

Sermon on Matthew 6:1-15, "The Lord's Prayer"
Lenten Service on Wednesday, March 10, 2010
Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
By James Erlandson (aka Martin Luther)

Dear Friends in Christ.....once again, I am blessed to be with you for this time of Lenten evening prayer and preach from your pulpit. On Ash Wednesday we began this season of Lent by reading from the gospel of Matthew, in what is known as "The Sermon on the Mount", when Jesus taught his disciples and the crowds who came to hear him, how to live in God's kingdom. In the portion read this evening, Jesus teaches us what true Christian piety is: how to give alms, how to fast, and how to pray faithfully, and not for mere show. Jesus taught best by example, so he showed all who follow him how to pray by giving us an example called "The Lord's Prayer". Christians have been praying this beloved prayer ever since, both in private prayer and in public worship. If we use this prayer so much, we should know what it means, and how saying this prayer can help us become stronger in faith and in our Christian life.

I once was asked by my barber, Master Peter, how to pray. So I told him, by sharing with him the meaning of the petitions of our Lord's Prayer, while we was cutting my thinning locks of hair and shaving my beard (for I often will pray while baring my neck to a barber with a sharp razor blade!). So I began by asking:

Who then, are we praying to? "**Our Father in Heaven,**" of course! In the Lord's Prayer we address God the way Jesus did, with the title "Father", or as Jesus said, "Abba", which in Aramaic means "Daddy". In the year 1531, when our oldest child was five years old, I added this explanation to the Small Catechism: "With these words God wants to attract us, so that we believe he is truly our Father and we are truly God's children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father."

The first petition, or request that we make to God in this prayer is "**Hallowed be your name.**" It is true that God's name is holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that it may also become holy in and among us. *So how does this come about?* Whenever the Word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as God's children, also live holy lives according to it. To this end help us, dear Father in heaven! However, whoever teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches, dishonors God's name among us. Preserve us from this, Heavenly Father!

The second petition Jesus gives us in this prayer is "**Your kingdom come.**" In fact, God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us. *How does this come about?* Whenever our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that through the Holy Spirit's grace we

believe God's Holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.

The third petition says **“Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.”** In fact, God's good and gracious will comes about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us. ***How does this come about?*** Whenever God breaks and hinders every evil scheme and will of the devil, the world, and our flesh that would not allow us to hallow God's name and would prevent the coming of his kingdom. And God's will comes about whenever God strengthens us and keep us steadfast in his Word and in faith until the end of our lives. This is God's good and gracious will.

And now, the fourth petition. **“Give us today our daily bread.”** In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving. **“What do I mean by ‘daily bread’?”** Everything our bodies need such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright workers, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like. [Notice, I didn't say cell phones or I pods.]

And now for a petition that addresses the heart of the matter: **“Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.”** We ask in this prayer that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins or deny these petitions on their account, for we are worthy of nothing for which we ask, nor have we earned it. Instead we ask that God would give us all things by grace, for we sin daily and indeed earn only punishment. So, on the other hand, we, too, truly want to forgive heartily and do good gladly to those who sin against us. (Did anyone say that this was easy?!)

And the sixth petition: **“Save us from the time of trial.”** It is true that God tempts no one, but we ask in this prayer that God would preserve us and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and gain the victory.

Finally, the seventh petition: **“And deliver us from evil.”** We ask in this prayer, as in a summary, that our Father in heaven may deliver us from all kinds of evil – affecting body or soul, property or reputation – and at last, when our final hour comes, may grant us a blessed end and take us by grace from this valley of tears to himself in heaven.

“For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.” This means that I should be certain that such petitions are acceptable to and heard by our Father in heaven, for God himself commanded us to pray like this and has promised to hear us. “Amen, amen” means “Yes, yes, it is going to come about just like this.” May these words give us confidence as we pray tonight.