

First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia, Arkansas

Sunday, June 21, 2015

The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am. The liturgist will enter and take his/her seat. The pastor will follow, step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make announcements....

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.

This is Father’s Day, and we have a short video produced by the Skit Guys to express our thanks to our fathers.

FATHER’S DAY VIDEO

The Skit Guys

FATHER’S DAY PRAYER

Before we begin worship, would you pray with me as we give thanks for our fathers. Let us pray...

God our Father, in your wisdom and love you made all things. This day we thank you for one of your best gifts, our Fathers. Bless these men.

Guard their hearts. Strengthen their resolve. Help them embrace the joy that comes with the rearing of their children. Let the example of their faith and love shine forth. Grant that we, their sons and daughters, may honor them always with a spirit of profound respect and love.

Father, we also pray today for those who haven't a father nearby or didn't have an earthly Father which all your children have as their birthright. May they know that You are the Father of the fatherless. We pray You would use Your Word and Your people to help relieve some of the pain the fatherless children of earth bear. May this be a day in which we give honor to You, God, for giving us our fathers and for being there when they, in their fallen state, fail us. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

PRELUDE

"Prelude in G Minor" - J.S. Bach

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

After the Prelude, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 121 and printed in our bulletins?”

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 121)

I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Teach us to pray, loving God, that the longing of our hearts might find words, and the intent of our spirits result in faithful deeds. Open to us your Word, gracious God, as we ask and seek and knock. Wash us in the fountain of your truth, that we may be clean and trust in your mercy.

Bless us with fullness of life, and make us glad in your presence. We join our hearts and voices in thanksgiving for all the gifts of your love. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”, number 356 in our *Hymnals*.

control over these conditions in life, NO button that we can push to make these things better. But then ask the children if there is any power in the universe that can help us in these situations. Remind them that God is always working to deliver the poor, heal the sick, forgive sins, protect us from enemies, give us life after death, and conquer hatred and betrayal. It is only with the help of God -- not a remote control -- that we can get power over these hurtful conditions.

As the children leave, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

“Would all who are able, please stand and join in one voice to sing our next hymn, “Sweet Hour of Prayer” which is printed in your bulletins.”

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“Sweet Hour of Prayer”

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer, That calls me from a world of care,

And bids me at my Father’s throne make all my wants and wishes known.

In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found relief

And oft escaped the tempter’s snare by thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer! he joys I feel, The bliss I share,

Of those whose anxious spirits burn with strong desires for thy return!

With such I hasten to the place where God my Savior shows His face,

And gladly take my station there, and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer! Thy wings shall my petition bear

To Him whose truth and faithfulness engage the waiting soul to bless.

And since He bids me seek His face, believe His Word and trust His grace,

I’ll cast on Him my every care, and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

After the hymn, the liturgist will return to the pulpit and say,

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated. . . All our wealth cannot buy the mercy and favor of God. Yet God is pleased to use our gifts to spread good news that Jesus Christ came to redeem sinners. In grateful response to the limitless grace of God, we bring our offerings to invest in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings.

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY

"Sarabande" - J.S. Bach

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

*DOXOLOGY (In Unison)

The Hymnal #592

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray... For your healing love, for the goodly blessings we enjoy, for life itself-- we give thanks with these tokens of gratitude. Dwell in us, that we may be moved to make all of life an offering to your steadfast love. May we learn to give good gifts to all your children who need what we have to offer. Multiply our efforts to be faithful as you add others to our family of faith, in Christ's name. Amen.

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall

come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and take a seat.

SPECIAL MUSIC "O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee" soloist, Dr. David DeSeguirant
After the soloist finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from Paul's letter to the Romans, the eighth chapter, beginning at the twenty-sixth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 983 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God..."

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation. Thank you for your service.

When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our Gospel lesson this morning is taken from Matthew, the sixth chapter, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #839 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"Go Ask Your Father"

We had some fairly simple rules in our house when my kids were growing up. Rule number one was that if they needed it, their mother and I would provide it for them. Therefore, if they didn't have it, they didn't need it. If they wanted something they didn't have, they were supposed to ask. And to their credit, they were not stupid and had learned pretty well which parent to ask for certain things. If it was something Debbie didn't want to say no to, but couldn't bring herself to say yes to, she would answer them with, "Go ask your father."

Now the average dad, would take that as carte blanche to say yes or no as he saw fit, but I was much smarter than that. I knew I was supposed to say, "I'll talk with your mom and get back to you." That's when Debbie would tell me to say, "No," and she would get to remain the sweet, ever-kind, and eternally generous, "Mom", while I was reduced to playing the heavy, and hearing my kids say, "Oh, DA-A-A-D" with that "somebody stepped in something" look on their face.

But the truth is, Debbie and I didn't always say, "No." We usually said "Yes," even if it was something they didn't need, as long as it caused no irreparable harm to them or the family budget.

Another truth that should probably be admitted, is that how they asked did contribute in some small way to our decision making process. If all of us are honest about it, I suspect that we could look back to our own childhood or adolescence and remember how hard we worked at perfecting the "Ask," the technique of making our request to our parents that would give us the greatest possibility of having our petition granted.

I suspect that is what is behind the request from Jesus' own disciples in Luke 11 when they come to Jesus and ask him to teach them how to pray like John's disciples. Now these were all God-fearing, church going men who had been bar mitzvahed, and had grown up doing prayer morning and evening, at meals, and at church. They knew how to pray.

By making their request in this way, they indicate that they have heard John's disciples praying. So what their request really meant was that they wanted to be taught to pray out loud in public like John's disciples. They want the respect of the crowds so that they will praise them and follow them. They want the respect of God so that he will listen and give them what they ask.

Can you imagine their disappointment when their lesson on prayer is the Lord's prayer with a warning?

The warning is this-- Don't worry about your technique. Don't concern yourself with the words. Don't seek the approval of men when the one you are communicating with is God. If I want to tell Debbie that I love her and want to ask something of her, I don't stand on a street corner and yell flowery expressions of love and devotion at the top of my lungs, before putting her on the spot with my public request for her assistance.

Do we really think it is different with God?

The word piety comes from a latin word that means love or devotion. So Jesus said, "Don't tell God how much you love him while standing amongst the crowds, where believers and unbelievers mingle in daily commerce. You might as well write God's holy name, too precious even to be spoken aloud, on an outhouse wall. Rather, go home. Go into your chamber, your most private place, the place most appropriate for intimate expressions of love, and there speak to the Lord your God.

And when you speak, make sure that your words mean something. Here's an idea... leave off the vain repetitions of phrases that may mean something the first time they come out of your mouth, but are really irritating when they come out over and over and over again.

Many of you know that one of my pet peeves in public prayers in the extemporaneous pray-er who is so afraid that God might slip in a word or two along the way, that they crowd every little pause with words, usually praying to Almighty God, Father Son, and Holy Spirit, as if their last name were "Weeju". I know you've heard such prayers. Father, we just... Jesus, we just.... Lord, we just.... God, we just... Spirit, we just.... No matter how long their list of petitions, they begin each one by invoking a member of the Holy Trinity, and adding the words, "we just" as though this was their only petition. As a parent, my ears would tire of such drivel, and I am sure that it is just such verbiage that Jesus advised against when he told us not to use such empty phrases.

If you can't think of anything to say, for God's sake as well as your own, shut the heck up! Silence, especially in a prayer, can be a very good thing. If you focus more on what you really want to say and less on what you think you are supposed to say, I can guarantee that your time spent with God in prayer will be much improved.

Then Jesus gets down to specifics and says, "Pray like this...." and he gives them the Lord's prayer, simple, unaffected, honest.

I remember hearing my mother telling me as a small child to say my prayers, as if they were lines of dialogue in a play or a poem to be recited for a grade at school. Prayers are more than words, they are also the unspoken language of the heart. One of our problems is that we, as adults, are still saying our prayers. It's time for us to pray them. When we are alone, it might help to remember that

Jesus said to pray **like** this. Try taking the words of the Lord's prayer and putting them in your own words, so that you hear, not just the words, but their **meaning**. We can not do that in public worship, or we would lose our unity of thought and purpose. But even here, we can **think** about the words as we say them, and truly begin praying together instead of saying together.

The Lord's prayer begins just where a request from a parent should begin-- by acknowledging who you are talking to-- your Father in heaven. In so doing, you acknowledge the relationship that allows you to stand in his presence and make a request. God is your parent who gave you life, who loves you, and who provides for all your needs. If he does all these things, then why should he not be willing to listen to your request and grant it if it is in your best interest.

