

“Lord, will only a few people be saved?” He answered them, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough” (Lk 13:23-24). We should never take anything for granted, least of all our salvation. It is not enough to know Jesus, we must also act in accord with his teaching. It is not enough to be baptized, we must live our faith loving God and neighbor. In a world that seems adrift at times, it is difficult to live one’s faith. Jesus asks us to try, to strive. We may not succeed, but the effort we put forth is important and we will be judged by it.

Saint Paul reminds us that we do not know how to pray as we ought. We judge by human standards and often miss the mark. Recall the prayer of the Pharisee, “O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax collector” (Lk 18:11).

“Our feeble understanding of God’s ways is such that we desperately need help in the struggle to pray according to God’s will.”ⁱ Jesus offers numerous examples of how we ought to pray:

- “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:24). This prayer uttered as Jesus began his passion in the Garden of Gethsemane is also echoed in the Lord’s Prayer when we pray, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done.
- From the agony of the cross, Jesus prays: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). When someone finds fault with us and lashes out verbally, it is helpful to pray these words and remember that the Lord will forgive us as we forgive others.
- “When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you” (Mt 6:6). Time and again, Jesus went away to a private place and prayed too his Father throughout the night. It is not that God needs to hear us, “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (6:8). The reverse is true, we need to hear God. In the quiet stillness of our heart, when we have set aside distractions, we may more readily hear God enlightening us as to his will.
- “Store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (6:20). God’s will is one of selfless sacrifice. As we think of others first over and above ourselves, we can help others in little and small ways. Act in such a way as to serve others rather than being served yourself.

“The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness” (Rom 8:26). In the midst of our struggles and crosses, “our prayers ... are not only heard by God; they are also helped by God.”ⁱⁱ All the more reason, to place ourselves in the presence of God and listen for his guidance in prayer.

ⁱ Hahn, Scott W. Romans (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture) Pg. 141.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.