

In Nomine Iesu

Rogate, the Fifth Sunday after Easter 2024

Ask, for the Father Himself loves you – John 16:23-30

“Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.’ His disciples said to Him, ‘See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.’”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for whose sake our prayers are heard. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

Prayer in Jesus’ name is prayer that relies on His prayer in Gethsemane. There in the **garden of evil**, our Lord’s perfect prayer for us all is so intense that He sweats blood. The Father hears His prayer and, even as He prays, Jesus’ will is molded to that of His Father in heaven. “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39) Jesus will go alone to face the Father’s justice. Meanwhile a stone’s throw away from our Lord’s bloody prayer, His weak, fearful disciples fail to pray. They succumb to temptation and sleep. But despite their failure, the Son’s prayer is answered, and the Father’s will – For God so loved the world - is done. The disciples will go free as He is arrested. They will live even as He dies. For His prayer, that of the perfect Son accepting the will of the Father, covers us all. He is our atoning sacrifice, the Lamb consumed in the Father’s wrath, our holy Substitute for all the sins we have committed. In His name and with His encouragement we pray to the Father. Yet still we hesitate as if we do not know Him, the Father, well.

I

This morning, I see our Parkland Lutheran School teachers, many Sunday School teachers former and current, many parents who teach your children about God. I think all would agree that it is not hard to teach about Jesus, because we have so many pictures to draw upon in our hearts and minds, in pictures and statues: the Good Shepherd, the Sower and Seed, the Healer of the sick, the Feeder of the hungry, and so many more. Children have no trouble drawing their own pictures of Jesus; and there is an element of reality to each of them no matter how young the artist. But now, look for pictures of God, the Father. Try to draw Him and it is more difficult. You can go the Michelangelo route using his depiction of the Father on the ceiling of Sistine Chapel in Rome or the standard bearded, white-haired guy in the clouds route or the diagram of a triangle inside of a circle as we have in the hallway of our school. It is more problematic to picture or draw the Father, isn’t it?

Jesus told His disciples, “The time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in

figurative language, but I will tell you plainly **about the Father**.” Jesus used many parables – illustrations, pictures, figures – to teach His disciples about the Father. But it was, in a sense, no easier for Him than it was for Michelangelo, the white-bearded old man crowd, or the geometric diagram drawers of our own day to speak plainly of the Father. How do you speak plainly of or illustrate that which no one has ever seen – except, of course, the Son? But how do you, who have seen Him, speak plainly to humans about Him whom no eye has seen or can even imagine?

Well, clearly, Jesus would find a way to do so, because **He promised**: “the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figuratively language, but **I will tell** you plainly about the Father.” One day later, He told them plainly. He told them in a way both unforgettable and completely understandable. We have the illustration, the picture, the figure, in front of us this morning. Could Jesus speak more plainly of the Father than this. Could He speak of His Father anymore clearly than, with His own crucifixion, to say: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”? (John 3:16) His disciple Paul, who never walked with Him as did the other twelve, and yet believed, asks us, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)

That is what prayer in Jesus’ name is. It is prayer that finds its voice, substance, and confidence in the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Prayer in His name pleads to the Father, “Lord, have mercy,” and He does. It implores Him, “Create in me a clean heart, O God,” and He does. It petitions Him, “Lord, help me,” and He does. It turns to Him as children to their own dear father, “Our Father, who art in heaven,” and finds to its great wonder that, indeed, He is our Father; and He answers prayer.

And prayer has not only a basis, but also a context. We do not pray to obtain what will harm us and war against the spirit. When, through the twelve, we asked Jesus to teach us how to pray, what to pray for, He told us, plainly. And thus, we pray to our Father, who has saved us and called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. We pray like Jesus His beloved Son in Gethsemane that our Father in heaven would mold our will to His and so free us from despair that can drag us down and away from Him. After all, we are praying to Him who knows all, who understands all, who sees all, who is gracious and forgiving to all. Why would we not want our will to be conformed to His? Prayer in Jesus’ name is prayer in accord with His word and will, which is in complete accord with that of His Father, our Father. As such, it is prayer that is always heard, that is always answered. Whatever you ask in Jesus’ name the Father gives. Jesus promised. So, ask, that your joy may be full.

II

The president of the United States, or even the governor of this state, our state, will not return your calls. If you don’t believe me, try it tomorrow morning. Keep it up all day long. You will not be allowed to speak to either. You are not very important to them. Despite all the propaganda about their being servants of the people, they do not behave as though they were servants of all. But even though they are heads of state, and weighed down with many responsibilities, what do you think happens when their children call them? My guess is that they answer the call.

And so it is that we pray to our Father in heaven as children, His children. Do you remember what we memorized in the Small Catechism? “Our Father who art in heaven.” *What does this mean?* “God hereby tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so we may ask Him with all boldness and confidence, as children ask their dear Father.” We pray with the same boldness and confidence with which small children climb up into their father’s lap, eyes filled with trust and confidence, knowing that he loves them. The Almighty, the Ruler and Creator of all things, the One who was, and is, and will be forever, who gave His own Son into death as a ransom to serve the unfaithful and faithless rebels, the Living God, He eagerly waits for and takes pleasure in your prayers. He loves to hear you. He loves to bless you. He loves to nurture you. He loves to give and forgive you. He answers and gives. So, ask, that your joy may be full.

And it is not only the Son, who came to serve and to reconcile us to the Father. It is not only the Father who spoke from heaven in His own voice, saying that He was well pleased with His Son, proving it finally and forever by raising Him from death on the third day. But it is also the Spirit who bears witness of the Son and speaks the truth, who loves you. It is He who, as St. Paul said, “helps in our weaknesses, For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Romans 8:26)

It is the inner council of the Triune God that works in your behalf to make your joy full. Your prayers rise like incense to fill the holy place where the Father is. There the Son is your Advocate. He rules on high at the right hand of His Father, judging all things, interceding for you, having finished His mission to save, and returned to the Father. There He advocates for you, pointing to the print of the nails by which He reconciled the Father to you, by which your conscience is cleansed of all guilt. From there He sends the Spirit, whom He promised, the One called the Comforter, who also has sympathy for you in whose heart He makes His home. He knows that you do not always know how to pray. So, He prays perfect prayers for and with you, in perfect accord with God’s will, with unspeakable groanings on your behalf. The Father hears the Spirit and sees the Son. And so, He is with you. He loves you, lowly, unimportant you, whom kings and presidents and governors dismiss and ignore. You the One who rules heaven and earth cannot neglect or ignore, for in baptism He called you His own. You are His own dear child for Jesus’ sake.

+++

So, dear Christian, you are not alone, even when it seems to you that you are. Your heavenly Father’s ear is open to you, waiting to hear and bless. Ask, that your joy may be full. Ask for everything that will serve you well for time and eternity. Ask for everything that will serve your neighbor well for time and eternity. Ask, that your joy may be full. Ask, for your Father loves you. His Son has told you plainly of Your Father in heaven. Ask, and soon enough you will need ask for nothing, for the kingdom of heaven is yours. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria