

Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 7)

Luke 8:26 – 39

Legion is not too much for Jesus

The text for today’s sermon is the Gospel reading appointed for this Sunday, the Second Sunday after Pentecost. Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God, our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing My great Redeemer's praise, The glories of my God and King, The triumphs of His grace!**

There are times in our lives, where we should stop and give thanks for what God has done for us. Many of these times we forget to pray. When we are going on a long journey, do we stop and pray before the trip begins, during the trip, and after the trip is complete? How about praying before and after meals? In the morning, and before we go to sleep?

Each of these examples are times where we may forget to give thanks to God. St. Paul writes in Romans 14:8 **For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.** St. Paul also instructs the Colossians: **Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.**

While eating lunch at our own very nice DQ, I had an interesting discussion with another individual. I am sure he struck up the conversation because I was dressed in my clerical shirt and was wearing my collar. He asked me questions regarding world history. He also talked about recent events; how it seems that people have lost touch with God.

He commented how, when he goes into a restaurant, he seems to be the only one that prays before the meal. I told him I try to pray before every meal, and that when I do, I pray aloud. Sure, there are some meals where the prayer may have slipped my mind. However, it has become more consistent over the last many years. If you would like some assistance with some of the prayers that I mentioned, the Small Catechism has examples. You may find these prayers in your Lutheran Service Book, on pages, 327 and 328. They are also in your Small Catechism that you have at home.

Our lives should be lives of continual thanksgiving.

What is prayer? The simplest answer is this: prayer is how we speak with God. In this “conversation”, we thank God for all the blessings he has given us. We also ask for blessings in prayer. In these prayers, we do the talking (the requesting) and God will answer the prayer. That answer may be yes. It may be no. It may be not now. The disciples, during their time with Jesus, heard Jesus pray. They saw his example and they still asked him to teach them how to pray. Jesus gave them the Lord’s Prayer as a blueprint on how to pray.

During confirmation classes, we look deeper into the Lord’s Prayer. Please answer this question in your mind: What, in the Lord’s Prayer, is the first thing that we ask to be given to us? I will answer this in a few minutes.

The introduction to the Lord’s Prayer: **Our Father who art in heaven** is like the address on an envelope. We are praying to God in heaven. We aren’t praying to this statue, a stone, a tree, or any other false god. **Hallowed be Thy name.** This is not something that we are asking of God. Rather, this is our obeying the Second Commandment **You shall not misuse the name of the Lord.** We ask or petition God that His name be kept Holy here on earth and in heaven.

The next two petitions also deal with heaven and earth issues: **Thy kingdom come,** followed by **Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** Again, this is not a physical ask from God, rather that God keeps our faith alive and prepares good works for us to complete. Now, we come to the first thing that we ask God to provide to us. **Give us this day our daily bread**. By my count, this is the fourth out of seven petitions (or requests) in the Lord’s prayer. Up until this moment, we have been asking God to do “godly” things. Now, we are asking for everything we need for life.

In the Small Catechism, regarding the fourth petition: ***What does this mean?* God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.**

***What is meant by daily bread?* Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.** This is everything that we need to exist.

Notice, however, that this does not include the Lord’s Supper. This refers to daily needs, not spiritual needs. From this point on, the prayer deals with how we interact with others AND that we ask God to shield us from the devil. This is the blueprint for a good prayer. Does your prayer need to have each and every part of the Lord’s Prayer? Not necessarily. If your loved one is in the hospital, praying for daily bread may not be necessary. However, thanking God for his gift of medicine, and that God would guide the hands of the doctors and nurses that are working on your loved one is a good use of prayer.

In our gospel text: **26Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. 28When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.”** Here, this demon possessed man acknowledges exactly who is Jesus. This is not a prayer, merely an acknowledgement.

**29For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) 30Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. 31And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.** They begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. They prayed to Jesus. Even the demons pray not to be sent to Sheol (Hell).

**32Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. 33Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.** The demons (Legion) would rather enter the unclean animals and then commit suicide than that Jesus would send them straight to Sheol (Hell).

Verse 4 of our sermon hymn: **He breaks the pow'r of canceled sin; He sets the pris'ner free. His blood can make the foulest clean; His blood avails for me.** This is exactly what Jesus did for Legion. **He breaks the pow'r of canceled sin; He sets the pris'ner free.** The prisoner, in our gospel text is the man that was called Legion. The demons are not the prisoner, they are the prison.

Where the hymn says: **His blood can make the foulest clean; His blood avails for me.** This is what Jesus does for us. All this is done by Jesus, for you, for me, for us. We do not deserve it. Yet Jesus still died to sin on the cross for us AND He gives us (or he gifts us) his holiness.

When and why should we pray? This is a long list, and it may seem repetitive at times, but our lives should be a life of prayer. Prayer at the start of the day. Prayers before (and after) meals. Prayer before taking a journey, and again upon the end of safe travel. Prayers should be offered before a major decision must be made. Also, after the decision is made, asking that God would bless the decision. The list goes on and on.

**34When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. 35Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. 36And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. 37Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. 38The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.**

This man, who terrorized the people, is now praising God and telling them about what God has done for him. This might be in the form of a prayer offered, but most pointedly, it is a testimony of what has been done by God. No mere man could have freed him from the power of the devil.

So, now, where may we find good examples of prayer? Let us start with what is there in the pew, with you. The Lutheran Service Book (LSB), or the Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) are books of prayer. The LSB contains many prayers listed in the front of the hymnal. There are also Psalms contained in the front of both hymnals. Each Psalm is a prayer that was offered by Moses, King David, King Solomon, along with lesser–known individuals like: Ethan, Heman, Asaph, and the Sons of Korah.

Where else might we find examples of prayer? Still in the hymnal; the rest of the hymnal has hymns that may be considered fine examples of prayer. The Holy Bible, in the pews next to the Lutheran Service Book, has the complete collection of Psalms, the book of Lamentations, and other prayers available.

Martin Luther, in his Small and Large Catechisms, included morning and evening prayers, along with prayers for before and after meals. St. Paul wrote in the book of 1st Thessalonians: Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.In case you didn’t notice, our sermon hymn is a prayer. And so I will bring this sermon to a close with the last stanza of the hymn:

**To God all glory, praise, and love Be now and ever giv'n By saints below and saints above, The Church in earth and heav'n.**

Now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.