

17 August, 2025

## 10 Sunday after Pentecost

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**Lord, teach us to Pray**

**Genesis 18.20-33, Psalm 116.1-9, 1 John 5.13-21, Luke 11.1-13**

**Key Verse:** *“Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples”* Luke 11:1.

Prayer is the lifeline of a believer’s relationship with God. Through prayer, we communicate with our Creator, express our deepest emotions, and seek guidance. Yet, despite the centrality of prayer in Christian life, many find themselves wondering how to pray, what to say, or even how to prioritize prayer amidst life’s busyness. Just as the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray,” we too need to learn the art and practice of meaningful prayer. In today’s sermon, we reflect on how the different scripture readings guide us in understanding the importance of prayer, how to cultivate it, and its transformative power. We’ll explore the wisdom in Proverbs, the deep longing for God expressed in the Psalms, Paul’s relentless pursuit of Christ in Philippians, and the story of Martha and Mary in the Gospel of Luke. Each of these passages sheds light on the spiritual discipline of prayer and invites us to deeper communion with God.

### **1. The Wisdom of Prayer (Proverbs 3:13-18)**

In Proverbs 3:13-18, we are told, “Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding.” Prayer is a path to discovering divine wisdom. This passage speaks of wisdom as more precious than silver, yielding more profits than gold. This ancient wisdom reminds us that all earthly gains pale in comparison to the insight and clarity we gain from communing with God in prayer. Prayer is not just about asking for things; it is about seeking understanding, asking God to reveal His will, and drawing upon the treasures of His wisdom. As we

journey through life, it is easy to lean on our own understanding. However, prayer helps us surrender our human logic and limited perspective, opening ourselves to God's perfect wisdom. When we pray for wisdom, as Solomon did, we align our thoughts with God's and receive not only knowledge but peace, direction, and fulfilment in ways that earthly achievements cannot offer.

## **2. Longing for God in Prayer (Psalm 63:1-8)**

Psalm 63 is a prayer of deep spiritual thirst: "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you." The Psalmist David, writing in the wilderness, captures the human soul's intense longing for God. David's cry is one of desperation but also of hope. In prayer, we come before God not just to ask but to seek, not merely for blessings but for God Himself. The imagery of thirsting in a dry land reminds us of our deep need for spiritual nourishment, which only God can provide. In our fast-paced lives, prayer often takes a backseat, yet the Psalmist reminds us of the urgency of seeking God. Prayer helps us refocus and realign our hearts to thirst for God's presence more than anything else. As David says in verse 8, "I cling to you; your right hand upholds me." This intimate, heartfelt prayer of longing teaches us that God's presence sustains and satisfies us like nothing else. Just as David found God's presence in the wilderness, we too can encounter God in the midst of our challenges through sincere prayer.

## **3. Pressing on Through Prayer (Philippians 3:7-14)**

In Philippians 3, Paul writes about the transformative power of knowing Christ. He says, "Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ" (v. 7). Prayer is essential in the believer's journey of "pressing on toward the goal" of knowing Christ more deeply. Paul's commitment to pressing on is an illustration of perseverance in prayer. Though he had many accomplishments, Paul counted them as nothing compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus. He understood that knowing Christ is not a one-time event but a lifelong process of prayer and pursuit. Prayer, then, becomes the fuel that drives us toward a deeper relationship with Christ. It is through persistent and passionate prayer that we press on, even when life gets difficult, even when we feel far from God. Like Paul, we must keep our eyes on the goal, knowing that prayer is the means by which we come to know Christ and experience the power of His resurrection. Paul teaches us that true prayer is not just about words; it's about transformation. Through prayer, we become more like Christ, and through prayer, we are empowered to run the race of faith with endurance.

#### 4. The Better Part of Prayer (Luke 10:38-42)

In the Gospel reading from Luke 10, we encounter the story of Martha and Mary. While Martha is busy with the many tasks of serving, Mary chooses to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen. Martha, feeling overwhelmed, asks Jesus to tell Mary to help, but Jesus gently responds, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed - or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better” (v. 41-42). This passage offers a profound insight into the heart of prayer. Martha’s work was not wrong, but it became a distraction from the one thing that was truly necessary - being with Jesus. Like Martha, many of us are caught up in the busyness of life. We are “worried and upset about many things,” and prayer becomes just another task to check off our list. Mary, on the other hand, exemplifies the essence of prayer. She chooses to sit at the feet of Jesus, to listen, and to be present with Him. In our prayer lives, it is not about how much we do or say, but about being present with God, listening for His voice, and making time to sit in His presence. This story challenges us to prioritize prayer, to choose the better part, and to know that in doing so, we are not wasting time but investing in the most important relationship of all - our relationship with God.

