

“Taught By Our Lord, Trusting His Promises: Bold To Pray”

Grace, Mercy and Peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ –In Whom All The Fullness Of The GodHead Dwells In Bodily Form –Who Calls upon us –to Call upon Him –in prayer.

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You and I would never do what Abraham did. I’m pretty sure of that. To question God’s Judgment. Challenge His Plan Of Action. And yet: That’s exactly why our Lord Caused This Account to Be Recorded In The Bible, and Passed down over thirty-five centuries to us. Because That’s What our God Wants. This Is What He Likes! It Pleases God when His people do what we just heard Abraham do in our Old Testament Reading. Our God Is Pleased When we Take Him At His Word and talk to Him about it! When we show that we really do care about His Name –His Reputation –and the lost people in this world who need God’s Mercy and Protection.

We heard An Amazing Revelation of our Lord’s Own Inner Thoughts and He Shared His Purposes –with Abraham, and with us– listen again: **“The Lord Said: ‘Shall I Hide from Abraham What I Am About To Do? Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be Blessed in him? For I Have Chosen him: that he may command his children and his household after him, to keep The Way Of The Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that The Lord May Bring to Abraham What He has Promised him’ (Gen 18:17-19).** A concise Summary Of God’s Plans in Genesis, not just for Abraham, but for all mankind –indeed: for us here this morning. **“The Way Of The Lord” IS Righteousness and Justice.** And: Abraham is to “do” those things –to live them out, to make them happen, to put them into action.

Now: the Jews love This Story. “See!”, they say: “Abraham Argued With God! This Account provides Good Justification for why Jews love to argue –and show little shame even in disputing with God Himself.

Actually, though: it’s a stretch to call this an “argument”. Look how Abraham speaks to our Lord. He is not arrogant or rude. He’s not disrespectful –never once challenges whether God Is Telling The Truth or not. In fact: Abraham recognizes God as **“Judge of all the earth”**. His whole approach is very meek, yet confident and persistent. Amazingly: Abraham then proceeds to act

as the advocate ...the defense attorney –for cities that (even today) stand as symbols of horrible wickedness –that deserve to be Destroyed, by a nuclear blast from heaven. Sodom and Gomorrah.

In doing this: Abraham shows an admirable concern for defending God’s Own Name and Reputation –and people who need God’s Rescue and Protection. More than that: Abraham is taking God At His Word –Because (just one chapter ago in The Genesis Account) God Gave him a new name to describe his new role on earth and in human history. This man once known as Abram, “Exalted Father”, God Re-named as “Abra-ham” –father “of many nations”. Here: Abraham is acting out his new duties –fulfilling the position God Gave Him to perform. Abraham is defending pagan people. He’s not arguing for the wicked –he knows they deserve God’s Righteous Judgment and Punishment; their sin is so bad that God Himself Says it cries to heaven for His Vengeance. (Don’t mistake what Abraham is doing here as requesting God’s Mercy for them.) In reality: Abraham is asking God to Investigate the facts. He’s committed to one single principle: The Judge Of All the earth Must not Sweep away the righteous with the wicked, but Draw a line between them, and Recognize the difference. It’s really not an “argument” at all –because every time Abraham makes a request, God Agrees to it! What kind of “argument” is that? There’s no “argument” here!

Abraham describes himself as “**dust and ashes**”. He’s not thumping his chest; he claims no special privileges –apart from: his concern for God’s Own Name and Reputation, God’s Own Purposes and Plans. For Abraham, the nations, and –For you and me.

Which brings us to our second Account this morning: where God Himself once again Walks the earth among men. Only this time: He Came, not to Destroy, but to Save. To Rescue people from Destruction. And His followers (His disciples) noticed something: Every time Jesus Got a spare minute, when He wasn’t Healing people, Raising them from the dead, Feeding thousands, Walking across choppy waves, or Commanding ferocious storms to be still, Jesus Was Praying. So one of his disciples asked Him: “Hey, Jesus: Please Teach us how to do that!”

