

We had two of our young people perform a skit as an introduction to the sermon on Sunday. Below is the skit followed by the sermon.

Pastor Mike

## **DON'T INTERRUPT ME LORD, I'M PRAYING**

By Clyde Lee Herring

Adapted from Bread magazine, Nazarene Publishing House.

Our Father who art in Heaven....

**Yes**

Don't interrupt me. I'm praying.

**But you called me!**

Called you? I didn't call you. I'm praying. 'Our Father who art in Heaven.....'

**There, you did it again.**

Did what?

**Called me. You said 'Our Father who art in Heaven'. Here I am.... What's on your mind?**

But I didn't mean anything by it. I was, you know, just saying my prayers for the day. I always say the Lord's Prayer. It makes me feel good, sort of like getting a job done.

**All right, go on.**

'Hallowed be thy name...'

**Hold it! What do you mean by that?**

By what?

**By 'Hallowed be they name?'**

It means.... It means....Good grief. I don't know what it means. How should I know? It's just part of the prayer..... By the way, what does it mean?

**It means honoured, holy, wonderful**

Ah! That makes sense. I never thought about what 'hallowed' meant before. ....'Thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.'

**Do you really mean that?**

Of course, why not?

**What are you doing to do about it?**

Do? Nothing I suppose. I just think it would be rather good if you got control of everything down here as you have up there.

**Have I got control of you?**

Well, I go to church!

**That isn't what I asked you. What about your bad temper? You've really got a problem there you know. Then there's the way you spend your money.....all on yourself; and what about the kind of books you read?**

Stop picking on me! I'm just as good as some of the rest of those hypocrites down at the church!

**Excuse me. I thought you were praying for my will to be done. If that is to happen it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. Like you, for example.**

Oh, all right. I guess I do have some hang-ups now that you mention it. I could probably name some others.

**So could I.**

I haven't thought about it very much until now, but I really would like to cut out some of those things. I would like to, you know, be really free.

**Good! Now we're getting somewhere. We'll work together, you and I. Some victories can truly be won. I'm proud of you.**

Look, Lord, I need to finish up here. This is taking a lot longer than it usually does.... 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

**You need to cut out the bread. You're overweight as it is.**

Hey, wait a minute! What is this? 'Criticize Me Day?' Here I was, doing my religious duty, and all of a sudden you break in and remind me of all my hang-ups.

**Praying is a dangerous thing. You could wind up changed you know! That's what I'm trying to get across to you. You called me and here I am. It's too late to stop now. Keep on praying. I'm interested in the next part of your prayer..... (pause) Well go on.**

I'm scared to.

**Scared? Of what?**

I know what you'll say.

**Try me and see**

'Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.'

**What about Bill?**

See! I knew it! I knew you would bring him up! Why, Lord. He's told lies about me, cheated me out of some money. He never paid back that debt he owes me. I've sworn to get even with him!

**But your prayer? What about your prayer?**

I didn't mean it

**Well, at least you're honest, but it's not much fun carrying that load of bitterness around inside, is it?**

No, but I'll feel better as soon as I get even. Boy, have I got some plans for old Bill! He'll wish he never did me any harm.

**You won't feel any better. You'll feel worse. Revenge isn't sweet. Think of how unhappy you already are; but I can change all that.**

You can? How?

**Forgive Bill. Then I'll forgive you. Then the hate and sin will be Bill's problems and not yours. You may lose the money, but you will have settled your heart.**

But, Lord, I can't forgive Bill.

**Then I can't forgive you.**

Oh, you're right. You always are; and more than I want revenge on Bill, I want to be right with you.....(pause..sigh). All right, all right. I forgive him. Help him to find the right road in life. Lord, he's bound to be awfully miserable now that I think about it. Anybody who goes round doing the things he does to others has to be mixed up inside. Someway, somehow show him the right way.

**There now! Wonderful! How do you feel?**

Hmmm. Well, not bad. Not bad at all. In fact I feel quite tremendous! You know, I don't think I'll have to go to bed tense tonight for the first time since I can remember. Maybe I won't be so tired from now on because I'm not getting enough rest.

**You're not through with your prayer. Go on.**

Oh, all right. 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

**Good! Good! I'll do just that. Just don't put yourself in a place where you can be tempted.**

What do you mean?

**Change some of your friendships. Some of your so-called friends are beginning to get to you. They'll have you completely involved in wrong things before long. Don't be fooled. They advertise that they're having fun, but for you it would be ruin. Don't use me for an escape hatch.**

I don't understand

**Yes you do. You've done it a lot of times. You get caught in a bad situation. You get into trouble and then you come running to me. 'Lord help me out of this mess and I promise you I'll never do it again.' You remember some of those bargains you tried to make with me?**

Yes, and I'm ashamed, Lord, I really am.

**Which bargain are you remembering?**

Well, when the woman next door saw me coming out of the local pub. I'd told my mother I was going to the shop. I remember telling you 'O God, don't let her tell my mother where I've been. I promise I'll be in church every Sunday.'

**She didn't tell your mother, but you didn't keep your promise, did you?**

I'm sorry Lord, I really am. Up until now I thought that just praying was enough. I didn't expect you to answer like this.