Here are ten popular definitions and descriptions of prayer from various Christian thinkers and sources:

1. **St. Augustine:** *“True, whole prayer is nothing but love.”*  
Augustine believed that prayer was the expression of a heart filled with love for God. It is not just about asking for things but aligning one’s heart with God’s love and will.
2. **Martin Luther:** *“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”*  
For Luther, prayer was as essential as breathing - it is the lifeblood of the Christian’s relationship with God, a continuous and vital communication with the Creator.
3. **Billy Graham:** *“Prayer is simply a two-way conversation between you and God.”* Graham emphasized the personal nature of prayer, describing it as a direct, intimate communication with God. It’s not formal or distant but conversational and personal.

4. **John Wesley:** *"God does nothing but in answer to prayer."*  
Wesley, the founder of Methodism, believed in the power of prayer to bring about change in the world and in people's lives. He viewed prayer as a key instrument in God's plan.
5. **Oswald Chambers:** *"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work."*  
Chambers emphasized that prayer itself is the most important work a believer can do. It is not just a preparation for action but the most crucial action in our relationship with God.
6. **C.S. Lewis:** *"I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God - it changes me."*  
Lewis saw prayer as a natural response to our human condition. Prayer is not about changing God's mind but transforming us in the process of seeking Him.
7. **Mother Theresa:** *"Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts."*  
Mother Teresa emphasized the act of surrender in prayer. It's not just about making requests but placing ourselves in God's care and being attentive to His will.
8. **John Bunyan:** *"In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart."*  
Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, highlighted that prayer is about the posture of the heart, not just the words we say. Genuine prayer flows from a sincere heart rather than eloquent language.
9. **E.M. Bounds:** *"Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty."*  
E.M. Bounds, known for his writings on prayer, encourages believers to see prayer as a joyful experience, not just a religious obligation. It is a continual discovery of God's beauty and goodness.
10. **Leonard Ravenhill:** *"No man is greater than his prayer life."* Ravenhill emphasized that prayer is the foundation of a Christian's spiritual life, deeply connecting them to God and revealing their true spiritual strength. He viewed prayer not just as a practice but as a measure of

one's devotion and relationship with God. A similar definition inspired by Ravenhill's teaching could be: *"Prayer is the spiritual heartbeat of a believer, where true strength, humility, and intimacy with God are found. It is the hidden source of power for living out the Christian faith."* Ravenhill constantly pointed out that the effectiveness and depth of a Christian's life directly depend on their personal time in prayer.

These definitions emphasize different aspects of prayer - communication, relationship, transformation, and dependence on God - showing that prayer is both simple and profound in its practice and purpose.

### Conclusion

As we reflect on the theme "Lord, Teach Us to Pray," we realize that prayer is not merely a religious duty but a lifeline to God's presence, wisdom, and strength. Through the wisdom of Proverbs, the longing of the Psalms, Paul's relentless pursuit of Christ, and Mary's choice to sit at Jesus' feet, we learn that prayer is about seeking God Himself above all else. In the busyness of life, we often feel like Martha - distracted and overwhelmed. Yet Jesus invites us to choose the better part, to prioritize prayer, and to be with Him. As we press on in our faith, let us remember that prayer is the key to unlocking a deeper relationship with God, and it is through prayer that we are transformed.

May we, like the disciples, continually ask, "Lord, teach us to pray." And may we grow in our understanding of prayer as a place of wisdom, longing, perseverance, and intimacy with God.

### Prayer

*Gracious and loving God, we come before You today, asking as the disciples did: "Lord, teach us to pray." Help us to understand the depth and beauty of prayer, and guide us to seek You above all else. In the busyness of life, remind us to choose the better part - time spent in Your presence. Give us the wisdom to surrender our worries and distractions and to find peace at Your feet. May we thirst for You as David did and press on toward the goal of knowing Christ more deeply. Transform us through our prayers, and may we experience the power of Your love in every moment. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*