

SLIDE 1 – Praying hands over a bible

The gospel writer Luke provides the story of Jesus teaching his followers about prayer. The form of the prayer is the base for what we now call the Lord's Prayer. The posture of the one who prays is of respect and humility with a dash of expectation. Through this teaching Jesus reassures his followers of God's incredible reliability.

Prayer is a focus of the author of Luke/Acts more than any other gospel writer. Luke begins and ends with prayer. Jesus receives the Spirit while praying. The disciples notice that Jesus prays regularly. In Luke Jesus prays before important events like the calling of the disciples, his decision to head toward Jerusalem and the cross, his transfiguration on the mountain, and at the Mount of Olives just prior to when he was betrayed. Jesus dies praying, and the risen Lord prays with the disciples in the moment before they see him for who he truly is. In today's text Jesus instructs believers on how to pray and assures us that God hears and answers our prayers.

If you journey in faith long enough you will discover there are many occasions for prayer and many ways to pray. I still remember receiving at Sunday School a paper box with squares of paper that had an illustration and a Bible verse. I remember my Mom coming upstairs and helping me use this box of verses for my bedtime prayers. Those who teach prayer are our spiritual guides. Parents often are in the first position to teach their children about faith including prayer. It is what parents promise to do when they bring children for baptism.

I also remember learning to pray with the congregation before I could read. I could participate in worship when I listened to the liturgy which got repeated every week. The corporate voice which the congregation produces in worship acts like a guide to those who are learning the words of worship. I learned the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and responses to prayers. The gathered congregation acted as my spiritual guide. What we do matters! How we interact with one another matters! The memory we create today will matter for the faithfulness of God's people tomorrow!

SLIDE 2 - Labyrinth

Today we know there are many ways to pray and many disciplines which can help us to create a space for talking with God and listening to God. Do you have a variety of ways in which you pray? When was the last time you learned a new practice of prayer? Prayer can be creative like a Doodle Prayer, or beautiful like a sung response, or worldly like intercessory prayer.

One of the great characteristics of St. John's is the variety of prayer that is taught and practiced here. Prayer is not simply pouring out words to God as an individual person. It is also being attentive to the presence of God and the Spirit of God within the community. It is praying as the body of Christ for the things that God would have us pray for. Space is created for prayer to take place whether it is in walking the Labyrinth, gathered around the sand cross or sand bowls, gathered in community in lament, or gathered in praise, thanksgiving, or for intercession.

### SLIDE 3 – Sand Cross

To ask how to pray is not a silly question. The disciples are noticing something about Jesus' prayer life which prompted their request. Jesus is getting them to begin to imagine that there is enough for everyone and abundant mercy to reconcile all divisions. Jesus is telling people there is manna and mercy for all. And if we ask, seek, and knock as Jesus says, Meda Stamper writes that "we will surely receive and find and the door will be opened for us to the Father's favorite and fundamental gift,... the Holy Spirit." When our prayers are heard and answered by God, it is with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus gave them five brief sentences to guide the disciples in prayer that would be fundamental in shaping their life of faith. Through this brief prayer the disciples come to know the overwhelming love of God. They would come to see how God's goodness and mercy creates the possibility of joy in life.

Jesus addresses God in the most intimate terms, as "Abba," his Father, signaling the close relationship which makes prayer possible. Jesus and the Father have a familiar and cherished relationship. Such language works in the imagination of disciples causing them to remember how incredibly merciful God is, how Jesus' stories associate compassion and relentless love with God.

### SLIDE 4 – Joy in Faith Family

In the first petition, “hallowed be your name,” we recognize God as the very source of holiness. The holiness of God is joined to the gift of the Holy Spirit. And we are recipients of the gift of the Holy Spirit, not because of anything we have ever accomplished, but because of the love and grace of God, we are made holy. The beauty of holiness is at work in our lives and the results can be visible.

In the beginning of the gospel of Luke you will hear how angel’s foretold that John the Baptist would be filled with the Holy Spirit and turn people toward God, and that the Holy Spirit would come upon Mary, and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, and she would bear a son who will be holy, and will be called the Son of God. Mary sang that the Mighty God is holy. Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied the coming of a savior, and of the role of his own son John as one who would prepare the Savior’s way. IN the beginning of Luke the presence of the Holy Spirit is joined to times of new life and rejoicing. In our own lives, when we are part of the faith family we can imagine what this breath of holiness might look like – a nephew held and cared for and nurtured in faith, where there is this sense of joy, wisdom, impossible newness, and life.

#### SLIDE 5 – Provisions of Sleeping Bags for homeless neighbors

In the second petition we ask for God’s kingdom to come. Again, we are asking for a gift that God wants to give. In this prayer we are pushing against an open door. God desires to create community where all have what they need for each day and abundant mercy for human failings so each one can begin again. Creating communities where all have what they need means redistributing resources so that no one has too much and others have what is needed. During the winter the Eau Claire community struggled with that lack of a warming place for those without a home. St. John’s Community and World Ministry purchased sleeping bags to help mitigate the harshness of the cold. But when we pray this prayer we know Jesus desires more for cold neighbors. Jesus talks about a reversal of fortunes, and a leveling of the playing field.

#### SLIDE 6 – Daily Bread

In the third petition, “give us each day our daily bread,” we are invited to turn to God in all things. We are invited to trust in God’s mercies which are new each morning and not be burdened by fear of not having enough because God knows our needs. We are invited to trust that God hears our prayers and answers us. G

fThe prayer nudges is to neither worry nor hoard, but instead be fully awake to daily life so that we will not miss Jesus presence with us.

#### SLIDE 7 – Forgiveness

The final two petitions are also closely connected to what God wishes to give to us. There is no end to the abundant mercy God gives and when we model our love on God's mercy there is a superabundance of grace. Granting mercy to others is so freeing that it acts as a multiplier. The more we forgive, the more we come to know God's as the source of mercy, and the more we are caught up in acts of love in the future. When we pray, "forgive us our sins" we simply pray for one of the greatest gifts God offers. We are pushing against a way that is waiting to be opened to us.

#### SLIDE 8 – God wants

In this prayer that Jesus teaches us to pray, we realize God want us all of us, our hearts, our praise, our service, our giving, our whole selves. God wants us to knock and to seek and to find the Spirit waiting to make us alive in the faith, to make us fit ambassadors of goodness and mercy, and to make us ready to live the only life possible in God's community – one of divine love. In this prayer we begin to imagine that there is enough for everyone and abundant mercy to reconcile all divisions.