Sing before: Psalm 66:2

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise: Psalm 116:1,2

Prayer:
- Doxology
- Worship
- Confession of sins
- Forgiveness
- Gratitude
- Prayer for the need of the congregation for the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises.
- General prayer
- Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.

Amen

Psalm 143:1

Scripture reading: Matthew 4

Scripture text: Matthew 4:10; Catechism Sunday 45

Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' '' (Matthew 4:10)

During the previous succession of sermons we dealt with the Ten Commandments individually.
- Many times we found ourselves facing the fact of the devil, in order for us to succumb to all sorts of sins and ugly things, exploiting our lusts.
- Through our honesty we discovered that, should we want to stay on good terms with the Lord, we actually have to command the devil to leave our lives.

Where to then? How do I stay on the proper way? Where do I find insight and guidance? And where do I find forgiveness?

The answer on all these questions is: At the Lord!

Enter into conversation with Him – pray!

It therefore stands to reason that in our confession we write down everything important to the prayer – and confess – after having dealt with the Ten Commandments and our natural sinful inclinations.

There are certain very important characteristics that must not be present in prayer:
- A prayer is not a speech that is supposed to be liked by the audience – or to be pleasing to them.
- A prayer is also not a chore just to be done and get it over with.
What is a prayer?
- A prayer is having communion with God.
- It is a conversation with God.
- It is worshipping God.

Let us put it slightly differently:
- A prayer is a holy act of rendering your highest appreciation and honour to God.
- It is an act where you, through the redemptive mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, personally face the throne of God.
- Therefore, in your prayers, your thankfulness to the Lord must reach the highest peak. Thus a prayer is a holy offer of thanks to the Lord.

For man to be able to pray is particularly due to the work of God.
- He allows us to believe.
- He teaches and instructs us.
- Through His Holy Spirit He leads us to worship and glorify Him.
- He teaches us to enquire from Him what we need in life.

He thus lets us live from Him through Him, back to His throne.

What are we doing when we pray? Put differently: What may we pray for?
- Psalm 62 teaches that a prayer is an act where we pour out our hearts to the Lord.
  - Pouring out your heart means approaching the Lord with your deepest sorrow –
  - but it may also mean approaching Him with your greatest joy.
  - (62:8) Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah (Psalm 62:8)

In an emergency everybody calls for help. The call for help from the believer is directed at the Lord! This also happens during prayer.

Redeem Israel, O God, Out of all their troubles! (Psalm 25:22)

When the young pastor of the Ephesians – Timothy – got stuck in his ministry, Paul rendered him a lot of advice.
- Amongst other things he taught him what all to pray for.
- We read that he wrote the following:
  Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, (1Timothy 2:1)

This Bible verse reveals the existence of various types of prayer:
- There are prayers where the aim will be at supplication.
  - We will plead to the Lord for the forgiving of our sins.
  - In a drought we may plea to the Lord for rain.
  - When the country is suffering we may plea to the Lord for mercy, etc.
- There also are prayers where we just pray to glorify the Lord.
  - These are the prayers where we confess Him as our God and Redeemer.
  - It is also prayers thanking Him for His great mercy.
• Furthermore there are also prayers of intercession:
  o By example we pray for our children. For our parents. We pray for each other in the congregation: the elderly, the sick and the poor.

• Also we must pray for the salvation of our fellow believers
  Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.
  (Romans 10:1)

Our prayers are a direct conversation with the everlasting God, without anything impeding us, speaking to Him.
• It is a right of grace we attained by the cross death of our Lord.
• Exactly the fact that the veil of the temple was torn open is the symbolic sign that we now have unlimited access to the sanctum of the Lord.
• Our sins are fully punished and forgiven.
• Now we are allowed to approach the Lord asking what we need and due to the right of grace of the Reconciliation we know that He will answer our prayers.

Together let us read what we confess about this in the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 45.

Q. 116.
Why is prayer necessary for Christians?
A.
Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us: (a) and also, because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them. (b)

(a)
Ps.50:14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:
Ps.50:15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.
(b)
Matt.7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
Matt.7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
Luke 11:9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
Luke 11:10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
Luke 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?
1 Thess.5:17 Pray without ceasing.

Q. 117.
What are the requisites of that prayer, which is acceptable to God, and which he will hear?
A.
First, that we from the heart pray (a) to the one true God only, who has manifested himself in his word, (b) for all things, he has commanded us to ask of him; (c) secondly, that we rightly and thoroughly know our need and misery, (d) that so we may deeply humble ourselves in the presence of his divine majesty; (e) thirdly, that we be fully persuaded that he, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it,
will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, (f) as he has promised us in his word. (g)

(a) John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.
Ps.145:18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

(b) Rev.19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
John 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.
John 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.
John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

(c) Rom.8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.
1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:
James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

(d) 2 Chron.20:12 O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.

(e) Ps.2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
Ps.34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
Isa.66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

(f) Rom.10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?
James 1:6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

(g) John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
John 14:14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.
John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.
Dan.9:17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.
Dan.9:18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

(h) Matt.7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
Ps.27:8 When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
Q. 118. 
**What has God commanded us to ask of him?**
**A.**
All things necessary for soul and body; (a) which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer he himself has taught us.

(a) James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.
Matt.6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Q. 119. 
**What are the words of that prayer? (a)**
**A.**
Our Father which art in heaven,
1 Hallowed be thy name.
2 Thy kingdom come.
3 Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
4 Give us this day our daily bread.
5 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
6 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.

(a) Matt.6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Matt.6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Matt.6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.
Matt.6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
Matt.6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.
Luke 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.
Luke 11:3 Give us day by day our daily bread.
Luke 11:4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
Amen.
Closing prayer.
Closing Psalm: 86:3

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

Amen

Dr MJ Du Plessis
Reformed Church Bellville
21 September 2008
Scripture MKJV