

Cheyenne Boon:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Cheyenne Boon:

Welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Psalter book, Psalm number 125, found on page 63. Please rise in body or spirit and make your responses in bold. "They who trust in God are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but stands fast forever."

Congregation:

"The hills stand above Jerusalem, so does God stand round about the people, from this time forth forevermore."

Cheyenne Boon:

"The scepter of the wicked shall not hold sway over the land allotted to the just, so that the just shall not put their hands to evil."

Congregation:

"Show your goodness, oh God, to those who are good and to those who are true of heart."

Cheyenne Boon:

"As for those who turn aside to crooked ways, God will lead them away with the evildoers but peace be upon Israel."

Choir:

(singing)

The Rev. Fr. Vassilios Bebis:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

The Rev. Fr. Vassilios Bebis:

My thoughts today reflect from the phrase, "Never stop praying," from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians 5:17. This phrase inspired many Christian ascetics in Asia Minor, to develop the Jesus Prayer. "Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on me, a sinner." The Jesus Prayer is a breath prayer, similar in a way to prayers offered by our Buddhist and Hindu brothers and sisters, but also unique. It is a summary of the Gospels, holding in itself the whole Gospel truth. The praying person says the words, "Lord Jesus Christ, our God," while breathing in. You can try it if you like. And, "Have mercy on me, a

sinner," while breathing out, repeating this pattern for extended periods. In other words, our breathing is coordinated with the rhythm of the prayer, and may also be synchronized with the heart's beating.

I am trying to say the Jesus Prayer for a few minutes a day. It is not an easy task. However, experienced teachers of the breath prayer believe that about half an hour is needed to say the prayer attentively and meaningfully. The same teachers advise us not to try to establish this technique within us if it does not reveal itself on its own. One of them emphasizes many reason to learn it by experience can damage the lungs and gained nothing. The essence of the matter consists of the union of the mind with the heart during prayer, which is achieved by God's grace in its own time, determined by God. The above statement is accurate because this Christian mantra, or piece of Christian yoga, as Bishop Anthony Bloom described it in his book, [inaudible 00:10:24] Christian yoga, is addressed to a person, to the son of God, who elects when to fulfill a person's heart and when to dwell in a person redemptively.

When he does that, He becomes the master of a person's inner life and makes His will known to the heart. The human heart is purified through the breath prayer, not because it becomes clean of feelings but because it is filled with the love of God. A light suddenly shines from the heart, when we pull back the dark veil that covers it by invoking the divine name. This light reveals our union with God and all living organisms to the heart. But why the invocation of the divine name as we breath in this [inaudible 00:11:23], physically and spiritually, the words, "Have mercy on me, a sinner," we say as we breath out is cannot. These are words of repentance echoing the petition made by the tax collector in the Gospel of Luke 18:13. "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." This element of emptiness is emphasized by the traditional method of saying the breath prayer. We are asked to lower our head and to the chest, look toward the middle of the stomach and restrict breathing.

While we are saying the words, "Have mercy on me, a sinner," we will find darkness. But if we continue saying the prayer, we will discover the relief and happiness. The words will align with each breath and heart beat of us. Finally, no words will be spoken at all. The lips will stop moving. The only thing left is for us to listen to our heart speak. The last remark, the only thing left is for us to listen to our heart speak, is by [inaudible 00:12:36] of Philadelphia. Philadelphia in Asia Minor not in Pennsylvania. Who probably taught the Jesus Prayer for the first time. He points out, and this is important, that there are other ways of praying and other prayers leading a faithful person to communion with God. What is essential for a person sanctification, is the [inaudible 00:13:02] and periodically fulfilling actions of God who decides to pray in us and transform our lives. The Jesus breath Prayer is one example out of many. Thank you for listening to my host and may God bless us all.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Now, if you please rise in body or spirit, and join me in prayer. Gracious God, we thank you for this day, this morning, this moment. We give thanks for your transforming power. This morning, we call on you for the needs that are closest to our hearts. We pray that you will gather all things and all places together in Your love, for the good of your beloved people and your sacred creation. Grant Thy peace, grant us Thy peace, grant us Thy peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Now please join in saying the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying-

All:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those we trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

Cheyenne Boon:

Let us sing the hymn, To God with Gladness, Sing. Hymn number 30 in your Crimson Hymnal.

Choir/Congregation:

(singing)

Cheyenne Boon:

Now, as we go into this day, let us bless and keep one another. Let us make peace. Let us be at peace. May it be so and may the church say, Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.