

Pentecost 10 - August 1, 2010 - Pastor Chip Wilke - Amazing Grace Lutheran

A Plethora of Reasons to Pray

"Lord, teach us to pray," Jesus was asked. Jesus taught His disciples the Lord's prayer and gave other instructions on prayer. When I take children through confirmation class after our lesson on prayer I will give the children an opportunity to pray and often will hear: *"What do I say?" What shall I pray for?"* This morning I would like to remind us that there are many, many reasons to pray. I pray this will be helpful for our prayer life. I have made inserts for you to take home and think of your list from A-Z as we will quickly see we have a plethora of reason to pray. I will share mine this morning.

A - Amazing Grace - How often do we keep our church in our prayers? What a wonderful reason to pray! Pray for this place where we gather for worship, this place where God's Word is taught and Sacraments are administered. But we know Amazing Grace is so much more than a place - it is a group of people - believers gathered with a common purpose. Pray for your church family - for every one of them.

B - Baptism - This would have to be a prayer of thanks, wouldn't it? Thank God today as Eva Faith was baptized and made a child of God and heir of heaven. Thank God for your own baptisms and the robe of Jesus' righteousness the Lord placed on you at your baptism. Thank God for this great gift called baptism - a gift from which God excludes no one for He wants to exclude no one from heaven.

(lots of reasons came to mind for the letter C but I chose)

C - Confession - This is a proper place to begin any and every prayer for we have so much to confess. We have to confess that we have sinned in what we have done and not done. We must confess that we are unworthy sinners who do not deserve to come and stand in God's presence let alone ask God for anything. Yet we come before our Holy God to confess our sins knowing that for Jesus' sake He has had mercy on us. Because Jesus' has taken away our sin we can bring all our petitions forward just as children would bring them to their own fathers.

D - Daily Bread - This is the one petition in the Lord's prayer that focuses on our physical needs instead of our spiritual needs. As Luther says this daily bread includes all that we need for our bodies and life. We pray in the model prayer Jesus taught us that God would grant us what we need for this day that He would watch over our lives and protect and provide for us every day.

E - Enemies - This might seem like a strange idea to list as a reason to pray. I don't exactly remember the last time I folded my hands at night and included enemies in my prayers. Yet, this reason to pray comes straight from the mouth of our Savior, our perfect Savior, who prayed for His enemies even as He suffered and died for them. Jesus tells us ***"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"*** (Matthew 5:44).

F - Faith - I would be hard pressed to think of a greater gift that has been given to us or a higher priority when it comes to our prayers. ***"For it is by grace you have been saved,***

through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Thank God for faith that comes from hearing the message. Pray that God keep us and our loved ones in the saving faith. Pray for a faith that will not shrink.

G - Government authorities - This is another reason to pray that comes to us directly from God's Word. Paul writes to Timothy: ***"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."*** (2) Pray for our leaders that they may govern and serve and protect us diligently.

H - Honor God - Did you know that about your prayers? Believers honor God by bringing their prayers to Him. God wants to hear them. God wants you to come to Him again and again. As James reminds us this morning, unlike cursing and swearing, this is a proper use of God's name. Turn to God when you are in trouble. Go to God first and always for any of our needs. Trust in the Lord to hear and answer. As our God declares: ***"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me"*** (Psalm 50)

I - Isaiah - Thank God for all prophets who faithfully speak God's Word like Isaiah. Pray that we too have prophets who point us to the One who was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities and the One by whose wounds we are healed.

J - Jesus - For J I kept going back to Jesus for He is the reason all our prayers are heard. He lived for us. He died on the cross to pay for our sins and in doing so opened up the door to heaven. Because of Jesus we have free access to the Father. Thank God for Jesus every day for He is our Savior and our life. Pray that we continue to learn how wide and long and high and deep is His great love for us.

