

***Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025***  
***TEACH US TO PRAY***

***Prayer***

Father, we thank you that have called us to be your children, that you are always present to talk to us, and that you provide for both our physical and spiritual needs.

AMEN

***Introduction***

Today's text is so familiar that I had to do some reflection in order to know how to preach on a passage that most, if not all of you, studied and memorized as part of your confirmation process and that we still say each week.

The passage begins with Jesus's disciples asked the question ". . . teach us to pray" and compared themselves with John's disciples; Comparisons, along with the answer to most 'how to' questions are really based in the Law. We are asking ourselves and/or others if we **DOING** the right thing(s) in the right way(s) – looking to our **ACTIONS** to try to please God.

I'd like to skip over the prayer itself for a minute and focus on the context and example given in the latter part of the reading.

***Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025***  
***TEACH US TO PRAY***

***Background and History***

To better understand the example of our actions according to the law, given by Christ in verses 5 through 8, I'd like to provide some background details that would have been obvious to the audience that we may miss today.

Most of the houses at that time were simple 1 or 2 room dwellings made from stones with a simple wooden roof. Members of the family slept on the floor on sleeping mats covered with a blanket if the weather was chilly. So, when in verse 7 we read:

*and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'*

Picture the father having to step over sleeping bodies in the dark to get to the locked door.

And why would a neighbor be asking for something at midnight because of unexpected guests?

Because in Judaism, showing hospitality to guests is considered a *mitzvah* – a good deed done out of obedience to the law. When one

***Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025***  
***TEACH US TO PRAY***

knows of strangers who are hungry or need a place to relax, it becomes a legal obligation. By this understanding, the neighbor was showing hospitality and, if he had nothing to give them, making the sleeping man aware of this need was essentially a legal demand for food.

At the end of the reading, Jesus acknowledges in verse 13 that we are sinful and evil according to our fallen nature.

***Our Actions According to the Law***

Indeed, **ALL** our actions are done to a greater or lesser degree according to that fallen nature. The core question we ask ourselves, in one way shape or form, is **WIIFM -What's In It For ME.**

It may be that, as suggested by Jesus in verse 8, that we do things just to stop the actions of others, in that case give them what they want so they will stop asking. Have any of you who are parents ever been guilty of doing that with you kids? I know I have.

As with the man and his friend, both were acting out of a sense of duty, thinking that by playing by the rules, they're doing good. What they didn't recognize is that they, like most of us, make subconscious trade-off between keeping the rules and the consequence of being found in

***Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025***  
**TEACH US TO PRAY**

violation of those rules. This runs the gamut from what seems trivial, like driving too fast (which my wife can attest to that I often do) to what seems horrendous, such as the evil of *Kristallnacht*, where both soldiers and ordinary citizens were caught up in the killing of German Jews and the destruction of their property, in part because the civil authorities looked on without intervening. In short, if we think we can break the rules without consequences, we often do so, but if not, then we do our duty and obey them.

Along a similar line, we may act according to *Quid Pro Quo* – Latin that means an exchange. The most common example is that most of us work – exchanging our time for money, which we then use to purchase things we want made by others. Such exchanges may also include intangibles, such as giving respect in exchange for love.

Still another motivation, especially when our actions are public, is to do so in order to receive the praise, honor, or recognition of others. Be it the publican who prayed loudly in the temple courts or the mother's request that her sons be seated that right and left hand of the Lord, the underlying motivation is to be seen be valuable and important by **men**,

***Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025***  
***TEACH US TO PRAY***

as opposed to the value and importance that we have in **God** eyes solely by our relationship to Him, as His beloved children.

We must understand that **ALL** of our actions are tainted to some degree with **WIIFM** and are therefore both selfish and sinful. Theologians call this *utter depravity*, defined as to continuously sin;

***God's Answer According to the Gospel***

Circling back to the prayer, in response to the disciples' question according to the **Law**, Jesus answers as to one who understands the promise and fruit of the **Gospel**

This is mirrored in the Small Catechism, where we learn of our sins through the Law – summarized by the 10 Commandments, followed by the Gospel, what God in Christ has done for us – summarized in the Creed. The third section, the Lord's Prayer, shows the response to the Good News that we are God's children.

The prayer starts by declaring that relationship. We can call upon the creator of the universe, the sovereign, all-powerful, all-knowing God as our Father, because we are in Christ. We are called by the Spirit and adopted by the Father at our Baptism, where we both died and were

***Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025***  
***TEACH US TO PRAY***

raised with Christ, and the benefits of His perfection were given to us in exchange for **ALL** our sins.

We ask, with a sure and true faith, knowing that God **WILL** provide for our physical needs; Luther provides specifics in part of his explanation of the first article of the creed

*[God] also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.*

And our Father is not only concerned with our physical needs, but the needs of our spirit as well. The prayer continues by asking for the forgiveness of sins, not as a condition – that we be forgiven if and when we forgive others – but again in a sure recognition that **because God has already forgiven us** without any merit on our part, we will reflect that generosity and forgive those that has sinned against us.

Finally, Luke concludes the prayer with a request for protection. The last part of verse 4 the New Living Translation reflects that meaning:

***Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025***  
***TEACH US TO PRAY***

*And don't let us yield to temptation*

But we will yield, because we are both fully sinner and fully saint. Like St. Paul, we will do not what we want to do but will do what we don't want to do. However, we need to remind ourselves that our Father has indeed forgiven both you and I of ALL our sins.

Let us now come to our Father in prayer as He has indeed taught us, in one voice and with the church universal, bringing to Him our praise, petitions, and thanksgiving.

AMEN