

**Matthew 6:1-13** *"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup> "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>3</sup> "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. <sup>5</sup> " And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>6</sup> "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. <sup>7</sup> "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. <sup>9</sup> "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

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Our three lessons for the night call us to the four things that the church has throughout the years called it members to during the season of Lent. With Joel's calls for us to rend our hearts and return to the Lord and Paul's call for us to be reconciled to God, we are reminded that this is to be a season that in which we place special emphasis on searching our lives for sin and repenting of that sin. Secondly, Joel calls God's people to mark their repentance with fasting. Third, Jesus in Matthew's Gospel reminds us that we are to be about true works of love or almsgiving done without any regard for approval from men, but done only to serve God as we help our neighbors. And finally, Jesus reminds us to pray as He teaches us not only that we should pray, but how to pray as well.

Repentance, fasting, works of love, and prayers are all things that can help us meet Lent with the proper penitent and thankful attitude. And while we take seriously the call to all four of these Lenten disciplines, this year in our midweek Lenten services, we especially will focus on the life sustaining discipline of prayer. Of course, prayer is not merely for Lent, but it is particularly important during this season. As we realize the gravity of our sin and turn to God, we should well fall on our knees towards God's throne and seek His mercy.

Prayer is so important that Jesus not only calls us to it, but instructs us also of how to do it. He does so by teaching us his prayer, the Lord's Prayer. His prayer serves as a model for all of our prayers.

Jesus invites us to start our prayers the same way He did, by addressing God as Father. We often talk about our God as Father and us as His children, but in this Lenten season we do well to once again realize the gracious beauty of that relationship. As we examine our sins, we certainly realize that at best we have been rebellious children. But yet Jesus calls us to climb back into our forgiving Father's lap and bring our thoughts, our needs, and our troubles to Him. Yes, the almighty God who dwells in heaven encourages us think of Him not as some distant power but rather as our daddy, who cares so much for all of our needs and knows exactly which of our prayers to grant and which of them to deny. Try to get a powerful person of this earth to listen to your words, and you will likely be stuck on hold for most of your life, but sit down to talk to God Almighty, and you are assured to have an ear to fill immediately.

As we pray our petitions before God, no doubt we are invited to bring all of our thoughts and needs before God. And yet through his prayer, our Lord helps direct our prayer life as well. He reminds us of things that we should pray for in our lives.

First, he calls for us to pray that God's name might be hallowed or made holy. Of course, as Luther reminds us, God's name is holy in itself, but by this prayer we ask that it might be made holy among us as well. Often times our prayers are filled with requests for our well-being and wishes, but one thing the Lord's Prayer makes evident to us is that our prayers should also be filled with requests for God's well-being here on this earth. Along those lines, the Lord's Prayer first encourages us to pray that God's name might be respected, honored, made holy among us all. As this prayer flows from our lips, it is our prayer that all things that bear God's name might rightly use that name. It is our prayer that God's name would not be used carelessly for every misplaced hammer or accidentally closed door. It is our prayer that churches that call themselves Christian might preach God's Word purely. It is our prayer that we who were baptized into God's holy name and bear that name as Christians might live lives worthy of that calling. God's name is made holy among us primarily by those of us who bear that name uses it correctly, calling upon it in every trouble and honoring it throughout our lives.

We pray these words often because we know that all too often we have not brought God's name honor as we should. We realize in order to make His name holy among us we need God's forgiveness for those times when we have failed to bring His name honor. And we know also that we need Holy Spirit to sanctify us that we might use it well as we leave this place. Thankfully in this season of Lent we are not only reminded of our sin, but Jesus' answer to that sin, the cross. Today we are forgiven again by His grace and given His Holy Spirit that we might indeed keep His name holy among us. It is the spirit sanctifying work that indeed helps us to hallow God's name.

The season of Lent with its call to repentance has almost a natural way of pushing us to our knees. And finding ourselves there on our knees, may we indeed also fold our hands, bow our heads, and lift our hearts to God in prayer as He beckons as a loving Father this day to do. Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Amen.