

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

September 16, 2012

For What Does Jesus Tell Us to Pray?

Sermon Text: Matthew 6:9-13

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

Fellow Redeemed in Christ,

Last Sunday we directed our attention to the prayer instruction of Jesus and we began a brief study of the Lord’s Prayer. We learned from Jesus’ prayer instruction to us that we are not to pray as the unbeliever; addressing our God with vague names and repetitious babblings, mantras, nor with the attitude that we are going to instruct God when and in what manner He should bless us.

Dear Christians, we know from the Law of God that we in fact deserve nothing but eternal punishment on account of our many sins and that we can do nothing, nor contribute anything whatsoever for our salvation.

But we also know from the Gospel of Jesus Christ that God, solely on the merit of Christ’s perfect obedience to the Law in our place and His suffering and death on the cross, has made us to be joint-heirs with Christ, adopted us as His dear children and given us the gift of His Holy Spirit.

And so last Sunday, we learned from Jesus how *not* to pray and in the Introduction of the Lord’s Prayer we learned we are to address our prayers to God our Father in heaven. We also began our study of what we should be praying for, starting with what is known as the First Petition. In the First Petition, we pray: *“Hallowed be Thy name”*. We learned last week what it is to truly keep God’s name holy among us.

Today, we continue our study of what Jesus tells us to pray for, by considering the Second, Third and Fourth Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. Verse 10 and 11 of our text: *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.”*

In the Second Petition, verse 10 of our text, *“Thy kingdom come”*, we are not simply praying for God’s kingdom to come to us, who already believe. For the whole of God’s gracious gifts and the manifestation of His good mercy in the god-man Christ Jesus to redeem sinful mankind as evidenced in the kingdom of grace to all believers, *will* come. For God has promised to grant us, His children, faith; and by His Holy Spirit keeps us in the faith and thus in His kingdom. But God means for all people everywhere to receive the gift of His kingdom of grace through His Word. So we here also pray that God would

open the hearts and minds of *all* man-kind; that they too, might come to be members of His kingdom through hearing the faithful preaching of His Word. We are therefore also praying that God would send faithful pastors and teachers into all the world to preach the Gospel.

We pray in the Third Petition: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”; that through such faithful preaching and practice of the Word of Truth, all mankind might hear the good news – the Gospel – and receive faith by the working of God, the Holy Spirit and firmly grasp with that faith the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus. This is the good and gracious will of God. As we read in First Timothy 2:1-4: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

Because this *is* the gracious and good will of God, we are here also asking our Father in heaven to break apart and hinder every evil force in this world; including the Devil, the world and our own sinful flesh, so that His will is done in our own lives as well. Therefore, as true children of God, we place our complete trust in Him, for He knows what is best for us and when to give us the physical and spiritual blessings we need.

Furthermore, because of the sure hope of salvation we have in Christ Jesus, we will want to be ever watchful and remember that the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh are diametrically opposed to the will of God and are actively doing whatever they can to distract us – to get us to take our focus from the Cross of Christ. If we recognize these dangers and find it would be in our soul’s best interest to avoid certain people, places, and activities that we know are harmful to our spiritual welfare, then we ought to avoid those things. First John 2:15-17 says: *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”*

We know that because we are Christians – of Christ – the world will hate us, just as it hated Him. But then we are not running a popularity contest with the world, are we? We don’t belong to the world. We belong to God, our heavenly Father! For the blood of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ has reconciled us to the Father, and so we have eternal life through Him. And for this reason we ought to willingly bear whatever suffering and trials God allows us to be therewith confronted in this life – submitting ourselves to the will of our God and humbly commending our bodies and souls into His care. For God uses the trials and troubles we face from day to day to teach us and to bring our attention and trust back to Him. As we read in Romans 8:28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”*

Now, certainly we are not to create crosses for ourselves as though through our self-imposed suffering we might merit anything; but God *does* want us to take up our individual cross each of us have as Christians in an unbelieving and perverse world. Not because in doing so we will glorify ourselves, but so that others may see the trials we overcome by God's good grace and mercy and the good we do through Jesus Christ, and so glorify our Father in heaven.

Yes, Dear Christian Friends, we ought to take up our crosses without the grumbling attitude I dare say we are all guilty of adopting from time to time when things don't seem to be going the way we think they should, or within the time frame we think they should. We cannot rightly seek and pray for the kingdom of God to come quickly to us and then complain about what God accomplishes in us and others through the trials we face and the moving of His Holy Spirit!

We pray in this petition then, that in *all* circumstances and in *all* places, even as Christ Himself prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane: *not our will, but the Father's will be done.*

Finally, in the Fourth Petition – verse 11 of our text – we pray: “*Give us this day our daily bread.*”

We should take special note here that Christ teaches humility and frugality. For here we are not praying for the things we think we will need in the future. We are praying for *this day's* needs to be supplied. Hence, our Savior is also here teaching us that we are not to become anxious about what is going to happen next month, next week, or even tomorrow. For that is not only foolish, but sinful as well. Psalm 127:2 tells us: “*It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.*” And in First Timothy 6:6-8, we read: “*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*”

Yet God does provide not only what we need for nourishment this day, but also everything we need to sustain our lives and faith all the days of our lives. If we would simply take a few moments to consider even just the physical blessings God has given and continues to give us, we would very quickly realize just how good and gracious our heavenly Father really is towards us, His dear children.

Martin Luther does make mention of just some of these blessings in his explanation of this petition in his Small Catechism. Daily bread, Luther writes, is: “*Everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body, such as meat, drink, clothing, shoes, house, homestead, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful magistrates, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.*”

Yes, God does give these things to those who do not ask for them – the unbelievers – as well as to His children – the Christians. The Scriptures tell us: “*...he maketh his sun to*

rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”
(Matthew 5:45b)

So why should *we* ask for these things in prayer?

Well, first, because Jesus tells us to ask for our daily bread. And that, so we might be made aware and often reminded that our daily bread is a gracious gift from God and that we should therefore receive it with thankful hearts. “*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*” (Ephesians 5:20).

We would do well also to remember that everything we have really belongs to God. *Indeed, all blessings come from Him.* And because of what God has done for us in Christ, as Christians we will be *more* than willing – we will be *highly motivated* – to use our time, our talents, our money and all our earthly goods according to His will – to the glorification of His holy name, the edification of His bride, the Church and the preaching of His Gospel to all people.

And so, let us pray:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

And now, may the Peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.