

Luke 11:5-13; Psalm 40:1-4; The “Why” of Prayer I. God answers Persistent Prayers II. God Commands us to Pray III. God is our Loving Father

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, prayer is a necessary aspect of every Christian’s life. But it is a hard part as well.

The fact is, praying takes effort and dedication. In prayer our desires are tested and our motivations weighted. Why do we want what we pray for? Do we want what God wants? The little child that comes up to his mother saying- mom, why do I need to pray- well that little child has toughed on a very pressing issue. If God knows everything- if He knows what you need and He has already ordained everything that happens- why do we need to pray? Even Jesus’ disciples had a hard time praying- that is why our chapter opens with them saying- teach us to pray! In an act of great mercy, Jesus not only teaches us how to pray- the words and topics that we should focus on- but as our text reveals- Jesus teaches us why we should pray. What are the reasons why prayer is so important? Since we work through the Lord’s Prayer every year in the Catechism, this week we start our text in v. 5. Today we see that Jesus Christ teaches His disciples why we need to pray.

I. God answers Persistent Prayers

Our text begins in v. 5 where Jesus uses a short parable to teach us about prayer- specifically why we should pray. In this short story, Jesus tells of a little village that has no marketplace and no hotel. In this little village everyone knows their neighbor- and a traveler enters the village looking for food and rest. One man goes to his neighbor looking for a few extra loaves of bread to feed this guest he has taken in- and his neighbor lives in a little, one room house with one bed. At midnight he goes to this neighbor and knocks- I have a friend who needs food- please lend me some bread. Now this second man- the neighbor- has sleeping kids in bed. Don’t bother me now- the kids are sleeping. You know how it is with kids who are finally sleeping. But the needy neighbor will not go away. Finally, he prevails- not because of friendship but because of his persistence! As we find in v. 8- the needy man will have his petitions met because of his persistence- literally his earnestness. This is unique word in the Greek- anadion- meaning a shameless persistence- an impropriety or boldness. He is not going home without bread- nor will he take no for an answer. The earnestness of his need motivates his steadfast and repeated request. Remember that Jesus is teaching us why we should pray. The point is not that God is unwilling or ungracious. God is not sleeping and needing to be roused. No- God is eager, willing and

desires. He never sleeps nor slumbers- but what Jesus is teaching us is that we need to be bold and consistent- even persistent and tenacious in our prayers. We find a similar theme in Luke 18 with the parable of the persistent widow. The lesson is this- don't give up easily in your prayers. But continue to pray- be steadfast and consistent as I Thes. 5:17 says- pray without ceasing! We can be bold in our prayers- bold in our approach to God; even coming with confidence as Heb. 4 says because we have a High Priest who is sympathetic. In other words, because of Jesus our High Priest we are to be bold, confident and consistent in our prayers knowing that we will receive mercy and grace in our times of need! We are not beggars who depend on the whimsical generosity of strangers- but we are coming to a friend who listens to us in our time of need! Therefore do not lose heart in your prayers- God is testing your resolve. God does not give us what we want right away- because He wants to test our desires. Do we really want what we are praying for? Do you know how much you need? One of the chief failures in prayer is that we give up too easily- we need to strive. Even wrestle as Jacob did in order to get a blessing! What God has promised He will give- but we need to eagerly desire and consistently ask for it! For example, do you really desire the conversion of your neighbor? Do you really seek God's honor and glory above your own? Answers to prayer are all the sweeter when they are given after the sweat! We appreciate gifts from God when we have really struggled for them! IN all this God is teaching us to depend on God in faith- trusting that He will provide! Our desires are purified and refined. What we ask for the most in prayer proves what we really want! So Jesus teaches that God is pleased to answer prayers after we have persistently asked! Why pray? Because God delights to answer persistent prayers! Not always giving what we ask for- but always giving us what we need in due time! If your are asking for something that God has promised- then don't be discouraged- keep on asking!

