



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Devotion Time:
Prayer Time

Week 3: Matthew chapters 5 and 6

Opening Prayer

God you listen to all our prayers, yet sometimes we do not even know what to say. Help our prayer life to be shaped by the words of Jesus, who taught us to pray with simple words, and trusting you really do know what we need, even when we cannot find the right words. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A group gathers at church for a Bible study or a committee meeting, and everyone stares at one another. We know we need to begin this time and end this time with prayer. We have been taught that we start and end with prayer ever since we were little. But to actually lead a prayer, we have not been taught that. So we stare at each other, until someone volunteers, reluctantly so, or until the Pastor shows up and everyone can sigh with relief, cause, well the Pastor isn't afraid to pray.

We sit down at meal time with our family, and we think we should start with prayer. After all, Grandma always made sure we said a prayer when we ate at her house for dinner. What was that prayer again? How did it go? Will I teach my kids how to say it right? Is it something my kids will find value in? Do I even find value in it?

Prayer is often times like this. We know we should pray. We know we have been given some words, somewhere along the line, but it is awkward or uncomfortable, or what if we mess up. Well, the good news is you are not alone in wondering how to pray. You are not alone if you worry about what to say. Even in Jesus' day, his own disciples did not know how to pray. Jesus includes in the Sermon on the Mount a whole section on prayer. And part of what Jesus wants us to know is that you don't have to be a professional prayer-giver. In fact, those who are professional prayer-givers often have long flowing, very flowery-language, prayers that may sound nice but are actually quite meaningless. But the person who prays simply has a prayer that is not only heard but will be rewarded.

Now that word "rewarded" does not equal God giving us everything we name in our prayers. But it is found in the experience of knowing God hears us, God speaks back to us, and helps us to see how God's Kingdom is coming to earth as it is in heaven, in our prayers and beyond.

So, you are not so eloquent, Jesus reminds us speaking a prayer isn't about eloquence. So, you were not trained to speak long prayers, Jesus reminds us speaking a prayer isn't about length. So, you are worried about not getting what you want, Jesus reminds us speaking a prayer is about discovering God's Kingdom coming to earth. So next time you are at a committee meeting, a Bible study, or sitting at the kitchen table, just lead the prayer with the words you find in your heart. God is ready to listen.

Taking Time to Pray

a simple prayer practice may be to use a pattern based on "roses" or "thorns", or "highs" or "Lows" or "yay Gods" or "hey Gods".

All these phrases have a similar construct. Take a moment to express something you are thankful for; take a moment to express something you want God to address.

There are many different ways to start prayer life, but this one, especially as a practice with children, helps us learn that God does hear us. It reminds us that we can tell God the things that are making us happy, that not all prayers have to be about what is concerning. But also gives space for those things that concern us. And we don't have to use fancy language to name it. We can just say, "Yay God" and "Hey God" and we are heard.

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

First Lutheran Church * 116 South B Street * Monmouth, IL 61462

309-734-2106 * office@flcmonmouth.org * www.flcmonmouth.org

Pastor Jamie Gallagher * prjamie@flcmonmouth.org