

## Sermon for Sunday July 27 2025

~ Luke 11:1-13 ~ National Bishop Susan Johnson

Grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus. I'm pleased to be with you in this way today and to bring you greetings from your siblings in Christ from coast to coast to coast that make up this part of the family of God that we call the ELCIC. Can we talk – about prayer? I can count on one hand the number of times anyone has asked me about my prayer life. I think it's something we need to talk about more, so that we can encourage and challenge each other to a richer and deeper discipline of prayer. And praying is something that we are all called to do – Luther wrote *“As a shoemaker makes a shoe, or a tailor makes a coat, so ought a Christian to pray. Prayer is the daily business of a Christian.”*

*Prayer is the daily business of a Christian!*

When I was in seminary, one of the hardest things for me to learn was how to pray out loud. Not reading prayers out loud, but actually making up prayers on the spot, in front of others. What made it hard was that I couldn't stop thinking that there was a big red pen out there, circling all my grammatical mistakes and making editorial comments about my content. My fear of “doing it wrong” made my praying very stiff and uncomfortable.

The truth is that sometimes I find that same big red pen coming into my mind when I'm praying alone as well. I've talked with other people and have learned that I'm not the only one who had struggled with my prayer life. Sometimes the fear of getting it wrong, sometimes concern about not knowing what to do, or say, hampers us in our prayer life and keeps us from being as connected with God as

we, or God, would like. With prayer, as with anything in life, there are some people for whom it comes naturally and easily and others who struggle their whole life long.

Jesus' disciples struggled with how to pray as well. In Luke's gospel we heard how the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, and he responded by giving them a prayer outline that we now refer to as the Lord's prayer. So, if you are struggling with your praying, remember – you are in good company!

My regular prayer time is when I am walking or driving. It's a way that I can carve out some alone time for me and God. Obviously, I don't close my eyes when I pray! I know some people pray one way their whole lives and find it a rich and nurturing experience. But I am always trying new ways to pray.

Last week when I was out walking, I prayed out loud. I tried to visualise Jesus walking with me and turned my prayer into conversation. I was amazed at how much it changed my prayer. I still prayed for the same things, and in a similar order (see my list below!) but the words just flowed! For the first time in a long time, I forgot about the big red pen and just talked to God. I got a couple of funny looks from people I met on the way, but I didn't let it stop me. Best of all, I remembered to be quiet and listen, not just talk!

If the words don't flow for you when you pray, don't worry about it. Martin Luther said *"the fewer the words, the better the prayer. The more the words, the worse the prayer. Few words and much meaning is Christian. Many words and little meaning is pagan."*

Whether it comes easily or whether you struggle, I want to encourage you, and I want to invite you to encourage others, to pray. Every day. Don't give up. If it's hard, ask for help. Try something new!

I set up a prayer chair in my house with a bible and devotional material on hand. Here are some other ideas.

Pray at a specific time of the day – while you exercise, do dishes, or shower!

Pray with music, either playing in the background or try praying while you sing hymns.

Pray with a prayer partner, or prayer group.

Pray with movement – exercise, walking a labyrinth, or dancing

Pray with scripture – read a passage and repeat it several times – let your prayer come out of the word

Pray with someone else's words. Use Luther's prayers, the prayers in our worship book, or find a new favourite prayer author.

Pray online. Google prayers. Skype and pray. Pray on Facebook or twitter

Pray through writing. Journal. Write poetry as a prayer

Pray with the news. Listen to what is happening and offer up your concerns as prayers.

Or just pray the Lord's prayer. Everyday. Your own prayers will grow out of it.

Today, when you share the peace why not ask someone, how's your prayer life.

Remember, *Prayer is the daily business of a Christian!*

God bless you in your praying! *Amen.*