

Easter 6 (Rogate) – Vicar Anderson sermon  
St. John 16:23-30 “The Father Hears His Children’s Prayers.”  
May 13/14, 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

+ + +

Lord God heavenly Father, who by Your son promised to give us whatsoever we shall ask in His name, we humbly ask You, grant us Your power of Your Holy Spirit that we may make known our requests unto You in faithful prayer, and desire of You that which is well pleasing to You and profitable for us, lifting up holy hands without wrath or doubting, and being firmly assured that You will hear our prayer; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever. Amen. (The Lutheran Liturgy, companion altar book for The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 124)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

---

*The sermon text for today is taken from the 16th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:*

In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

---

In Christ Jesus, who teaches you the value, meaning, and the command of prayer, giving the Lord’s prayer as your model and guide, assuring you that He hears you, dear fellow redeemed:

Pastor and I have started another round of Christianity 101. Like the class in the fall, a statement is made to try and put people at ease. That statement is, “There is no such thing as a dumb question.” Now we might chuckle and think to ourselves questions that fit that category, we can also use this idea with our worship lives. Is there such a thing as a dumb prayer? Now I know when children hear the text say, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you,” they can wonder if God will really give us anything. “Can God really give me my own semi-truck?” “Can He get me my very own race car?” As a child I may have had these questions, and even if they were childish then, our text today is very clear. Jesus is teaching about the power that prayer has. This power is not from us, but we see Christ’s work on display. It is through Him that the Heavenly Father hears His children’s prayers.

Our text starts with Jesus telling the disciples that their joy will be full when they ask in His name. He is pointing out that this joy is coming to them from God. God is with them, and He will not leave them or forsake them. Jesus is pointing this out because they can still have joy, even when there is great tribulation. The disciples forget about the joy they have from their heavenly Father as the night continues. Their joy that they have being with Jesus soon shatters as Jesus is arrested and taken away from them. Instead of joy, they run away in fear.

The disciples are trying to figure out what Jesus is talking about. Jesus admits to them that some of the things that He tells them, He is using figures of speech. Jesus is not saying these things to trick His disciples. There is important information that Jesus tells them plainly. The important information is that He will die and rise from the dead. The disciples do not want to believe this saying.

Jesus also tells the disciples where He came from. *"In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."* He points out that the disciples do believe this. That Jesus is the Son of God. They can pray to God the Father because they believe in the Son. Hours from now they will be asked to pray. Jesus would pray continually in the garden, but instead of praying, the disciples would fall asleep. They would not ask for strength and they would run away in fear.

We all have fears that the devil will try to use to paralyze us. Our fears can consume us. I don't need to say, "think about being in the disciple's shoes." Each one of us has had a fear that has caused us to cower and many times, it can be from our sins. We can be struck with the fear that our sins could be brought into the light. This fear has been passed to us from our first parents. Adam and Eve tried to hide their sins from God. They sewed fig leaves to make clothes and when they heard God walking in the Garden, they hid among the trees. God knows their hiding place.

He also knows our hiding place. God sees all that we do, nothing is hidden from Him. Like Adam, Eve, and the disciples, how do we go to God when we have sinned against Him. He is a righteous judge. Yet we get in trouble because we do not go to Him when we have problems. We think that since God is upset with us, maybe we can just get ourselves out of the problem. God is right there to give us medicine, but we look the other way. How can the Father love us and answer us when we have failed to keep His commands?

Jesus is teaching His disciples about God's command of prayer. God hears our prayers and commands us to do it. Now what is the problem with that? Well, we usually do two things. We can find ourselves in a group who don't pray or pray very little. We think that we are controlling our lives. The devil enjoys when we are not going to God. He knows that when we are not praying, it means we are focused on ourselves. Then we go to God in prayer as a last resort when we find ourselves in a bad situation. There is another group who looks at prayer as something we are doing for God. That God needs our prayers to function. These prayers, like the last-minute ones, focus on me. Not on what God has done, but what I can do for God or what I demand from Him. As you might be wondering to yourselves, "how do I pray to God", Jesus keeps you calm with the first thing He says in this text.

God the Father does hear His children. Jesus teaches the disciples that they can have comfort and joy because they know the truth. Jesus tells them that *"you have loved me and have believed that I came from God."* They understand that Jesus is true God. God the Father loves them because they loved and trusted His Son. They can go to God the Father as children because Jesus has taken away their sins and made them right with God. Even when they were going to

still mess up. Jesus would soon leave them, but He would come back to them, rising from the dead!

Jesus' glory shines forth and we see that He is not just a man. This is God in the flesh. No one can talk like this unless they came from God. The world needed someone to be able to answer God directly. We cannot do that because we are not perfect. Jesus however can talk to God directly because He has done all that His Father asked of Him. Jesus assures us just as He assured His disciples that the Father does hear us. He listens to our every word and Jesus explains why.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you."* Jesus knows that you can't go to God the Father on your own. He is a righteous judge. Jesus tells you that it isn't because of anything that you can do to talk to God the Father. You needed a go-between. *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). You can ask for anything in Jesus' name because He is your go-between. He stepped in front of God's vision with His sacrifice on the cross for your sins. Your communication is restored with your heavenly Father because He comes to you through the work of Christ.

Christ's redemptive work is the reason that you are children of God. You never need to think that God doesn't hear your prayers. He is always listening. When life looks as though it will continue to push back on you, when it drives you into the lowest parts, it can feel and seem easy to not pray to God. It is in these hard moments where you look to the cross, see what Christ has done for you and know that God hears every prayer. He can even translate prayers when you are so hurt that it looks as though nothing will come out of your mouth.

As God translates even your silent prayers of pain, He has given you other prayers to pray. The psalms are rich prayers that still fit today. They remind you of where your prayers are supposed to come from. *"O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart"* (Psalm 10:17). Your prayers do not come from elaborate thoughts, they come from the heart. The psalms assure you that because of what Christ has done for you, you are heard here on earth.

Your Savior has also taught you a prayer that sometimes you take for granted. There is a reason that Jesus taught the Lord's prayer. Think about the petitions, how many are focused on the things of this world? The fourth petition is the only petition that you pray that God would give you daily bread. Your daily bread is anything you need to take care of your body and life. All the rest of the petitions are about your spiritual needs. These are needs that you can sometimes forget about, and these are the most important. You are reminded that God is the One who takes care of you, not the other way around. And when you forget this, it is your Savior who has redeemed you that you can go to God as children go to their Fathers.

We do not need to be in fear or think that we don't deserve this Fatherly love. We receive it not based on our own works. The Father loves us because of His Son. Christ died in our place and rose from the dead taking away our sins. It is because of what Christ has done for us that we don't need to worry about our prayers. They are being answered by God himself. He is all around us, providing us with strength for our trials. Our prayers are not dumb in God's eyes. He hears every word, even the words that won't come out of our mouths. Nothing is too big or

too small for God to handle. He will do everything according to His good and gracious will. Jesus teaches us that whatever we ask in His name God will hear. Our joy will be full because we know that we speak to God because of Christ. And because of Christ's resurrection, we will speak to Him face-to-face when He calls us home. Amen.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

+ + +