K - Kingdom, that is God's kingdom - In the Lord's prayer Jesus' taught us to pray for His kingdom to come. When we pray this we ask God to come with His powerful Word and work in our hearts and in the hearts of others. We pray that the Gospel is spread and more and more people come to know Jesus by faith. When we pray this we are also looking forward to the day Jesus will return and take us and all believers to His heavenly kingdom forever.

L - Love - The Bible calls this the greatest gift and God is love. Pray that we might know God as love and then be filled with this great gift. Love is really the fulfillment of the law. Pray that we learn to love God and love each other as we are guided by God's commands. Pray that love fill our lives and continue to show itself as a fruit of our faith.

M - Marriage - Which marriage doesn't need our prayers? The devil is constantly trying to wreak havoc on God's institution of marriage. If you are married keep praying for

God's blessings on your marriage. Pray for the marriages of others. Pray that God bless our families and our homes with good marriages where Christ is Lord of all.

N - Neighbors - This would also include remembering the needs of others for it is far too easy to become self-centered in our prayers. Pray for your neighbors and pray that you be a good neighbor. Especially pray for neighbors who do not believe in Jesus as Savior.

O - Open Tomb - Pray that our eyes see why the angels rolled the stone away from Jesus' tomb - because Jesus is no longer there but Jesus is risen indeed. Pray that the joy of Easter lives in us - to know our sins are all paid for - that we can trust all that Jesus tells us - that one day our graves will be just as open and empty.

P - Peace - This is not a prayer for world peace although that would be nice as well. But this is a peace even better - one that Jesus and He alone can bring. This is the peace of sins forgiven, the peace of knowing God as our Father, the peace of knowing where we are going. Listen to these beautiful words from Philippians: ***"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"*** (4).

Q - Quiet time - With our busy lives pray for some time where you can be by yourself and talk one on one with your Father in heaven. Jesus often went to a quiet place to pray.

R - Repentance - Pray that this is something God works in each of us every single day. Confess our sin, ask God to forgive us, and have a change of mind regarding sin. Pray that we always turn to the one and only God and Savior who takes our sin away. Pray that we turn away from sin and to Jesus in repentance daily.

S - Spirit - In our Gospel lesson this morning Jesus says: ***"How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*** (Luke 11) This is certainly a good gift. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work on our hearts every time we hear His Word. Pray that the Spirit open our hearts and our eyes to the good news. Pray that the Spirit grows us in grace & knowledge and works in us a life filled with fruits of faith.

T - Talents - Pray that we might recognize the talents God has given to us. Pray that we do not become lazy or apathetic in the use of them. Pray that all our abilities be used to give glory to God. Pray that our talents might be used to help others.

U - Unity - Pray for true unity based not upon man's decisions to agree to disagree, but the unity that comes from standing together on the Word of God. Pray for our WELS that we keep such unity of doctrine and faith. Pray for God's blessing and continued unity in our congregation. As the Psalmist writes: ***"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!...For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore"*** (133).

V - Violins - Not just the beautiful violins we hear this morning, but this could include a prayer for all our instruments that are used to praise our God. May we thank God for these gifts in our prayers. May we also pray that the Lord continue to bless our church with gifted musicians and music so we can proclaim the gospel in song and sing our Savior's praise.

W - Wisdom - In our 19-minute Bible study this morning we will read about Solomon's request for wisdom. James also writes: ***"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him"*** (1).

X - eXtra - Try to spend extra time in prayer each day. Say an extra prayer. Or include an extra person every day for which we can pray.

Y - Youth - Pray for our young in our homes and our church. They are our future. Pray that they know the great and wonderful works of the Lord and that they do not forget His deeds. Pray that they pass the Word of God down to their children and their children's children.

Z - Zeal - May we pray that God would make us zealous for His Word, zealous for His work, zealous in prayer. May our zeal be filled with knowledge, the knowledge of our sin, but more important the knowledge of our Savior from sin. This Savior has given us a great gift in prayer. May we use it faithfully and pray continually, and persistently talk with our Father in heaven. I pray this exercise was beneficial this morning and that we all realize we have a plethora of reasons to pray. Amen.