



“Living Mindfully”

BY PASTOR JOHN HILLMER

Through the years, a man developed a trusted friendship with his barber.

I've known more than one person, like this. A man will make a special trip to see his barber -- busy flight schedules; always on the go, with his travels -- but when he's home, he'll make a special trip, to see "his" barber. He trusts him.

You come to trust a person, with your deepest thoughts, when you pay him to stand over you, and to wield a sharp razor across your neck.

In the spring of 1535, Martin Luther visited his barber, Master Peter Beskendorf, and the two found themselves discussing matters of the heart.

Master Peter – knowing that this gruff & earthy man in his chair - was also a priest and professor of theology, asked Luther "how to pray". They talked – matters of the heart. Following that "day in the chair", Luther followed up with a letter, called "A Simple way to pray". Later, he expanded it into a small book that became one of the most popular works of his lifetime. It has since been translated into dozens of languages, and has become a classic work on "Prayer".

Not surprisingly, when the barber asked Martin how to pray, Luther pointed back to Jesus; because Jesus had friends too, who asked the same question: "How to pray?"

The disciples said: "Lord, teach us to pray, for John taught his disciples to pray."

And Jesus gave them a blueprint – we call it the "Lord's Prayer".

(when you pray, say..."Our Father, who art in heaven...")

Luther tells the barber to follow this blueprint.

-a simple way to pray.

Are you worried about paying bills?

Fearful of hurricanes?

Irritated to find politics in your football games?

Irritated in politics -- generally?

Pray to God about these things; for all of this is "daily bread".

Give us this day...what we need.

Forgive us our sins. Help **us** to forgive others.

We can struggle to say meaningful prayers, but if you know the Lord's Prayer, you already know how to pray! And what to say.

Luther also recognized that prayer takes attention. Concentration.

(Today) "Mindfulness".

A good, attentive barber, keeps his thoughts, attention, and eyes on the razor and the hair, and the head in front of him. He can't let his mind wander! –or forget how far he's gotten with the work of cutting and shaving and trimming. If he wants to engage in too much conversation, or let's his mind wander, or look at someone else in the barber shop, he is likely to cut his customer's chin, or his nose, or even his throat!

How much more does "prayer" call for concentration, mindfulness, or singleness of heart if one is to become a good Pray-er!

The human condition is that we get distracted.

We often pray with half a heart. Or our prayers go on "auto – pilot". We get started well enough, but then...we get to the end and say "How did I get here?"

"I begin my prayers for people; for the world; for my city and state; and soon I find myself thinking about what I need from the store. What I have to do, before I can go home.

Here again – the Lord's Prayer can help. Its words can bring us back down to earth, focusing our restless souls and our wandering minds.

What does your restless soul need this December? (This week? This day?)

Advent helps us to "be still" - and listen for God. (To be "mind" – "full"; less full -- of "worry –"; less full -- of "world".)

John the Baptizer says: "Repent". ...which simply means "to turn". To turn your thoughts, your mindfulness, to God. To turn, and re-turn. Distractions are a way of life. No one can 'control' the world "out there", but we can exercise our minds, and discipline our thoughts in "here", to turn from "there" to "here"; and then to God.

Our Father -- in heaven -- holy is your name.

(The world sure isn't holy, but YOU are holy.) Let YOUR will, shape my will.

Let YOUR spirit, guide my spirit.

And...truth be told...you may find that even the words of this most beautiful prayer, fail you. In such moments, you can follow the simplest thing of all -- which Luther suggested to his barber: Simply, "Be still"...and listen.

("Be still and know that I am God" Psalm 46:10)

Listen *for* God.

Listen to the One – who is, and who was, and who is to come.

John the Baptizer is such a powerful figure. He captured the hearts and minds of his generation. The whole country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him; and were baptized by him; confessing their sins. (Can you imagine THAT kind of impact today? No one sins.

"I'M INNOCENT". I didn't do THAT. Talk to my lawyer.) All lawyered up.

Yet even with such a following, John says - The ONE who is more powerful than I is coming.

I'm not worthy to stop down and untie his shoelaces.

I do what I do, with water. But HE...HE will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

...and he points away from himself, to the One who is coming.

John never said, "It's all about me." "I'm the only one who can fix this." "I'm the only one who matters."

There are words in our time, and the spirit of our age, is so deluded. Devoid of truth.

Advent – the season of Advent – gives us exactly what we need:

the time, the "permission", and the wherewithal, to set aside some time and space in our lives to focus: to focus on God. –to focus on the greater truths of life.

–to become more mindful. –to set our hearts and minds, on the coming of Jesus, the One who teaches us how to be truly human; the One who comes to forgive, and make whole, and set us free.