

**John 16:23-33**

Sixth Sunday of Easter (Series C)

**Lessons for the Day: Acts 16:9-15; Revelation 21:9-14, 21-27; John 16:23-33**

**(Don't) Ask Your Mother!**

May 25, 2025

*“In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.” His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.””*

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

“Ask your mother”. There are probably very few words that are spoken more frequently in a household with young children than those words. “Can I have a cookie?” “Ask your mother.” “Can I go to the park?” “Ask your mother.” “Can I have five dollars for pizza day?” “Ask your father.”

In some households, I am sure that mom is so busy fielding request after request that she wishes she had a staff of people to screen them before the really important ones come to her. And, of course, children really are very clever. They know that, depending on what they want, it is usually easier to go to mom and ask for things than it is to go to dad. In fact, if dad has to be consulted, which I do indeed hope that he is, especially on the things that should be shared between parents, then the children first ask their mother, get her on their side, and use her as the intermediary to make the request known to dad.

There may be a precedent within the history of the church for this “ask your mother” philosophy. Within the Roman church there is a common prayer known as the “Hail Mary”. The first part, “Hail (Mary) full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women”, comes from the words by the angel Gabriel in saluting the Blessed Virgin (Luke 1:28). Elizabeth’s joy at seeing the mother of the Lord comes out in the second phrase, “and blessed is the fruit of thy womb (Jesus)”. Then there is a petition: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.” The “Catechism of the Council of Trent” states: “...the Holy Church of God added to this thanksgiving, petition also and the invocation of the most holy Mother of God, thereby implying that we should piously and suppliantly have recourse to her in order that by her intercession she may reconcile God with us sinners and obtain for us the blessing we need both for this present life and for the life which has no end.”

Contrary to that philosophy, which is never encouraged in Scripture, and even contrary to common practice, I would suggest, “Don’t ask your mother.” Now, boys and girls, if you are looking for permission to go to a friend’s house or to have a cookie or to watch tv, please ask your mom or your dad. And you bigger kids—if you are looking for some encouragement, if you want to know the recipe for that great apple pie you remember from your youth, ask your mom. If you want to know some of the history of your family and the things that helped shape your parents, ask them. But when it comes to the real needs of your life, don’t ask your mom. Don’t ask dad. Don’t ask Mary. Don’t ask any of the saints. Ask your Father in heaven. Go to Him directly, which is the privilege and blessing you have through Jesus Christ. Take it to the Lord in prayer, for as Jesus Himself assures us: *whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.*

In the historical pericopes, or outline of lessons appointed for the church year, this Sunday is known as Rogate Sunday. The word Rogate is from the Latin version of our text. The word means ‘ask’ or ‘pray’. Jesus makes it very clear that we have the high privilege of prayer as a gift of grace from our loving God. He also teaches us that we are to pray in His name, as we bring our petitions to the Lord of all.

Prayer is such a blessed gift. Yet how little we tend to make use of this precious treasure. Corrie Ten Boom once asked, “Is prayer your steering wheel, or your spare tire?” Instead of being a guiding, directing, and starting point in our lives, prayer is more often than not something we do in the dire moments of our lives. It is our response in disaster; it is our desperate plea

in emergencies. We are quick to pray when we don't know what else to do. Yet we are often negligent in praying as we should. Can we say that we ***pray without ceasing***, (1 Thessalonians 5:17 - ESV) as Paul encourages us to do? Do we follow the example of our Lord Himself, who would withdraw to a quiet place to pray and spend time in a heart to heart talk with His Father? If we are honest with ourselves, we will likely find that our prayers are relegated to the prayers that we may say before meals, (depending on where we are or how hungry we are); to prayers that we say in church; and maybe the occasional bedtime prayer.

Yet, as that well beloved hymn reminds us, "*Oh, what peace we often forfeit; oh, what needless pain we bear all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.*" (LSB 770, st. 1) Jesus tells us: ***Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*** Christ invites us to pray. Christ teaches us to pray. Christ promises that the Father will answer our prayers for Jesus' sake.