**Go ahead and finish your prayer.**

'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen'

**Do you know what would bring me glory? What would really make me happy?**

No, but I'd like to know. I want now to please you. Now I can see how good it would be to be a real follower of you.

**You just answered the question.**

I did?

**Yes. The thing that would bring me glory is to have people like you truly love and follow me; and I see that happening between us. Now that some of these old sins are exposed and out of the way, well there's no telling what we can do together.**

Lord, let's see what we can make of me, ok?

**Yes, let's see.**

## **“Prayer”**

July 27, 2025

First Christian Church

Scripture Text: Luke 11: 1-4,10-13

Our Scripture lesson this morning is Luke’s version of the prayer Jesus taught His disciples. We call it the Lord’s Prayer. And thank you Will and Rissa for helping us learn more about it in a fun way. Well I know 3 different versions of the Lord’s Prayer. I am not talking about little tweaks like “trespasses” and “those who trespass against us” vs. “debt and debtors” vs. “sins” and “those who sin against us.” I am talking about 3 ancient versions: there is Luke’s version which we read this morning, the version found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, which is slightly longer than Luke’s version, and the version we pray together every Sunday. The version we use comes from something called the Didache which was basically a handbook of the 12 Apostle’s teachings. It added the “for Thine is the power and glory forever” part and instructed people to pray the prayer 3 times a day.

Though there are 3 ancient versions, their content is basically the same. It starts out with “Father” or “Our Father, who art in heaven”. Now I understand and am sympathetic to people whose own father has damaged the definition of father so badly that it hurts as an image for God. As you know, I use many other images of God as well as Father. But I think the image of Father is important because it establishes us as children. We do not approach God as equals. God is greater than us. We are under God. We are a lesser power with the privilege of approaching a greater power, but yet a greater power that cares for us and wants to empower us and help us. That is where prayer starts. When it comes to power and strength and knowledge and wisdom and gifts to give, God is up here, and we are down here. But God does not see us as subjects or the faceless masses, but as children. God loves us, cherishes us, and wants to give us everything we need to thrive and be amazing. In His prayer, Jesus matches “hallowed be Thy name” with the image of Father to help us remember just how big and powerful and awe-inspiring God is – never to be dumbed down to a single, graven image; as well as how approachable, intimate, and caring God is toward us.

Next, the prayer moves to the petitions or the asking. First for God’s Kingdom come and God’s will be done. I really like how Will and Rissa’s skit made that personal. “Do I have control of you?” That is where the kingdom starts. Then we ask for daily bread, God’s help in providing for our physical needs. Then forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. I like that line because it not only recognizes the core of what we need from God on a spiritual level – to be forgiven, but also reminds us that what God does for us, should change us and affect what we do to others. If we ask God to forgive us, we need to forgive others. Our relationship with God changes how we do life. And finally, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” or as Luke says, “Do not bring us to the time of trial.” Its asking, in daily temptations, in the

ultimate battle through the end of time, God protect me. Again, I like the skit with God's line, "I'll do just that. Just don't put yourself in a place where you can be tempted." What we expect from God, we need to expect from ourselves as well – in forgiveness and in not leading to temptation. In this prayer, Jesus summarizes the 4 things we need most when we come to God: 1. God's presence (Thy kingdom come), 2. our physical needs met (give us this day our daily bread), 3. our spiritual needs met in forgiveness (as we forgive others) and 4. salvation (deliver us from evil).

If you are looking for more on how to pray, I invite you to go to our Facebook page and scroll down the video archives to Teaching Tuesday V (Roman numeral 5) which is a short series on prayer. I could do more of that here, but I don't want us to miss Jesus' move from teaching His disciples how to pray, to why we pray.

In verse 9 He says prayer is asking, seeking and knocking. And generally speaking, we don't ask people for things we know they cannot give. We don't search unless we think there is something to find. We don't knock loudly unless we think someone is home. What I am saying is the very act of prayer is an act of confident hope that God is. Prayer is seeking God. Prayer is asking for confirmation that we are not alone. Prayer is knocking on God's door. And Jesus says in verse 10, "everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." He then continues with His parent-child metaphor and says just as a parent knows how to give good gifts to their children, even if they are not necessarily the gift the child asks for, so much more it is true with your Father in heaven. In other words, you may not get exactly what you ask for in prayer. You may not get any of the specific things you prayed for in your prayer. But you will get why you prayed. Verse 13 says God will send the Holy Spirit to those who pray. What we are seeking even more than the winning the lottery ticket is God. What we are asking for even more than healing is to know we are okay. What we are knocking for is to know we are welcomed in. And God sends the Holy Spirit to affirm your connection with God, your connection to eternity, your connection through the gates of heaven.

Prayer is not about using the right words in the right order to make God do what we want. That is reserved for genies when you let them out of their lamp. The effectiveness of prayer is not defined by how many times God says "yes" as compared to how many times God says, "no" or "later". Prayer is not about making God yield to your will. Prayer is about seeking God. And the promise is if you seek persistently, you will find God. And God will respond not by giving you everything you want, but giving you what you sought, what you need – God, the Holy Spirit, the really good gift.

Mike Van Heyningen