

Worship for July 24, 2022

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

*Call to Worship

God of grace, you have given us minds to know you, and voices to sing your praise.

**Fill us with your Spirit,
that we may celebrate your glory
and worship you in Spirit and in truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Hymn 14 For the Beauty of the Earth

Prayer of Confession

**Holy and merciful God,
in your presence we confess our sinfulness, our shortcomings,
and our offenses against you.
You alone know how often we have sinned
in wandering from your ways,
in wasting your gifts,
in forgetting your love.
Have mercy on us, O Lord,
for we are sorry for all we have done to displease you.
Forgive our sins,
and help us live in your light,
and walk in your ways,
for the love of Jesus Christ our Savior.**

Hymn 698 Take, O Take Me As I Am

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear the good news!

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance,
that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross,
that we might be dead to sin and alive to all that is good.

I declare to you in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Be at peace.

First Scripture Reading Psalm 85

Time With Our Young Disciples

Gospel Reading Luke 11:1-13

Morning Message

Lord, teach us to pray.

Prayer groups, prayer chains, books about prayer, prayer retreats, prayers before meals, prayers before bed, prayers to open sessions of congress and legislature, prayers on the 50 yard line, prayers sung, prayers walking a labyrinth, praying the psalms, praying the church directory, prayers for the world, prayers at times of crisis, prayers for the community, the denomination, for leaders of all sorts and those who have no agency, prayers for safety, for travel, prayers at graduations, prayers at the bedside of a loved one, prayers at the graveside, prayers over newborns, when tears become words, prayers when starting a new job, when leaving home, prayers when establishing a new home, prayers for direction, prayers for pilgrimage to Lourdes or Craoah Patrick or Prayers of confession, of anguish, when we have failed, when we have been wounded, when someone needs help, prayers for what seems hopeless, prayers of praise and thanksgiving, prayers of confession, for all in need, especially for the suffering, for victims of violence, victims of disaster, prayers for strength and direction and discernment, prayer beads, candles, icons, prayers from great liturgical works, spontaneous prayer.

How many of those types of prayers have you experienced? Most of them, I'd guess. They are all effective means of prayer.

For many years I met weekly with two members of the church I served. All were invited, but only two regularly showed up at nine o'clock on Monday mornings. Sisters. We prayed the newspaper, we prayed for individuals, we prayed for the church, for all local churches, we prayed for our Jewish neighbors, our Muslim neighbors, our neighbors who seemed to have no use for faith.

We started this practice in 2004, right before a presidential election. For the next four years we prayed for the Bushes, then for eight years, we prayed for the Obamas. We prayed to understand the point of view of those who differed from ourselves. We prayed for resolutions to great problems as they emerged. We prayed for peace. We prayed for one another.

And then the time came for one to "go up," as she put it, and we sang her to heaven. And then, my other prayer partner suffered a heart attack and joined her sister. I prayed over her still body in the emergency room at Cabell Huntington Hospital late one Sunday night. She knew all evening that she was in trouble, but, said nothing, as she was determined to see the latest episode of Downton Abbey with her family, so that would be their last memory.

Lord, teach us to pray.

Who taught you to pray? Your mother or father? Sunday School teacher?

My first memory of prayer came when I was just about a year old. Now, developmental psychologists will tell us that we really don't retain memories until later in childhood, but, I remember this.

I was at my grandmother's house. I was learning to walk. I saw the colorful flames of a gas space heater in her living room and crawled over to it. Then I tried to pull myself to a standing position grabbing the grate across that heater. My grandmother did not reach me in time.

I don't remember the moment, so much as I remember the pain and then being rushed to my father's car, my grandmother holding me in her arms, as we sped away to the hospital. A parade going on that day and I remember a policeman leaning into the driver's window of the car, speaking with my dad, and the sound of a siren. Held close to my grandmother's heart, I didn't hear a formal prayer, or even an informal prayer, so much as I felt the urgency, the anguish, and the love of those who were taking care of me. They didn't have to speak a word, yet the car was full of petitions to a very present God.

What is the purpose of prayer?

Listen to the witness of Mark Skinner, pastor and author.

It's a very personal, intimate thing, one's prayer life. Getting started at praying is less like learning how to drive, how to play the banjo, or even how to preach. It is more like learning how to kiss.

You learn some by watching others do it. You should be discerning about whom you will allow to teach you. You certainly make mistakes. And maybe you worry that you might be doing it wrong.

When Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them about prayer, I don't think they were asking about technique or method. Nor do I believe the intention was to get Jesus to institute a prayer that Christians could gather round and speak in unison, even though we do adhere to the practice of praying the Lord's Prayer each and every Sunday. I think it is such an important part of our Christian formation, that I include it in services of marriage and at funerals. Even though members of a variety of denominations will be present at such events, each with their own version of the Lord's Prayer, it is foundational to all of us. It gives us something in common to left up in celebration or cling to at times of grief and loss.

According to Skinner, the request, “Lord, teach us to pray,” comes from the desire to see God’s reign come to full fruition. They believe in the good news of the gospel. They have witnessed lives transformed. The disciples want to know how to be in communion with God. They want to experience the love and close relationship to the One whom Jesus calls, “Father,” or “Abba,” meaning “Daddy.”

In this text, Jesus offers us much more than an invitation to imitate his prayer practices. He gives us tools to imagine who God is and how God is in relationship with us.

The prayer lifts up several theological claims:

God hears.

God provides.

God forgives.

God protects.

God calls on us to be generous with one another.

Matt Skinner says Jesus urges his followers to be persistent in prayer. This doesn’t mean we need to increase the volume and pray the same things over and over all day. It means that with a God like this the door is always open. An occasion for relationship always exists.

Writer Anne Lamott says in her book, *Help, Thanks, Wow*, “Prayer means that, in some unique way, we believe we’re invited into a relationship with someone who hears us when we speak in silence.” That day when my dad and grandmother rushed me to the hospital, there was a lot of activity going on between them and God. I believe God heard their prayers, even though they were spoken, or cried out, in silence.

Psalm 141 makes this request before God:

May my prayer be set before you as incense;

may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.”

Silent or spoken. In church or on the lakeshore. In a crowd or in solitude. In times of distress or moments of blessed peace.

I pray it is so for all of us.

*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles’ Creed *p. 35*

*Hymn 581 Gloria Patri

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

*Hymn 606 Doxology

*Prayer of Dedication

**Loving God, having received your grace in the redemption of Christ Jesus,
we live strengthened in the faith, with lives overflowing with gratitude.**

**From the depths of our hearts, we offer to you the very best we have-time, talent, and
treasure.**

May our offerings be a sign of our true devotion and thanksgiving. Amen.

*Hymn 175 Seek Ye First

*Blessing

May the God of peace

make you holy in every way,

and keep your whole being- body, mind and spirit,

free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Postlude

Announcements

Next Sunday is ECCHO and Centsability Sunday to relieve hunger in our community.

Contributions of cereal are always needed and appreciated.

Prayers: Family of Lula Wilson

Jakob Caudill