

CALL TO ME

"O Thou by whom we come to God, The Life, the Truth, the Way, The path of prayer
Thyself hast trod - Lord, teach us how to pray. (TLH#454)

As these words are written, the world faces renewed warfare among nations, threats of terrorism, the hatred of various religious groups one for another, and the hatred of Christianity from almost all other religious groups. The world's financial picture is not looking very healthy, and danger of some sort seems to be around every corner.

Jeremiah the prophet would recognize this picture of world events. His world was unsettled, armies marched, kings were disposed, nations captured, religious differences flared, and various states sponsored acts of terrorism. For Jeremiah personally and for the small nation of Judah, danger was also around every corner.

Jeremiah 33 opens with the prophet held captive in the courtyard of the king's guard. While in this seemingly hopeless condition, under arrest and kept from speaking God's Word to Judah, the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

How this promise must have lifted the prophet's spirits! Even in his miserable condition, God WANTED to hear from him, God WOULD answer! God's promise is the same to us, some 2600 years removed from Jeremiah, in a world that, except for technology, is little different from his.

What do these passages of Scripture say about prayer?

Psalm 4:3

Psalm 18:6

Matthew 7:7-12

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

We often hear that God answers prayers with "yes" "no" or "wait until later." Some suggest that it would be better to say that God answers prayers by saying "yes" or "I have something even better in mind for you."

What impressions of God are given by the first set of answers? The Second?

What is the promise and warning in James 1:(2-4)5-8

What do the following passages say about the CONTENT of our prayers?

Philippians 4:6-7

Psalm 136:1

I Timothy 2:1-4

Matthew 5:43-48

Psalm 50:15

Examine the "Lord's Prayer" - Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4.

What makes this a model prayer for believers?

Where is the overall emphasis in this prayer - on physical or spiritual matters?

How does this prayer encompass the needs of today's world in its various petitions?

The Large Catechism says: "[God] desires of us nothing more ardently than that we ask many and great things of him; and on the contrary, he is angered if we do not ask and demand confidently.

Why does God so much desire our prayers?

Why would God be " angered " if we do not " ask and demand" of Him?

What is the difference between this way of thinking and the so-called "name it and claim it" theology?

The Large Catechism also teaches: "This [God's commands and promises concerning prayer] you can hold up to him and say," I come to Thee, dear Father, and pray not of my own accord or because of my own worthiness, but at thy commandment and promise, which cannot fail or deceive me.

What is meant by the phrase " This you can hold up to Him ... " ?

Why are we not worthy to pray on our own?

What is it that makes us worthy to pray?

So we conclude as we began, with God's Word to Jeremiah, which still echoes today in God's Word to us:

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

God bless you as you pray!

The Bible study was written by Rev. John Mueller, pastoral advisor 2000-2004, Michigan District.