

Why Pray?

Mark 10:46-52

Introduction

Kyrie Eleison! Lord, have mercy! That's a familiar part of our worship service and possibly the most basic Christian prayer there is. But do we think about those words when we pray them in worship, or do we just say them out of habit? I've heard some ask the question, "Since God knows everything, why should we pray? If He loves us and wants what's best for us, do we really have to ask Him to fulfill our needs?" If we understand *Kyrie Eleison*, we will have a better understanding of prayer and why we pray. This prayer is a lot like the prayer of blind Bartimaeus, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*" (**Mark 10:47**). But it is a shortened form of an ancient repetitive prayer, called the "Jesus Prayer." *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.* That's what we want to unpack today.

Lord Jesus Christ

We begin by identifying the one to whom we pray. Bartimaeus said, "*Jesus, Son of David*" (**v. 47**). The name 'Jesus' identified Him as the Son of Mary and Joseph. 'Son of David' identified Him as the Christ, or Messiah, who would be a descendant, or son of David, the greatest king of Israel.

Lord

We identify Him as 'Lord Jesus Christ.' He is our Lord, our Creator and God. As our Creator, He knows us inside and out. We pray *because* He already knows us. Prayer is an affirmation of our relationship with the Lord.

Jesus

The name 'Jesus' means 'Yahweh saves.' He is our Savior; He gave His life on the cross to set us free from sin. We pray out of gratitude for the grace we have received so freely in our salvation.

Christ

'Christ' means 'Anointed One.' In Bible times prophets, priests, and kings were anointed to their offices to show the power of the Lord upon them to carry out their tasks. A prophet speaks forth the Word of God. Jesus preached personally during His life on earth, and today proclaims Himself through the preached Gospel. He is our Priest, interceding for us with the Father. He is the King of the earth, but more importantly, He is our King, ruling over the church; He is the Head of the body. We pray to Him because He gives us the Gospel, intercedes for us, and rules over us.

Have Mercy on Me

'Have mercy on me' is the heart of our request. This is the request of all people, for all of us need mercy. Mercy and grace are related. Grace is unmerited favor. It is when we receive something good that we don't deserve. Mercy is the counterpart of grace. Mercy is when a deserved punishment is withheld. We pray for mercy because we deserve to die. We deserve every terrible result of sin, the sickness, death, and chaos. We are helpless and all we can do is beg for mercy.

A Sinner

The Prayer of Confession in Divine Service 3 is powerful. It is the only one that uses the word 'repent' and it's the only one that uses the phrase, 'I, a poor, miserable sinner.' There are some who don't like that phrase. They say, "I have a good life. I'm not poor; I'm comfortable. I'm not miserable; I actually enjoy life." In truth, no matter how wealthy we are, or comfortable, or happy, when we stand before God Almighty, we are poor and miserable because we are sinners in the presence of a Holy God. How dare we sinners presume to be comfortable in His holy presence? If I could add another adjective, it would be 'pathetic.' We pray because we recognize our pathetic condition.

Jesus' Response

What is Jesus' response to our prayer? What was His response to Bartimaeus? He called Bartimaeus to Him and asked what he wanted. Jesus knew what he wanted, what he needed, but He wanted to hear Bartimaeus voice it himself. Jesus calls us to Himself today to gather around Word and Sacrament and asks us what we want. We recognize our need to be made whole and we tell Him. And in His love, by His Word and Sacrament, He grants our request because of our faith, just like he did with Bartimaeus. And in answer to our prayer, He says, *"Go, your faith has made you well" (v. 52).*

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
