

Prayer I

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Date: 16 August 2015

[0:00] Amen. The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John. Glory to you, Lord Christ.

! For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever.

Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum. The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Christ.

[1:19] Blessed Lord, open our hearts to your word. Strengthen us to do your work. Give us joy in doing it. In Jesus Christ's name, amen. Please be seated.

So, church bulletin bloopers again. I had a wonderful secretary once in one church, and I think she put bloopers in there just so I would see them when I proofed the bulletin, which I always did.

So, here are some that were not from our church, but some bloopers you've probably heard before. Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale.

It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands. Don't let worry kill you.

Let the church help. For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs. At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be, What is Hell?

[2:28] Come early and listen to our choir practice. Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

Okay, so we're running out of these, so I'll just throw a couple more in. The low self-esteem support group will meet Thursday at 7 p.m.

Use the back door. And finally, to be equal, Weight Watchers will meet at 7 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use the large double door at the side entrance.

So, if I do any bloopers in the sermon, you'll understand. Okay, so, start.

Timer. Okay. For the 12-minute sermon, which never seems to be 12 minutes. What's going on? I have a question for you. Are we at Church of the Holy Trinity prayer warriors or are we prayer wimps?

[3:37] It's a very important question. Warriors or wimps? What are we? St. Paul warns Timothy in 2 Timothy 3.5, The others, he said, have a form of godliness but without power.

Is our worship a form of godliness but has no power? We're going to talk about that today. Prayer has been described as this.

The attitude of the human spirit in its approach to God. When I read that, I give a sigh. What in the world does that mean? The attitude of the human spirit in its approach to God.

Now, I was raised on U.S. Marine Talk. The way we would say that is, how in the heck do you deal with God? How do you deal with God? Each of us have to deal with God in some way.

We can either ignore Him, we can hold Him at a distance, or we can hug Him. How do we deal with God? And that's prayer.

[4:41] So as you know, we're doing Acts 2.42 this summer. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and today, to the prayers.

Okay, so that's where we're going today. They devoted themselves to the prayers. Three points again. Prayer in Bible days, prayer today, prayer at Holy Trinity.

So let's look at prayer in Bible days. And to do that, we have to do the dreaded word study. Okay. Couple of words.

A Hebrew word. Hithpail. Hithpail has an interesting meaning. It means to draw near to, or to lean into.

Have you ever been in a room with a lot of people and you want to talk to somebody? You have to kind of lean into that person so they can hear you. And you have a kind of a close conversation. That's the Hebrew for praying.

[5:45] To lean into God. And then the Greeks, who have many, many more words than the Hebrews had, they have a number of words for prayer, but the one I want to use today is called *prosuche*.

Pro means in favor of. *Suche* means to ask. In favor of asking, or asking a favor. So we are in favor of asking God for our lives.

Both these words denote intimacy, don't they? And it's amazing that we little creatures ask for intimacy with the Creator.

Doesn't that seem rather arrogant on our part? I mean, how many, Raymond can tell us how many of these constellations there are scattered around. Well, He really can't tell us.

This Creator, for all I know, He may still be creating things out there. He's okay with us being intimate with Him. That is amazing.

[6:55] In the Old Testament, if somebody could get me a glass of water, that would be really helpful. In the Old Testament, we had the Hall of Fame people who were intimate with God.

Moses, Abraham, David, Elijah, they all had their way of being intimate with God the Creator.

But it was not just the Hall of Fame. The, quote, little people had intimacy with her. Do you remember Hannah, the mother of Samuel? She was being intimate with God when Eli accused her of being drunk.

It was the way she was praying. She was inebriated with God. Well, the apostles knew all this when they suddenly realized they were having 3,000 new guests for church.

How do we teach them? How do we teach them to pray? They had seen Jesus in prayer.

[8:06] And that had given a whole new view of prayer because, as we know, Jesus met quietly with God. And some of the apostles listened in.

And he was talking to his Father, God, just like they were sitting together somewhere. Isn't that an amazing way to pray?

As he drank a glass of water. They had experienced Jesus praying in public. What did he call God? *Abba*. Father. In fact, *Abba* is an Aramaic word which is a familiar form of Father. It's sort of like Daddy. they saw Jesus praying intimately with God.

And they asked him to teach them to pray. Remember, they said, Lord, teach us to pray. And what did he teach them? The Lord's Prayer.

[9:10] I think it must be, don't close the windows, but I think the breeze is coming through and I'm getting all sorts of pollen in my system.

