This morning, Family, we begin a new series on the Gift of Prayer. Over the next few weeks, we will be focusing on how Jesus prayed. We will look closely at how, while we are being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ according to Romans 8:29\*, our prayer life will be affected and become more effective. In our Gospel reading, the disciples had witnessed Jesus praying and made a prayer request themselves: “Lord, teach us to pray.” They did not ask for Jesus to teach them to turn water into wine, to heal the blind, or to teach them to preach. They didn’t ask Him to teach them how to walk on water—cool but not their desire or need. NO, they said, “Teach us to pray.” At this point in their lives and His ministry, they have witnessed how Jesus’ life has been guided and empowered by prayer. They have seen him taking time alone, heard his prayers, and seen their results. And in response to their request to learn to pray, we are given the Lord’s Prayer.

Now, listen, Family. This Lord’s prayer with which we are so familiar—that we prayer together every Sunday—is not given as a ritual for recitation. It is a model, a blueprint for prayer that is acceptable to God. John Calvin called prayer “the chief exercise of the faith.” Prayer is how our faith speaks. Prayer is one of our most gracious gifts. So, how’s your prayer life? Christ is our example. Think about this: When we pray, it is done on the basis of relationship. All of Jesus’ prayers address God as Abba--Father (see Galatians 4:6\*\*). Abba is the Aramaic term Christ used, more than sixty times. The only exception I have found is Christ’s plea on the cross.\*\*\*

Family, that we can pray to our Heavenly Father should serve as our foundational awareness as we pray. We have in prayer a father’s love, a father’s care, a father’s strength. Our effective prayer begins with the relationship, knowing our God has a

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\*Romans 8:29

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

\*\*Galatians 4:6

“Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba,[a] Father’”

Matthew 27:46

About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ).

father’s heart. Jesus prays in intimacy, not from a distance. It is an act of faith. The center of Jesus’ prayer life is seeking the Father’s heart. Prayer is actively experiencing the relationship. Prayer is not getting what we want. It’s getting God!

# Because He is a father, God listens to our prayers and has the resources of Heaven at the ready, ready to burst into action at His command. Last week we talked about recovering our awe of God, that feeling of reverential respect mixed with wonder. In our awe of God, our awareness of His presence increases. We become aware that the God of Creation, of the Ten Commandments, of the parting of the Red Sea, of the plagues, of the Virgin Birth of Jesus, of the victory of Jesus’ resurrection, the birth of the church—that all-powerful, timeless God is also involved in our day-to-day lives. As a loving Father, He invites us to commune with Him through the gift of prayer, and He offers through His Son a model to follow in our prayer time with Him. We are to begin with speaking His name: “Hallowed be your name.” The name of God is an expression of His character. When we begin prayer like this, we recognize and honor His Holiness.

# And we acknowledge our awareness of our prayers’ audience—our Father, in whose care we live and who, in His Holiness, allows us access. We honor Him; we do not simply rush into His presence with petitions but express reverence for His glory and confirm that our lives reflect that glory. When we pray for His name to be hallowed, we declare our desire for Him to be the foundation of our lives. His name is established for eternity, woven into our day-to-day lives (Galatians 1:5-8\*; Isaiah 57:15\*\*).

# Listen, Family, God didn’t have to provide a way for us to talk with Him. But he did! And the best way to say “thank you” for this gift is to use it. And, Family, I love you, but you must hear this: Any excuse that keeps you from prayer is not sufficient. Prayer is a beautiful expression of our dependence upon our Father. Prayer-lessness is misguided self-reliance. And self-reliance doesn’t work. He listens! He is far above us but ready to come to us. God is in Heaven and on the throne of the heart of the

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\* James 1:5-8

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

\*\*Isaiah 57:15

For this is what the high and exalted One says—

he who lives forever, whose name is holy:

“I live in a high and holy place,

but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit,

to revive the spirit of the lowly

and to revive the heart of the contrite.

# believer, the foundational awareness of presence and access. Billy Graham said, “A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian.” Prayerlessness forfeits intimacy, and when intimacy is forfeited, joy and peace and power are casualties. Prayer is necessary for the Christian. “Praying is keeping company with God,” writes James Houston. Church, you don’t have to have all the right words. The posture of your heart and your attitude are more important. And He knows your heart(Psalm 139:1-4\*)! We can depend upon God personally because He is trustworthy. We can pray based on our relationship as children to a Holy Father, and the strength of His name. Prayer is the language of faith. When we pray, it pleases God. And no, you’re not burdening Him when you pray. You are not that powerful!!! Listen, Family, it’s time that the church treats prayer like the gift that it is. How’s your prayer life? How will it change? Lord! Teach us to pray.

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\* Psalm 139

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

1 You have searched me, Lord,

and you know me.

2 You know when I sit and when I rise;

you perceive my thoughts from afar.

3 You discern my going out and my lying down;

you are familiar with all my ways.

4 Before a word is on my tongue

you, Lord, know it completely.

PASSAGES IN SUPPPORT OF THIS MESSAGE:

Psalm 25

Of David.

1 In you, Lord my God,

I put my trust.

2 I trust in you;

do not let me be put to shame,

nor let my enemies triumph over me.

3 No one who hopes in you

will ever be put to shame,

but shame will come on those

who are treacherous without cause.

4 Show me your ways, Lord,

teach me your paths.

5 Guide me in your truth and teach me,

for you are God my Savior,

and my hope is in you all day long.

6 Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love,

for they are from of old.

7 Do not remember the sins of my youth

and my rebellious ways;

according to your love remember me,

for you, Lord, are good.

8 Good and upright is the Lord;

therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.

9 He guides the humble in what is right

and teaches them his way.

10 All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful

toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.

11 For the sake of your name, Lord,

forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

LUKE 11:1-4

11 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

2 He said to them, “When you pray, say:

“‘Father

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come.

3 Give us each day our daily bread.

4 Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.[c]

And lead us not into temptation.’”