

Zion Lutheran Church, Harrisburg, PA /September 20, 2023
WOW (Worship On Wednesday) – FALL SERIES - 12:10pm Service of the Word
“KNEELING WITH GIANTS – Learning to Pray with History’s Best Teachers”
Based on the book of the same name by Gary Neal Hanson
Praying with Martin Luther: The Lord’s Prayer

Welcome & Announcements

Opening Versicles

L O Lord, open my lips.

C **and my mouth shall declare Your praise.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness

L Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence for self-examination

C **I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed; wherefore I pray to God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.**

L The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins. Amen.

Prayer

L The Lord be with you,

C **And also with you.**

L Let us pray: Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may never forget you, but remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

Scripture Reading: **Matthew 6:5-15**

⁵“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

L The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Readings from Martin Luther’s Works

From *The Large Catechism*

For whenever a good Christian prays, “Dear Father, your will be done,” God replies from above, “Yes, dear child, it shall be done indeed, in spite of the devil and all the world.”

From *A Simple Way to Pray*

You should also know that I do not want you to recite all these words in your prayer. That would make nothing but idle chatter and prattle... Rather do I want your heart to be stirred and guided concerning the thoughts which ought to be comprehended in the Lord’s Prayer. These thoughts may be expressed, if your heart is rightly warmed and inclined toward prayer, in many different ways and with more words or fewer...

This in short is the way I use the Lord’s Prayer when I pray it. To this day I suckle at the Lord’s Prayer like a child, and as an old man eat and drink from it and never get my fill. It is the very best prayer, even better than the psalter, which is so very dear to me...

Finally, mark this, that you must always speak the Amen firmly. Never doubt that God in his mercy will surely hear you and say “yes” to your prayers. Never think that you are kneeling or standing alone, rather think that the whole of Christendom, all devout Christians, are standing there beside you and you are standing among them in a common united petition which God cannot disdain. Do not leave your prayer without having said or thought, “Very well, God has heard my prayer; this I know as a certainty and a truth.” This is what amen means.

Homily

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers

L Show us your mercy, O Lord,

C and grant us your salvation.

L Clothe your ministers with righteousness.

C Let your people sing with joy.

L Give peace, O Lord, in all the world,

C for only in you can we live in safety.

L Lord, keep this nation under your care.

C and guide us in the way of justice and truth.

L Let your way be known upon the earth;

C your saving health among all nations.

L Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten,

C nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

L Create in us clean hearts, O God,

C and sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

L *Additional petitions offered...*

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **C Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

L Lord, remember us in your kingdom and reach us to pray:

C 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.

Benediction

L Let us bless the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

L The Lord almighty bless us and direct our days and our deeds in his peace.

C **Amen.**

Additional Teaching on Praying the Lord's Prayer

From Kneeling with Giants by Gary Neal Hanson

Luther used the Lord's Prayer as an outline to structure a time of prayer – a framework that shapes prayers offered in our own words, our own meditations and requests, our praise and confession. It is Christ's own authoritative guide to the *topics* we should pray. We stop on a clause and spend time praying our own words on that subject, and then we move to the next one. Rather than leaving us to a completely open, even wandering, talk with God, Luther offers us a map to make sure we get through all the territory we should cover.

I often recommend writing the Lord's Prayer out on a card and holding onto it, even if people already know it cold. They can put their thumb on one line, pray about that topic and then move on to the next line. This can help people who find it challenging to slow down after decades of careening through it in worship. It also helps people who come from nontraditional churches in which the Lord's Prayer is not emphasized.

There are three practical tools that Luther uses, though he never lists them. First, it helps to think of what Jesus says to pray for in three time frames: each petition is in a sense accomplished already, and we give thanks; each petition applies to current needs, and so we ask; each petition will be truly fulfilled only at the end of the age, and so we wait with longing. Second, it helps to think about each clause of the prayer in concentric circles: we pray for God to answer in our own lives, then among our families and friends, then in our churches, our communities and the world as a whole. Though he prays for himself, Luther reminds us that the Lord's Prayer always says "our" and "us," rather than "my" and "me": "A prayer spoken only in behalf of oneself is not a good prayer." Then third, each line of the prayer can include more than one kind of prayer: within any line we may be led to quiet contemplation, words of praise and thanksgiving, and humble confession, as well as requests in the form of supplication for ourselves or intercession for others.

From the Small Catechism: <https://catechism.cph.org/en/lords-prayer.html>

The Lord's Prayer: As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.

The Introduction

Our Father who art in heaven.

What does this mean? With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

The First Petition

Hallowed be Thy name.

What does this mean? God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

How is God's name kept holy? God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!

The Second Petition

Thy kingdom come.

What does this mean? The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God's kingdom come? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

The Third Petition

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done? God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die.

This is His good and gracious will.

The Fourth Petition

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

The Fifth Petition

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

The Sixth Petition

And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean? God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

The Seventh Petition

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

The Conclusion *These word's were not in Luther's Small Catechism

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.* Amen.

What does this mean? This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen means "yes, yes, it shall be so."