II. God Commands us to Pray

Jesus concludes this parable in v. 9 where He says those well-known words; ask, seek and knock. Ask and you will receive- keep on asking and it will be given to you- what you need will be placed in your hands. Like the widow who came every day looking for justice- asking to have her cause heard- continually seeking justice until it is served. Ask and you will receive. As James 4:3 says in the negative- you do not have because you do not ask! If you have a sanctified desire- if you want something that I have promised- than ask me for it! Seek and you will find- keep on seeking,

searching for and desiring- and you will discover the thing that you are looking for. Like a treasure hunter seeking gold- seek the things that are above! Like the shepherd who lost a little lamb- keep on searching until you find! You know that what you are looking for will not be withheld- so seek blessings from my hand! And finally knock and the door will be opened! Don't just stand at the door- keep on knocking! Ring the bell again and again until someone answers! You know that I am home and that I am always awake and listening- come to me in prayer! Knock at my gate- bang on the door of my house and you will be heard and your requests made in the name of My Son will be answered! Whatever you ask in the name of Jesus as John 14 says- this will be given according to the Father's will! I will do for you whatever you ask! The way forward will be made clear- the hinderance will be moved- whatever is blocking your way into my home will be taken away! Whatever you need- for your good- according to My glory- I will give it! To summarize v. 9-10 we could say- we are to pray because we are commanded to pray! Jesus tells us to pray- to keep on praying- that is why we pray! Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will answer you as Psalm 50 says. Our God is pleased to have His children calling on Him day and night! If you need something- if your heart desires something- ask God for it! In prayer it will be made known- your wants revealed! Do you want the right things- in the right way- then pray knowing that He is doing the very act that God has commanded! In the business world, funds are earmarked for a specific cause. You only need to ask- and the promised blessings of God are yours! Yes, God knows your needs. But He calls us to verbalize our needs as an act of faith in Him!

III. God is our Loving Father

So far we have seen that we will pray because God has designed to use persistent prayer to give us what we need- God also demands that we pray to Him and Him alone for all that need. And finally, we see that we should desire to pray to God because God is a loving Father to us? Why pray? Because in prayer we are children coming to a loving Father who lives in heaven. The One upon whom we call is not just a friend- but a Father who is loving, good and all powerful! In v. 11 Jesus compares earthly fathers and our heavenly father. Earthly fathers normally give good things to their children. If a child asks his father for food, that father will give them something good to eat! But these fathers remain fallen- the word here is *porneos*- meaning that earthly fathers are weak, imperfect and depraved. Yet they can and do give good things. However, the Father we are calling upon is our heavenly Father. This is an argument from the less to the

greater! Our Father dwells in heaven- meaning that He is perfectly good and all powerful! As HC LD 46 explains- our fathers do not refuse us the things of this life- God our heavenly Father will surely not refuse to give us what we ask in faith! And what is the greatest gift that the Father will give? Well- the best gift is His Spirit! As v. 13 concludes- the Father will give His Spirit to those who ask! Of everything that we can ask- one of the best things we can ask for is the gift of the Holy Spirit! It is, after all, the work of the Spirit to teach us to pray- to put into words the groans of our heart- the Spirit who gives us even the desire to pray! The request of the disciples- teach us to pray- is answered by Jesus- the Father will give you His Spirit! It is the Spirit's work that enables us to pray according to the will of God! Seek first the Kingdom of God- those other things will be added! Remember, we are praying to our heavenly Father- we share this Father with the Son Jesus Christ! He is our Father because Christ has made us adopted children. As children, we have the rights and privileges of children. And one of those chief privileges is the granted right of access to come to God directly, boldly and consistently in prayer! If every good relationship needs open communication, wont loving children want to converse with their heavenly Father in prayer?

To conclude, prayer is a gift. But we need to know why we need this gift? Why will we pray? We will pray because God has promised to answer prayer- we will pray because God commands us as children to pray- and we will desire to pray because we are coming to a loving Father who will give us what we need! As v. 13 concludes- God will give to those who ask! So you need to ask in order to receive! He inclined His ear to me and He heard my cry! Blessed is the man who makes the Lord His trust as we read in Psalm 40. Our God uses our asking in prayer as the opportunity to give us what we need- to grant us what He has promised! As Christian we are to pray to the Father in Jesus name- to pray for the things that Jesus taught us to pray for- and as we see today- we will desire to pray because of what God has promised! Jesus Christ teaches His disciples why we need to pray. As Eph. 3 says- we have a boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him! When you know how great your need is- and how great your God is- then by the Spirit you will want and even delight to pray! As Eph. 6 says- pray in the Spirit at all times. Now as we come to the LS- we once again acknowledge our need for life in Jesus Christ! Christ not only taught us how and why we should pray- but He also gave us His body and blood so that we might have the right to pray! By His one sacrifice on the cross, Jesus has opened the way for us to come to the Father as His children- so that we might pray for all these Spiritual blessings!