

Wednesday, May 20, 2020

Lord, teach us to pray

- Pastor Hank French

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial" (Luke 11:1-4).

The Lord's Prayer appears twice in the Gospels, once in Matthew and once in Luke. It is not found in either Mark or John. Matthew and Luke's versions of the Lord's Prayer are slightly different, but clearly they are more alike than different. (You can find Matthew's version in 5:9-13.) It is interesting to note that, in both Luke and Matthew's versions, there are no singular pronouns. It is not "Give me each day my daily bread;" it is not "Forgive me my sins for I forgive everyone indebted to me;" and it is not "Do not bring me to the time of trial." The pronouns in the prayer are all plural pronouns. Which is to say that this prayer is a prayer for the community of faith and not for individuals except as members of the community.

Although it may sound strange to Americans who emphasize and celebrate *individualism* Christian faith is not *individualistic*. It is not about me and God alone; it is not about you and God alone—it is about us and God together. While it is not individualistic, Christian faith is *personalistic*. We all have a deeply *personal* relationship with God—our Father—but that relationship is lived out in the family of faith with our sisters and brothers in the faith.

The Book of Acts gives a great picture of how the community of faith looked in the earliest church. "All who believed were **together** and had all things **in common**; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to **all**, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time **together** in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:44-47).

Clearly, this way of doing church cannot be widely replicated in 21st century America, but it is a reminder that we are in the life of faith together, so we care for each other, we support each other, we encourage each other, we are there for each other. That's how I have experienced First Lutheran and it's why our motto is "First—Servants of All."

Prayer: Father, thank you for my sisters and brothers—my family of faith. Amen.