

## **Scripture Reading:**

**Luke 2: “ 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. 21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. 22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought [Jesus] to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." 25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." 36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. ”**

## **"Simeon & Anna: Faithful in Prayer"**

**We come this morning to one of my favorite characters in the Christmas accounts: Faithful Simeon. A Saint that we are very familiar with here at Church of the King because we sing his prayer as part of our commissioning each Lord's Day.**

- **A prayer that encourages us and challenges us each and every week!**

**This year I also included the other faithful Saint that Luke mentions at the Temple visit: Anna.**

- **A faithful widow who had served the Lord with fastings and prayers for many years!**

**Clearly they should remind us about the importance of our prayers:**

- **Both the lifting up of our prayers and the content of our prayers.**
- **The New Year is a good time to remember the importance of prayer in our lives and in the advance of God's Kingdom!**

**I want to spend time this morning reviewing the great prayer that our Lord taught us to pray and hopefully to encourage all of us to commit ourselves to more faithful prayer:**

- **Both the study and the practice of prayer.**
- **We can never learn enough about prayer and there is always more to pray about.**

**As we learn we also must take the time to instruct the next generation:**

- **Our precious covenant children or new converts entrusted to our care need our instruction AND they will learn to be faithful prayer warriors as they see us praying!**

How do we learn more about prayer? Today, we have easy access to two very important resources:

- First and foremost we have the examples of prayers in the Bible:

I mentioned Simeon's prayer and we will consider the Lord's Prayer in a moment, but you can also have as your homework assignment the prayer life of Nehemiah, the great prayers of confession by David in Psalm 51 or Daniel chapter nine. And of course the Apostle Paul often prays for us in his Epistles and these can be examples of how to pray one for another.

- 2) The second resource that is often neglected today are the great creeds that have come down to us from the Reformation!

These creeds are important not only because they keep us on the right Biblical path, but they are tools that enable us to better instruct our children about the nature of God, His creation, the nature of man and his redemption, the purpose of the law and the importance of prayer. These creeds should be a regular part of the instruction of our children:

- They can be used as part of their academic instruction in school and for individual or family devotions!

If you have not been using them, please dust them off and put them to use!

- The bottom-line is that I hope and pray that this sermon will be the beginning and not the end of our study and practice of prayer!

There are two prayers from the Scriptures that we use every week in our service: Simeon's prayer as I mentioned and the Lord's Prayer. We discussed Simeon's prayer at some length during my recent series on worship and we will often come back to both as we return to our study of Acts.

So, this morning I want to take a few minutes to focus on the Lord's prayer: Now I have to say up front that whatever I share that is profound is a result of greater men who have gone before because I am going to follow my own advice and use the part of the Heidelberg Catechism that covers the Lord's Prayer... *[Tell radio story]* Before we begin with the questions and answers from the Heidelberg, there is a basic question that we should ask:

- Why do all the major creeds spend time teaching us about the Lord's Prayer?

It is one of those obvious answers that we often don't take the time to think about: When the disciples came to Jesus asking Him to teach them how to pray, He simply said, pray thus... This is why it is called the Lord's Prayer and why we pray it every week here at Church of the King... We do not pray thus each week in order to violate the instructions from Jesus about avoiding repetitious prayers: Things chanted over and over again to get God's attention, or the attention of other men... We pray the Lord's Prayer because it is the model or framework that should inform and influence ALL of our prayers throughout the week. Thus it is good to review what is being prayed in this prayer so it does not become such a sinful repetition.

Here is another place where it is important that we teach our children that we are praying this prayer [which they can easily learn] and that they begin at an early age to understand what is being prayed! And as I mentioned, they will learn this from our example as well as the time we spend instructing them about the importance of the Lord's Prayer. The section in the Heidelberg that deals with the Lord's prayer begins at question 116 where they simply ask:

*Why is prayer necessary for Christians?*

*Answer: Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us: and also, because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them.*

- Prayer is required and prayer is a blessing! *[mention proof texts]*

**Question 117. What are the requisites of that prayer, which is acceptable to God, and which He will hear?**

- As we hear this answer we must remember that it applies to ALL of our prayers, from the simple thanks before a meal to an extended time on our knees in our morning prayers!

*Answer: First, that we from the heart pray to the one true God only, Who has manifested himself in his Word, for all things, He has commanded us to ask of Him; secondly, that we rightly and thoroughly know our need and misery, that so we may deeply humble ourselves in the presence of His divine majesty; thirdly, that we be fully persuaded that He, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as He has promised us in his word.*

- Question 118 then reminds us why prayer is important:

*What has God commanded us to ask of him?*

*Answer: All things necessary for soul and body; which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer He himself has taught us.*

*Question 119 then asks: What are the words of that prayer?*

*Answer: Our Father which art in heaven, 1 Hallowed be thy name. 2 Thy kingdom come. 3 Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. 4 Give us this day our daily bread. 5 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 6 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

*Question 120 begins to look at the details of this great prayer:*

*Why has Christ commanded us to address God thus: "Our Father"?*

*Answer: That immediately, in the very beginning of our prayer, He might excite in us a childlike reverence for, and confidence in God, which are the foundation of our prayer: namely, that God is become our Father in Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of Him in true faith, than our parents will refuse us earthly things.*

*Question 121. Why is it here added, "Who art in heaven"?*

*Answer: Lest we should form any earthly conceptions of God's heavenly majesty, and that we may expect from His almighty power all things necessary for soul and body.*

- The catechism then explains the seven petitions that we find in the Lord's Prayer.