It also acknowledges God's otherness. Unlike your mom and dad on earth, this is your Father **in Heaven**. He sees you more clearly, loves you more completely, understands your situation with all your needs and wants more fully. He knows better than your mom and dad, and much, much better than you, what is good for you and what is not. You can not begin to wrap your finite minds around the concept of an infinite God. Do not limit God by limiting Him only to what you can think or imagine. Direct your prayers, not to whom you think God is, but to what God knows **HIMSELF** to be.

By doing that, you are saying, **Therefore**, I trust you to do what is right for me. You do that, Abba, and I will be just fine. You know more than I do and you are wiser than I am, so I will trust your judgment. I know that you have plans for me, plans for good and not evil, so I will trust you in all things.

Just give me what I need for today, and tomorrow I will trust you to give me what I need for tomorrow.

I am a sinner. I ask your forgiveness, and realize that I can not ask for that which I myself am unwilling to give to others.

I am foolish and do not always recognize the traps set for me by the evil one. Guide my steps. Keep me safe. Watch out for me when I am distracted and fail to watch out for myself.

Two more cautions-- when you pray, do not judge the success of your prayers by whether or not they come to pass. Screwtape, says that Satan refers to this as the 'heads I win, tails you lose' argument. If the thing you pray for doesn't happen, then that is one more proof that petitionary prayers don't work; if it does happen, you will, of course, be able to see some of the physical causes which led up to it, and think 'therefore it would have happened anyway', and thus a granted prayer becomes just as good a proof as a denied one that prayers are ineffective.

Neither should you measure the success of prayer by how you feel when you're finished. If you want to feel better after prayer, and that becomes your chief motivator to pray, then in no time at all, you will begin focusing on your feelings and to trying to produce them from within yourself. When you want to ask Him for charity, you will, instead, start trying to manufacture charitable feelings for yourself and not even notice that this is what you are doing. When you want to pray for courage, you will really try to feel brave. When you pray for forgiveness, you will try to feel forgiven. You will never suspect how much your success or failure in feeling this way or that depends on whether you are well or ill, fresh or tired, at any given moment.

Most importantly, focusing on your feelings turns your attention away from God and back to yourself. It is hard to have a conversation with anyone whose face is turned away from you.

Finally, a word of reassurance. Prayer is important. God wants our presence, one on one in prayer with him, on at least a daily basis. It is so important that ultimately, our words are unimportant-- even the nature of our requests is not the essential element of prayer. Paul says as much when he says, "We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." The one absolute essential is **our presence** in prayer. If we draw near to God, He **WILL** draw near to us. And when the

words don't come, no problem, the Holy Spirit knows what we want, what we need, even when we don't, and He intercedes for us. All we have to do is show up.

God takes care of everything else.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me... Eternal Father, we come to you in the quiet of a Sunday morning, and we still our hearts and pray that you will speak and we may hear. We come seeking to find in you a friend as real as any we know on earth. So let us not be numbered among those who think of you as a puppet to be controlled by us for our own pleasure or our prayers as incantations spoken to produce what we want from life.

We come, needing you to command us, needing you to renew us, needing you to console us, needing your help to amend our lives until they shine forth with the glory of Christ at the center of our very selves. As each has need of you, be known to each, we pray, and grant that we may leave this place with faith rebuilt and hope restored.

We pray for those who bear upon themselves the burden of loss or bewilderment. We pray especially this day for Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C. Only you know why someone would enter into your house of worship and open fire on your children seeking after your presence and blessing in prayer. Wrap your loving arms around them and send our minds and hearts to dwell with them, and spur our hands and feet to do for them what you would have us do.

We pray for those about to face some sorrow unforeseen, some bereavement unexpected, some temptation unannounced. Walk with them through the valley of the shadow, and guide those of us to their side who can best bring strength or add comfort to their journey. We pray for the young, that they may not grow old in bitterness; for those of middle years, that they may do good deeds with diligence; for the aged, that in sunset time they may have peace.

Broaden our vision, Lord. Deny us the sin of looking only at ourselves. We are your creatures: cause us then to act as if we were. We are your children: shape us then until we bear upon our hearts the marks of the One we call our Father. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus", number 403 in our hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

The Hymnal #403

THE BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and give you His peace-- in your coming in and your going out; in your lying down and in your rising up; in your labor and in your leisure; in your laughter and in your tears; until you come to stand before Jesus in that day in which there is no sunset and no dawning. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Sanctuary"

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true;
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for You.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis