

Sermon – 07/25/21
(The Lord's Prayer)

Text – Matthew 6:9-14

(Jesus said): “In this manner, therefore, pray: ‘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 who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.’ For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

Theme – “Our Father”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the verses before our text, Jesus is preaching to the crowd in His famous Sermon on the Mount. He has already spoken about the Law of God – dealing with such things as murder, adultery, divorce, revenge, and acts of charity. In effect, Jesus is making them see how they do not – and that they cannot – properly and perfectly keep those commandments of God, as the Lord demands. He says: *“Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Really, that is the burden of the first part of the Catechism – to show us our sin and need for a Savior.

But that second part of the Catechism – the Creed, the topic of last week’s sermon – shows us how God is good and gracious to us, poor sinners though we be. He still loves us and provides for us, giving us all we need in this life. He has sent His Son to be our Savior, in obeying the Law for us and in paying for our sin on the cross. He sends His Holy Spirit to us, to give us faith in Christ – and to keep us in that faith until He brings us home with Him – as the Gospel is applied to us in Word and Sacrament.

Today we move to the third part of the Catechism, the Lord's Prayer. And in our text we hear Jesus say "*this is how you pray*". First, we are told to address God as "*our Father*". This prayer, then, unites us as Christians — as God's children. When we pray this prayer we are joining together with all our brothers and sisters in Christ, all around the globe, of all times and ages, coming to the One who is the Father of ALL believers. And He **is** our Father, simply because we have been joined to the Son by faith.

As Christians, then, we can honestly and truly call God "Father" – not just in some figurative sense, not just because He is our Creator, but because we ARE actually His children by union with the Son, Jesus Christ. Think of what that means! Just think of all the things that our earthly fathers have done – and still do – for us. How they provide for us; watch over us; advise us; support us; encourage us; motivate us; love us. Well, if they do all those things for us, just imagine what our heavenly Father can do, and does, for us! He is the One who made heaven and earth. The One who rules the universe. The One who commands angels. **That** is your Father. That is the One to whom you are coming with your prayers and petitions, your worries and needs, your requests and desires. Will He listen? Of course He will – He is your Father! And will He help? **Can** He help? Of course He can and He will – He is God Almighty! What a tremendous and most encouraging way to start our prayers, indeed. And He wants – He even **commands** – you to come to Him, asking for His help and blessing. What a Father we have! (pause)

In the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer, we say: "*Hallowed be Thy name*". Luther reminds us in his explanation that God's name is holy in and of itself, apart from anything we might do, but that we are asking here that we would keep His name holy in our lives. And, he says, this is done when we live and teach and believe according to God's Word. But when we fail to live and teach and believe

according to what God has said in His Word (or when we allow others to do so without reproof), then we are guilty of profaning and abusing His name, of not keeping it holy and sacred. (pause)

When we pray “*Thy kingdom come*” are we praying for an *earthly* kingdom and rule? Are we asking God to give us power and influence in this world, in the political realm? No. What we *are* praying for is the extension of His Kingdom, which Jesus tells us is not of this world, but rather is a spiritual kingdom.

The kingdom for which we are praying, then, is the kingdom of believers. We are praying, first and foremost, that we may be kept always in that kingdom – that we may never fall away from the Christian faith, but that God would keep us steadfast and true by His Holy Spirit. And we are also praying for our fellow-believers, that God would likewise bless and keep them in that faith. But we are also praying for those who are not yet in that Kingdom – we are praying that God would expand His Kingdom and add more and more people to it; and we are asking that God would use US as His instruments to accomplish just that.

But there is also yet another component to this petition: we are also praying for the consummation of that Kingdom, for the time when our Lord will return and take us to be with Him forever in heaven. So, in just those three little words (“*Thy Kingdom come*”) we are (first of all) praying for our salvation; secondly, for the salvation of our fellow Christians; next, for the conversion of unbelievers; and, finally, for the new heaven and earth God promises. How much is packed into this one short, little sentence! (pause)

“*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” God’s will is good and gracious; as Christians we know and believe that because of Christ. After all, if God would send His own Son to take our place under the curse of the Law and suffer the punishment for the sin of the entire human race, how could we doubt that He will be good to us in all other things? He has carried our greatest burden for us – our great

and terrible sin – so we cannot fear that He will fail us in lesser matters, such as the needs of the body. And because we have faith in God’s good and gracious will, we ask in this petition that He would grant us a ready and faithful obedience to that will. We ask that we may be as quick to obey, as unquestioning in our response, as perfect in our carrying out His will as are the angels and saints in heaven.

However, as sinful human beings, we are often tempted to doubt God’s will. The devil whispers in our ear: “How could a loving God allow such things as suffering and pain?” But in this part of the Lord’s Prayer we are asking that God would not let us be led astray by such thoughts. But instead that we may always have a firm faith in Him and live accordingly. (pause)

When we pray for our “*daily bread*”, Luther makes the point that this includes not just what we eat, but **everything** we need to sustain our lives and bodies here on earth. Again, Luther gives a LONG list (much like he did in his explanation of the Creed). His intent is that we see that all we have is gift from our Father’s gracious hand. Given to us freely, without any merit on our part, but simply because He loves us.

And because it all comes from Him, it is to be used according to His purposes. Notice how this petition follows right at that in which we say “*Thy Kingdom come*”. Surely the connection is not coincidental – no, God gives us our “*daily bread*” to be used here in the extension of His Kingdom and to show forth His love, not for our own selfish use.

Notice too that we pray for our **daily** bread – not for a vast accumulation of goods and possessions which will ensure us comfort and ease in the future. No, we pray only for enough for today, to satisfy our current needs. As wonderful as this world is, we cannot forget that we but strangers and pilgrims here. Jesus Himself warns us that it is indeed hard for a rich man to enter into heaven – not that it is sinful to have wealth and possessions, but because the temptation is great for us to focus on **them**, to let **them** steal away our hearts from God, to make **them** into our god in which we put our faith and hope.

“Give us this day our daily bread” – give us what we need for today, and make us content with that, and bless us to use these things according to *Your* will, O Lord! (pause)

The Fifth Petition says *“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”* Now, this does NOT mean that God will forgive us only if and when we forgive others – as if our forgiving of others **earns** or **causes** His forgiveness of us. No, what we are really saying here is that because God has first forgiven us, we will then forgive others when they sin against us. First comes His forgiveness of our sins, and from that follows and flows our forgiving of others.

Because we are forgiven, we MUST forgive others. We must. It is not optional, as if we can pick and choose who and when to forgive. No, Jesus has paid for their sins just as He paid for yours. So you must forgive. To do otherwise is to deny what Christ has done at the cross.

But to forgive is hard; it goes against our human nature, which wants to set conditions, or limits, or penalties. So, this petition really is a prayer that God would give us His forgiving heart, that we may freely and fully forgive just as He has done for us. (pause)

The Sixth and Seventh Petitions (*“...and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”*) belong together. When we pray *“lead us not into temptation”* we are NOT insinuating that God would try to trick us into sin. Nor are we saying that He is the One who puts temptation in our way. No, such things come from the devil, not God. What we **are** asking in this petition is that God would lead us **away** from temptation, that He would direct and guide our footsteps in the opposite way.

But how often do we put ourselves into position where we know we will be tempted? How many times have we insisted on associating with people we knew would try to get us to sin? It seems that at times we are almost daring God, putting ourselves in situations where we are bound to get into trouble, and then expecting God to bail us out. In this petition, we are praying that God would guide us

away from those people, places, and situation – and instead move us in the direction He would have us go.

Now, these two petitions (“...*and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*”), do not mean that we expect God to grant us a life without trials, turmoil, or testing. God does allow such things to befall His people, but He does so only in order to strengthen our faith in Him. No, what we ARE asking – and expecting – of Him here in these petitions is that He will not let us be tried beyond our strength and ability to resist. And God has promised us that He will not let that ever happen. (pause)

We close the Lord’s Prayer by saying: “*For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*” The Kingdom again refers to the kingdom of all believers; the power means that the power to make us a part of that kingdom belongs to God alone; and the glory for our salvation is His, and not ours. That final word (“*Amen*”) literally means (as Luther says) “yes, yes, it shall be so” – and so, it expresses our confidence that God WILL hear and answer our prayer, giving us what is best, for Jesus’ sake. We don’t need to doubt or worry that God will ever forget us or disregard our prayer, but instead we come to Him with the same simple confidence and hope that little children have when they go to their parents. After all, He IS our Father. And we know just how much He loves us — more than anything, in fact. Of that fact we have infinite proof. In our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

OS – Hymn