If I can't finish, then Forrest will finish the sermon for me. Okay. The Lord's Prayer, if you notice, has six petitions. Three toward God, three toward man.

The three toward God first, all right? Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Okay. Then three toward man.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive others. Lead us not into temptation, and then give us victory by defeating the evil one. Deliver us from evil.

Oh, you are a sweetheart. Thank you. Okay. So now I'm going to talk like this for the rest of the sermon. And not only that, but Jesus allowed them to use his name in prayer.

[10:15] Have you ever requested something in someone's name? In one of my many jobs, I was the exec to a general officer in the air force. Now, if I were to call the conference center in Homestead, Florida, and say, I'd like to schedule a conference, and he'd say, well, who are you?

Well, I'm Lieutenant Colonel Benna. He'd say, thank you, bonk. But if I called him and said, I'm the exec for General Collins, we'd like to schedule the conference center.

The guy would look at his protocol list, General Collins, yes, sir, when would you like it? You see, when you pray in someone's name, you've got power.

Jesus taught them to pray in his name. So the apostles had to teach these 3,000 how to pray.

Now, they already knew about prayer, but they needed one ingredient. What was the ingredient they didn't have? Jesus. These 3,000 did not have Jesus until they invited him into their hearts.

[11:28] They repented. They received Jesus. They were baptized. Now they could pray in Jesus' name. And that's how he taught them. That's how they taught the new believers.

And those new believers, of course, spread back out across the Mediterranean world. They passed that kind of prayer on to us. That's why we pray the way we do.

It was taught by Jesus, passed down to the apostles, passed on down to us. So now we move to point two. The church today. Is the church in the world today a battalion of prayer warriors or a bunch of wimps?

What is it? You say, well, it depends on what part of the world. That's true. So let's look at the USA. What's it look like? And you say, well, it depends on the denomination, which it does.

But I need to tell you that the key word for people in the United States today who acknowledge God is this, the key sentence. I can pray just as well on the golf course as I can in the church.

[12:41] We are developing a nation of people who acknowledge belief in God but don't believe in any church. And even good old Pope Francis last week, you know, he does what's called free association.

He doesn't seem to realize that there are reporters listening to him. So he was obviously talking about non-believers and what chance they have for heaven.

and of course Pope Francis always says you don't have to believe. You don't have to go to church. Well, he expects everybody to go to church but he kind of says that to establish rapport with people before he lowers the boom and says but you got to go to church.

Of course, the reporters report the other thing and it just fills right into our society. You don't need to go to church. You can pray on the golf course.

Well, I've played a lot of golf. I thought I was worshipping but you know what? I was using the Lord's name but not necessarily addressing him.

[13:50] I don't remember having an intense prayer session walking around the golf course. I would not say others are liars but I don't know how you do both of those.

Play golf and have a prayer session. In fact, we know better, don't we? We've got this wonderful statement from Paul in Ephesians 4, 6, and 7.

Some of us have memorized it. Don't worry about anything but by prayer and supplications make your requests known to God and the rest of it is and the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Prayer is crucial. Today's church is missing it. It tends more toward anemia than steel sharpening steel.

Is that the case of Church of the Holy Trinity? Are we prayer warriors or are we prayer wimps?

Where are we? My take, I've been with you now about a month and a half, I put my vote in prayer warriors.

[15:01] prayers. You take prayer seriously. Our liturgy takes prayer seriously. Last night in the Albany area, Mary Ellen and I, Mary Ellen's gone to Disney World, you'll see her next Sunday, and she took our daughter Laurel and our 17-year-old granddaughter Allison with her.

And I'll get the bill eventually. So anyway, last night we went with Laurel and Allison to the church they've been attending. Well, interesting, you may have attended a church like this, but we walked into the vestibule and they handed out coffee and tea.

We hung around, nobody really talking to each other, waiting for the doors to open. The doors opened. We walked into the worship space, which is, the floor is black, the walls are black, the ceiling is black, and you sit in theater stairs, just like going to the movies.

Big stage, theater lighting, two screens. On the screen it said something about life is good, and then it had a clock going backwards.

So when we got in there it was like ten minutes till the show begins. And then it went 9.59, 9.58, it went all glung, glung, glung. At exactly zero hour, the band came out and they had three guitars, a drummer, and four singers.

[16:36] They came out and it was 15 minutes of high energy singing. And the band, you know, did this kind of thing, and they were all young, and there was one old guy who played the bass.

