

Rogate, A✠D 2008

John 16:23-30, [31-33] 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. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. ²⁵ "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. ²⁶ 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; ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸ I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." ²⁹ His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech!" ³⁰ 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." [³¹ Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? ³² 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. ³³ 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."]

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Anything? "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you." Really? Whatever you ask? What if you ask for a million dollars? What if you ask for a new car? What if you ask God to smite the guy in the cubicle next to yours who comes in late, leaves early, and plays solitaire all day? What if you ask God to make you able to fly? Whatever you ask in Jesus' name, right? Ah, but you're far too pious to pray for things so foolish or selfish. But what if you pray in Jesus' name for the Lord to heal your disease? What if you pray in Jesus' name for a new job and some relief from the bills? What if you pray in Jesus' name for time and strength simply to get done all the tasks in a day that are calling for your attention?

2 Or are you too scared to try? What if you pray for healing and healing doesn't seem to come? What if you pray for a relief and things only get worse? What if you pray—yes, pray in Jesus' name—and your prayer goes unanswered? What a blow to faith that would be! So, if you're not sure the prayer will be answered, it's safer not to pray it, you suppose. Your faith is far too fragile to have God not grant your wishes. If this is the case, repent of not praying. Repent of keeping your cares and concerns to yourself, trusting in yourself to fill your own needs. Repent of not praying.

3 Or maybe you do pray these things. Maybe you pray for what you need. Maybe you suppose you even pray it in Jesus' name. And it doesn't happen. Your prayer seems unanswered because you didn't get what you wanted. So you sulk, like a little child whose mother refused to allow him to play with sharp scissors, because God has not given you what would make you happy. But to assume that you know what is best for you is arrogant. To pray that way is prideful. And it's not praying in the name of the One who bids you call upon His Father. It's not prayer in the name of Jesus. So repent.

4 Jesus only promises that His Father will give whatever you ask when you ask the Father in Jesus' name. So what is prayer in Jesus' name? It's not a magic formula that bends the Lord's will to yours. It's not the perfect phraseology that will guarantee your prayers are heard and answered. Praying in Jesus' name isn't simply sliding "in Jesus' name" between the last item on your wish list and "amen." So what is it?

5 Prayer in Jesus' name is prayer to the Father. Who may pray like this? Only the Sinless Son of God. Jesus alone is worthy to approach the Creator as "Father." So He does. He prays. And His most important prayers to His father came as He hung upon the cross. God the Father sent His only Son to be the sacrifice for sinners, the one whose blood would pay for the world's sinfulness. For your inability to muster up faith, for your prideful petitions, for your arrogantly asking, for these and every sin you have committed or will commit, Jesus died. But before He died, he prayed, "Father, forgive them."

6 Prayer in Jesus name is foremost prayer as a child of God. Prayer in Jesus name is prayer that may approach God as Father because Jesus has reconciled you, brought you back into relationship with your Heavenly Father, by His gift of faith. This is the only prayer that God hears and answers, prayer with faith in Jesus; Jesus Himself promises so. Prayer in His name is prayer for God's mercy, "Father forgive us." "We pray...that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by

grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.” Prayer in Jesus’ name is prayer for mercy, prayer for salvation. And your Heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus, promises to answer this prayer.

7 Since His resurrection, Jesus has been preparing His disciples for His departure, His ascension. Even though their Lord will depart, the disciples will not be left comfortless. Rejoice. Sing. Pray. These are the imperatives for the Christian’s life. These are what we’re given to do while we wait. Prayer is what Jesus gives His disciples in the time while they await His return.

8 And so prayer in the name of Jesus is also prayer in the spirit, manner, and character of Jesus. To pray in His name means to pray as Jesus did. When Jesus prayed, he didn’t seek to exert His will over His Father, but to submit Himself to His Father’s will. Prayer in His name is prayer that trusts that your Heavenly Father knows better than you do what is best for you. Your Father knows the clear difference between what you want and what is good for you, what seems necessary and what is necessary for building you up in the stature of your salvation. Do not hesitate to pray. Setting aside all selfishness, pray for what you need or want; pray for your neighbors and your enemies. These prayers, prayers in Jesus’ name, are what your Heavenly Father has promised to grant.

9 So your Lord gives you prayer as a gift, as a pattern for your life. It’s not a magic incantation to invoke God when you need Him. It’s a way of submitting yourself to God’s will and allowing Him to do what’s best for you. And you are not left to your own devices to learn how to pray. You have teachers to instruct you in prayer. The Lord Himself gives you His prayer, the Lord’s Prayer. Nothing you could need is omitted from the short petitions of this prayer. And you may learn to pray from the prayer-book of the Bible itself, the Psalms. You may pray the Catechism. You may pray the collects, which end beautifully, “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” You may pray the prayers from the hymnal. And from these teachers, you will learn to pray on your own.

10 Your prayers in Jesus name are answered. God has heard your prayers for mercy and salvation. And He answers, "Take, eat, and take, drink, for the forgiveness of your sins." Amen is the word of faith, the word which receives the Lord's gifts. Amen.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
Pastor Jeff Hemmer
Hope, Jerseyville, IL