(Evidently: this disciple who asked the question was not there when Jesus Gave His Sermon on the Mount several months ago. That’s The Version of The Lord’s Prayer we have in St. Matthew’s

Gospel.) Here: Jesus does not (directly) Mention The Third or Seventh Petitions –from St. Luke’s version we do not hear **“Thy Will Be Done”** or **“Deliver us from The Evil One”**. As Luther explains (in the Small Catechism): *“God’s Will Is Done when He Breaks and Hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s Name or let His Kingdom Come”* –so: when we pray and keep Those First Two Petitions, God’s Will Is Certainly Done! Likewise: Luther calls The Seventh Petition a “summary” of the other six as *“our Father In Heaven Rescues us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation”*. So: neither Jesus nor Luke have left anything out –This Is still The Lord’s Prayer.

But after Jesus Tells us How to pray –He Points to the care of human fathers, and Tells His Parable of the Unexpected Friend at Midnight, knocking and pounding on the door, to say: How *Quick and Ready* our Heavenly Father *Is to Hear and Respond*. Take note of the way Jesus Speaks about us: **If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more Will The Heavenly Father Give The Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”**

Abraham called himself **“dust and ashes”** –but Jesus Called us “evil”! People who *truly want to learn how to pray!* Jesus *Knows* how sinful we are –*better* than we know ourselves. And yet: He did not tell us: *God Will Refuse to Listen*. No, Jesus Teaches sinful people like you and me how to pray –who’ve spoken evil words, hatched evil plans, done evil deeds –who wrestle with evil inside our own hearts –Jesus *Wants us* to pray. **Ask! Seek! Knock! And it Shall Be Given to you. You will find. The door shall Be Opened –to you.**

This is where St. Paul Comes in– to solve The Mystery of Who Abraham was talking to, and *explain how and why it is that Jesus Shows such Kindness and Patience* to evil people **“In Him The Whole Fullness of Deity Dwells Bodily”**. This Man Is God Himself –In Human Flesh – **“The Head Of all rule and authority.”** And yet: He Came not To Destroy, but To Save! To Reach the lost who are wicked –and to Make them –to Make us –Righteous. He Came Down to earth to Suffer and Die –to Rescue us.

And: This Is Why we can come Before God’s Holy Throne In Heaven and make our requests with such confidence –and persistence. Because **“you have been buried with Him In Baptism, In Which you were also Raised with Him through faith In The Powerful Working Of God ... Who Made [you] alive Together With Him, having Forgiven**

us all our trespasses, by Cancelling The Record Of Debt That Stood against us With Its Legal Demands.”

In the Large Catechism Luther Says: *“The Lord’s Prayer Helps us to become aware of our true needs and to reflect upon them. Although we all lack much, we sadly do not feel or even see what we are missing. By having us plead for what we and others need, God Increases our desire for The Greatest Good Gifts That He Wants to Lavish on us, and so He Enlarges our capacity to receive them –thankfully.”*

To save Sodom and Gomorrah (counting Lot, his wife and their two daughters) it took only six more people. Yet they could not be found. Just a few people who *pray and intercede for others* stand like an iron wall between us and our enemies (Luther said that).

Are you worried about our church, our city, our country? *Instead of worrying: let our true needs move you to pray*. It only takes a few! You can make that kind of difference. By *praying* the way Abraham did: with confidence and persistence, seeking The Honor Of God’s Name and The Coming Of His Kingdom.

Which Happens When He Gives to us His Holy Spirit. Remember? That was Jesus’ Focus! Ask for His Holy Spirit –With you and In you! That Happens When He *Speaks* to you His Word, *Washes* you Clean in Holy Baptism, *Restores* you to Himself in Holy Absolution, and *Strengthens* you With His Own Living Body and Precious Blood.

So now –with God’s Own Holy Spirit With you and In you: you *can do* things that were impossible before: you *can walk In Jesus*! ...say no to the desires of your sinful flesh, because you’re no longer a prisoner to your sinful human body: you’re now In Christ’s Own Body –The Church. Now, you *can pray*: **“our”** Father –*Together With* Jesus Himself. Now: you can use That Name (God Himself *Wrote upon you* in Holy Baptism) to *Call* upon your Father in heaven –to Save us from the horrible rot that enslaves this lost world –and you can pray for others around you –*even and especially* your neighbors, and enemies. Now –like Abraham– you too can serve as God’s Instrument For Mercy and Rescue on this earth: *teaching* your children, *keeping your household* in the faith, and *putting* Justice and Righteousness into action.

That Peace Of Christ
–Which Passes all understanding–
Guard your hearts and minds In Christ Jesus
unto Life Everlasting. Amen.