Now obviously the number seven is one of those good numbers that we find in the Bible:

- God's number of completion like the seven days of creation

This should help us see the fullness that we have in what Jesus taught us to pray:

- This is why the Lord's Prayer informs and should structure all of our other prayers.

We can also learn from the structure of these petitions: Which I have outlined in our order of worship...

- Along with the proof texts so you can see how much further study we can do from the catechisms  
*[mention the Berean principle]*

It reveals two important lessons:

- This great prayer opens and closes focused on the majesty and centrality of God Himself.
- At the center is our basic need: Daily bread.

When praying, we are often tempted to run right to our need and forget the great foundations upon which our hope of having that need answered is built.

- **Our help can come only from God!**
- **And it can come only in the context of God's purposes which are shown in the other four petitions that surround our cry for help.**

Again, from our simplest prayer before a meal or on the fly as we see Nehemiah do before the great King; to our longest and deepest prayers like those of Daniel or the Apostle Paul, this is the structure that they should follow. With that structure in mind let us know review what some of the great men who have gone before can teach us about this Great Prayer:

*Question 122. Which is the first petition?*

*Answer: "Hallowed be Thy Name"; that is, grant us, first, rightly to know Thee, and to sanctify, glorify and praise Thee, in all thy works, in which Thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth, are clearly displayed; and further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words and actions, that Thy Name may never be blasphemed, but rather honored and praised on our account.*

*Question 123. Which is the second petition?*

*Answer: "Thy kingdom come"; that is, rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to Thee; preserve and increase Thy Church; destroy the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against Thee; and also all wicked counsels devised against Thy Holy Word; till the full perfection of Thy Kingdom take place, wherein Thou shalt be all in all.*

*Question 124. Which is the third petition?*

*Answer: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"; that is, grant that we and all men may renounce our own will, and without murmuring obey Thy will, which is only good; that every one may attend to, and perform the duties of his station and calling, as willingly and faithfully as the angels do in heaven.*

[remember our favorite PJ O'Rourke quote: "everyone wants to save the world but no one wants to wash the dishes!"]

*Question 125. Which is the fourth petition?*

*Answer: "Give us this day our daily bread"; that is, be pleased to provide us with all things necessary for the body, that we may thereby acknowledge Thee to be the only fountain of all good, and that neither our care nor industry, nor even Thy gifts, can profit us without thy blessing; and therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures, and place it alone in Thee.*

- **This petition is so critical in our age of creature comforts and the worship of mother nature!**
- **Remember that the proof texts given for all of these are given for our encouragement and further study!**
- **And again, we must remember that this appeal for our basic needs can only rightly come before God in the context of the other petitions.**

*Question 126. Which is the fifth petition?*

*Answer: "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"; that is, be pleased for the sake of Christ's blood, not to impute to us poor sinners, our transgressions, nor that depravity, which always cleaves to us; even as we feel this evidence of Thy Grace in us, that it is our firm resolution from the heart to forgive our neighbor.*

*Question 127. Which is the sixth petition?*

*Answer: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"; that is, since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory.*

**Question 128. How dost thou conclude thy prayer?**

**Answer: "For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever"; that is, all these we ask of Thee, because Thou, being our King and Almighty, art willing and able to give us all good; and all this we pray for, that thereby not we, but Thy Holy Name, may be glorified for ever.**

**We have spent a great deal of time during this Advent season talking about the Kingdom of Jesus**

**When we return in two weeks to our study of the Book of Acts we will continue to expand our understanding of how the Spirit of God will glorify the Son by filling the earth with His Kingdom!**

**It should NOT surprise us to see the Kingdom of God mentioned so often and so strongly in the Lord's Prayer...**

- **Our challenge is to more fully believe and to really mean what we are praying!**

**Question 129. What does the word "Amen" signify?**

**Answer: "Amen" signifies, it shall truly and certainly be: for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of him.**

- **This is why we like to have a lot of hearty AMENs in our services here at Church of the King!**

**Each week we have one of the men in our congregation lead us in what we call the Great Prayer: A time where we lift up our hearts in prayer bringing our needs before the Throne of Grace. To conclude those prayers we pray together the Lord's Prayer that we have studied together this morning.**

- **May we always make this a time of hearty and honest prayer to our Lord and Savior!**

**May our young children learn to pray the Lord's Prayer and grow in their understanding of this prayer all the days of their lives.**

- **May we learn to be a praying people who lift up timeless prayers like that of Simeon**
- **May we learn to be a praying people who never tire of prayer like Anna**
- **May we learn to be a praying people who rightly magnify the Name of our God and lift each other up as we see the Apostle Paul often doing as we read his letters!**

**I will close this morning with one of his prayers to the Saints at Ephesus:**

**Ephesians 1:15: "Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus & your love for all the Saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."**

**And all of God's people said... AMEN**

**Communion Meditation: Psalm 23**

**"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever."**