And yet, dear friends, we don't pray as we should. We often fail to ask for the Lord's help. We forget to go to Him with our needs and concerns—until they have piled up so high and heavy upon us and everything blows up around us. Now, to use Corrie Ten Boom's example, we go into the trunk, and hope that the spare tire will work.

Why don't we pray? Surely it can't be that we are so confident we can deal with everything ourselves! Jesus brings us back to reality in our text when He tells us: ***In the world you will have tribulation.*** The truth of that statement surrounds us in this world of sin. We have trouble. Life with its cares and worries does press hard upon us. We may be able to cope with some things and even overcome others, but there are many things that can be overwhelming to us. The real problem is that we cannot wash away the burden of our sin that still stands as the root cause of all the suffering into our lives. Thankfully, Jesus can help. He says to us: ***But take heart; I have overcome the world.*** He has defeated our enemies through His death for us. He lives to help us in all our needs. He waits for us to seek His gracious strength for each day.

So why don't we pray? Is it fear? Isn't that often why a child will ask mom for help rather than dad? In many homes, mom is seen as the caregiver and the indulgent parent. Dads are seen as strict and unyielding. Of course, that is a gross overstatement. It is also a total misunderstanding of our loving Father. It is true that we would not dare to approach the throne of God without Christ. Our sin would be an immovable obstacle in our way. Sin separates from God. But we come to God through the Son whom He gave for our redemption. We come in confession to the foot of the cross, and remember the shame of our sin as the sinless Son of God dies for us. We plead: ***'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'*** (Luke 18:13 - ESV) And God is merciful. Our sins are forgiven. The debt against us has been paid. The living, resurrected Lord assures us that all has been done that brings us life and salvation. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews assures us: ***Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*** (Hebrews 10:19-23 - ESV) This is why we pray and why we pray boldly, for the God who loved us and gave His Son to save us has received us as His own. He has marked us as His children in our Baptism. He has bought us back from sin, death and hell at great cost—the cost of His own Son. And when we come in the name of Jesus, trusting in the blood of Jesus, we can be sure that the Lord of heaven and earth hears and answers our prayers.

Don't be afraid to pray! God wants to hear and answer your prayers. Jesus even says: ***I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.*** Jesus isn't saying that He won't intercede for us, because as our faithful High Priest he ***always lives to make intercession for [us]***. (Hebrews 7:25 - ESV) He just wants us to know that the whole God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit are attentive to our prayers. God loves us and He hears and answers in His wise, perfect ways. When we pray in Jesus' name, we are praying as those who know the life we have as people under the cross. We know that we have been redeemed and forgiven in Christ. We trust in Jesus and His precious sacrifice and glorious resurrection. And because we love His Son, God loves us. He hears and answers because He loves us.

What a wonderful promise Jesus gives us: ***Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.*** There are those Christians today who operate according to the philosophy, "Name it, and claim it". If you want something, just ask God. Like the genie in the bottle, He will do it, as long as you ask in Jesus' name. That isn't what Jesus said. He told us to ask in His name. To ask in Jesus' name is to trust our needs into the hands of God, just as Jesus Himself could say, ***"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*** (Matthew 26:39 - ESV) We trust that God knows how to say yes, and how to say no. He will do what is best, because He loves His children and wants only what is good for them.

The point is that we need to pray! We need to come before the Lord as those washed in the blood of the lamb. Another hymn writer reminds us: *You are coming to your King, Large petitions with you bring; For His grace and pow'r are such None can ever ask too much.* (LSB 779, st. 2) Don't ask your mother. Don't ask the saints. Pray to the Father who loves you! Pray with the Saviour, who gave His life for you and who gives you life in His own resurrection! Pray in the power of the Spirit who intercedes on your behalf, making even your most confused and uncertain prayers beautiful in the ears of the King of Kings. Pray, and trust in the God who knows you will have trouble, but who has overcome all things for you in His Son. Amen.