

(Matthew 6:5–13, NIV84)

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’”

Contrary to our "normal" practice of standing shoulder to shoulder with our fellow believers in prayer, we have (perhaps against our personal preference) been praying by ourselves behind closed doors. This time of personal devotion and personal petition to our Lord has truly been a blessing.

But as we gather together once again in public, we will be confronted by a number of "distractions": social-distancing requirements, friends' faces hidden behind masks, our favorite pew "roped off", wariness of anyone who coughs or sneezes. In the midst of all this, our challenge will be trying to focus on why we are there. We come together to unburden ourselves of the weight of our sins and to be assured of God's forgiveness in Christ, to hear God speaking to us through His holy word, to speak to our gracious God through our prayers and bring Him our cares and concerns, confident that He hears us, and finally to offer Him our praise and thanksgiving for all His wonderful blessings.

Before venturing out to a worship service this weekend, offer a private prayer to the Lord that He would surround and shield your heart and mind, as well as the hearts and minds of those around you, so that nothing will distract or detract from our true worship of Him.

Praying confidently with you in Christ,
Pastor Golm

June 26

Next Sunday—Will We Really Pray?

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. Psalm 19:14

Presumably, we shall occupy our accustomed pew in church next Sunday. Together with our fellow-pilgrims we shall rest from the burdens of the week and shall seek communion with our Father. Whatever may have been our differences during the week—in wealth or health or fortune—we shall be as one when we kneel before the throne of mercy.

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

But will we really pray? There is always a danger, especially when set liturgical forms are used, that public prayer becomes a matter merely of the lips, and not a matter of the heart. How often, when we have stood in church joining in the prayers of the congregation, have we had to admit that "the words of our mouth" had very little in common with "the meditation of our heart"?

Prayer, true prayer, is more than the mere repetition of set phrases. It is more than the chanting of a beautiful liturgical response. It is the sinner's intimate, personal pleading directed straight to the Father-heart of God. True prayer is always heart to heart--our heart to God's heart. And it is always in the Savior's spirit and in the Savior's name.

Surely, in public worship, as we prepare to approach our Father with our petitions, we have every reason to repeat the prayer of David: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." Or we may wish to turn to our hymnal and offer the silent prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, be present now,
Our hearts in true devotion bow,
Thy Spirit send with grace divine,
And let Thy truth within us shine. Amen.

(Devotion from: Daily Walk With God - Meditations for Every Day, by Herman W. Gockel)