Everybody else is like 20, it looked like. and the congregation was high energy as well. And they were songs I'd never heard before. They were really choppa-doppa-doppa-doppa.

And finally we finished the three songs, and we sat down, and then on the screen came the one minute announcement. We're glad you're here.

It's wonderful to have you here. We're going to have a class every Sunday at 1230. You only have to come to the four classes. You don't have to come anymore. Come and be a part of us. That

ended, and somebody came out and gave a sermon.

12 minutes. Now, I don't like to judge anybody's sermons because that means they have a right to judge my sermons. But it was another high-energy kind of a sermon.

[17:43] The theme was one of the songs we sang, His love never ends, it never runs, out, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot.

Anyway, that's what he preached on. It was good. It was not gospel, but it was good. It was, you know, you're not a failure. God will never let you be a failure because He loves you.

Okay? And then, incredibly, we had the sinner's prayer. Now, sin had not been discussed, but we had the sinner's prayer where we invite Jesus into our hearts, and then we did the closing song, and they said, see you around, and at 6.55 we walked out.

It started at 6, we walked out at 6.55. Now, I noticed a few things missing to me. Now, for the 400 people there, there was nothing missing.

They were, they had been to church. But, you know, we didn't have any reading of scripture, and we didn't have any prayer. That was puzzling to me.

[18:47] my take is when we get together as Christians, we pray together. Our liturgy asks us to do that.

It's called the prayers of the people. And I love the way you do, have I gotten to 12 minutes yet?

You're OT, baby. I'm OT again. All right, I did it. I love the way you do prayers of the people, because you have the liturgical form, and then you have what we call free prayer.

That is a wonderful thing. And today, I think we're going to pray for a lot of people who may not be feeling well, who are not here today. We're kind of being attacked with physical problems. We're going to pray about that.

You see, this church is a battalion of prayer warriors. Our liturgy helps us with it. Our private prayers are dedicated to being prayer warriors.

believers. The Holy Spirit hovers over a praying church. Listen to this from Acts chapter 4, the early church. It says, And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

[20:05] That's us, brothers and sisters. That's us. That's what it means to be prayer warriors and to watch for signs and wonders. Come tonight to the class.

We may see more signs and wonders. God doing extraordinary things in the life of his people. Four things I'd like you to pray for every day on your own. Number one, a new pastor.

On the constant contact email you receive, there's a prayer on the right, prayer for the new rector. I'd like you to cut that out and put it on your refrigerator and pray it every day or put it in your prayer book wherever you will see it.

Speaking of the constant contact, each week our team tries to put together something that sort of leads you into the next week and gives you any announcement.

Please try to read that. I notice there are eight families in our parish that do not have email. So we have a new ministry for someone.

[21:15] What I did this week was after the constant contact came out on my email, I made copies of it, I put it in the envelope, I put the address of those eight families, not on one envelope, but on eight different envelopes, put a stamp on it, and put it in the mail.

Did any of you receive that by mail this week? Yeah, okay. I could do that every week, or someone of you might want to do that every week. It takes a half hour.

So stamps, you don't have to buy stamps, envelopes, you don't have to buy envelopes, address list. I'm going to put it here, and today, please tell me if you're interested in taking on that ministry.

Praying for a new rector. Second, praying for the renovation upstairs. That's key. The vestry is in the midst of making final decisions on what's going to be up there.

We need you to be praying. Third, praying for growth, for Church of the Holy Trinity. We need to grow spiritually.

[22:18] We need to grow financially. We need to grow numerically. That's what a church is. Let's pray for visitors. Let's bring visitors.

Let's pray for growth. And then the last is to pray for each other. Remember I said the roster?

There's rosters over there. Pray for everybody on the roster within a week.

Divvy it up. So you're praying actually for a person. You know their face. You know their name. You know something about them. We need to be in prayer for each other. You see, that's what being a

prayer warrior means.

my last comment. There is a marine base in Hawaii called Kaneohe Marine Station. There are barracks there.

In one of the barracks, when you walk down the barracks, before walking out, there's a full-length mirror. And above it, it says, you are a marine. Do you look like one?

[23:18] I'd ask you the same question. You are prayer warriors. Do you look like one? Let us pray.

Lord God, you have touched us in so many ways. You've given us new life, salvation, forgiveness of sins, hope for heaven, hope to be reunited with those who have gone before us.

We ask only one thing, more, O Lord. Make us prayer warriors after your heart. We pray this, Father, in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen.