jesus taught the disciples about their own identity and teaches us who we are – beloved children of a living God. On the last night he was with them, Jesus prayed for his disciples using these words, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. . . As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.” For us he prayed, “I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you

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have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” Jesus teaches about God’s love for God’s creation, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Jesus, in his words and actions teaches the disciples, all his followers, and us about God’s love. And because he taught his disciples this, they have taught us saying “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him” (1 John 3). In the first chapter of John’s Gospel we read, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” And Paul writes the same to the Romans, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,” (Romans 8:16).

These words affirm that we are beloved children of a living God. Our identity is that we are “in Christ” we belong to Christ, purchased with his blood; purchased on the cross. That is what Jesus’ disciples learned from living with and following him and that is what they have passed along to us. That knowledge is what should drive us and what should be our guiding star.

Then, Jesus taught his disciples how to live in God’s kingdom. Through the parables he used, Jesus illustrated what the kingdom was like, a pearl of great price or a mustard seed that grows into the “largest of garden plants.” “The Kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field” (Matthew 13:44). Jesus illustrates that living in the kingdom is worth any price and worth far more than anything this world can offer us. Living in the kingdom is worth giving up all our worldly treasures. Jesus teaches about the kingdom of God so that we can experience the fullness of God’s gift. Jesus teaches for our freedom and for our peace – knowing that the kingdom is near and we will be welcomed to God’s eternal banquet table. Stories from the Hebrew bible give us pictures of what the kingdom will be like – Jesus offers us the fullness of God’s kingdom now. His life illustrates how we should live in God’s kingdom, loving God and loving our neighbors. Serving others as Jesus served – putting the welfare of others, the needs of others ahead of our own (or at the very least on the same level as our own).

Sometimes, however, we fall short of what Jesus has taught us – we are human after all. We fail to be attentive to a neighbor’s pleas for help, we fail to

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offer hospitality to others. Sometimes we are like Jesus' illustration of the reluctant neighbor who does not want to be bothered once the children are in bed. But imagine what this world would be like if we acted in the ways Jesus teaches. What would our prayer lives be like if we always prayed according to Jesus' illustrations, approaching a God made known to us through Jesus? Imagine a world where we lived like the kingdom of God were here now. Imagine a world where each of us acted like beloved children of God and treated others as beloved children of God bearing the image of God. Wouldn't that be the world we want to live in? Isn't that the world that Jesus teaches? I think it exists.

I guess the goal for each of us, and for the church, is rather than just saying the words of the Lord's prayer or any prayer for that matter, pray a prayer with meaning. Draw on what you know from Jesus' teachings and if you have forgotten, take a refresher course by reading and studying Jesus' life in the scriptures. But maybe it just takes practice to love as Jesus loved and live according to Jesus' example, according to God's will.