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Immanuel Lutheran Church – Burns, WY

Lent II–Midweek (members of St. John’s Kimball, Zion Grover, Grace Pine Bluffs present)

March 3, 2021

Text: Lord’s Prayer; SC III, 2nd & 3rd Petitions

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Before we continue our journey through the various petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, we need to remember the foundation upon which our prayer life must be established.

First, prayer is an exercise and activity of Christian faith. Prayer can be likened unto the breath of faith created in us by the Holy Spirit. Praying is the calling and vocation of the baptized. When we were baptized into God’s Trinitarian name, God the Father filled us with the Holy Spirit because in those waters of baptism we died with Christ and were resurrected in the newness of His eternal life. Christians and the Christian Church will pray until we reach our final home in the new heavens and the new earth.

Secondly, Christ commands us to pray. “When you pray,” our Lord taught His disciples. Not if you pray but when you pray. Thirdly, Jesus promised to hear and answer our prayers. Ask and you will receive. Knock and the door will be opened to you. Seek and you will find. No qualifications or equivocations are provided. Just a bold, amazing promise. God will answer our prayers. Fourthly, Jesus gave us the very words to pray, the Lord’s Prayer. It is the perfect prayer. These four characteristics are the foundation upon which our prayers are established: 1) it’s an activity and discipline of faith, 2) Christ commands us to pray, 3) He promises to hear and answer our prayers, and 4) He gave us the perfect prayer that we are to pray every day.

Last week, we briefly considered the Introduction to the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father who art in heaven.” The Small Catechism teaches us that God is our true Father and we are His true children so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children as their dear father. One of my goals in this Lenten series is to encourage and embolden your life of prayer. Not in your own righteousness or strength. But in the knowledge and confidence that God is our loving Father, and we are His beloved sons and daughters. God the Father delights in heaving our prayers and answering them. Our prayers are prayed with boldness and confidence because God is our Father, His Son is our Savior, and the Holy Spirit is our helper and guide.

We also briefly considered the 1st Petition, “Hallowed be thy name.” The Catechism taught us that God’s name is holy in itself. We do not and cannot make God’s name holy, but we want it to be kept holy among us. God’s name is kept holy among us by the grace of the Holy Spirit when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we Christians live holy lives according to it. In this 1st petition we are praying for all pastors and teachers of God’s Word (Sunday school teachers, parents as they teach God’s Word at home to each other and their children, professors of theology, musicians and composers of sacred music, artists, and so forth). We are also praying for every Christian. That they would hear pure Christian teaching with repentance and faith and a sincere desire to live according to it. Doctrine and life always, always, always go together. They cannot be separated.

Tonight, we will consider the 2nd and 3rd Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. The 2nd Petition, or request, is “Thy Kingdom come.”

The Catechism question is “What does this mean?”

Answer: “The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.”

Once again, we see a similar idea as we heard in the 1st Petition and we’ll hear again in the 3rd Petition. God’s name is holy in itself, God’s kingdom comes by itself, and God’s will is done (i.e., 3rd Petition) all without our prayers. In other words, we don’t make God’s name holy or bring God’s kingdom or make His will happen because of our prayers or other good works. God’s name is holy in itself, God Himself establishes His kingdom, and God accomplishes His will whether we pray or not. But we Christians want these things to happen to us: His name kept holy, His kingdom come, and His will be done, so that we may live godly lives now and into eternity. Thus we pray boldly and confidently that these things will happen because God has promised to do these things. Thus, we pray joyously and courageously.

The follow-up question in the Catechism under the 2nd Petition is:

“How does God’s kingdom come?”

Answer: “God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.”

Notice the similarity between the answer given here in the 2nd Petition to that of the question in the 1st Petition, “How is God’s name kept holy.” Both emphasize the pure preaching and teaching of God’s Word heard and believed in faith coupled with the

Christian living according to it. God's kingdom is a kingdom of faith in the earth created by the Holy Spirit resulting in a God pleasing life. The holy and precious Gospel, strictly speaking, is the preaching and teaching of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. God the Father sent His Son to redeem us from sin and death and deliver us from the devil's power. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

But this Gospel also brings about a change of life, heart, mind, and habits. This is why the teaching of the 10 Commandments cannot and must never be ignored or forgotten. We do not earn forgiveness of sins or eternal life by keeping the Commandments. That is given to us in Christ through the Gospel. But we must know how we forgiven, redeemed, and sanctified children of God are to live in this world. The 10 Commandments are included in the Catechism's phrase about the Word of God being taught in its truth and purity. Godly Christian lives are defined by the parameters established in the 10 Commandments. We don't really have the time tonight to consider each of the Commandments individually. But I do want to encourage you to review the 10 Commandments with their Catechism explanations included in your hymnal pp. 321-322. Or you can review them in Small Catechism published separately (Hold up copy). If you don't have one, let me know and I'll get you one. The Bible summarizes the Commandments as love for God and love for your fellow man. The apostle Paul says love is the fulfilment of the Law in Romans 13:10. A godly life in which God's kingdom triumphs among us (LC III:54) is lived in Christian love. May God the Spirit grant us this richly.

Now we consider the 3rd Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The Catechism question is "What does this mean?"

Answer: "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."

The follow-up question in the Catechism under the 2nd Petition is:

"How is God's will done?"

Answer: "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."

Under this petition, we begin to venture into the arena of spiritual warfare. In faith, we desire that God's name be kept holy among us, that His kingdom come to us, and that His will be done among us. But the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh do not desire these things. In fact, they openly resist them. The Bible teaches us "there will be strange events (in our lives) if we are to abide in God's will. We shall have to suffer many thrusts and blows on that account from everything that seeks to oppose and prevent the fulfillment of the first two petitions" (LC III:62) of the Lord's Prayer. The devil "chafes and rages as a fierce enemy with all his power and might" (LC III:62) against us because we are children of God.

"He marshals all his subjects and, in addition, enlists the world and our own flesh as his allies. For our flesh is in itself lazy and inclined to evil (Romans 7:18), even though we have accepted and believe God's Word. The world, however, is perverse and wicked. So he provokes the world against us, fans and stirs the fire, so that he may hinder and drive us back, cause us to fall, and again bring us under his power (II Cor. 2:11; I Tim. 3:6-7). Such is his will, mind, and thought. He strives for this day and night and never rests a moment. He uses all arts, wiles, ways, and means that he can invent ... For where God's Word is preached, accepted, or believed and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be missing" (LC III:62-63, 65).

Prayer, especially the Lord's Prayer, and God's Word are our protection. Remember to whom we pray, God the Father. According to whose command and promise, Christ our Lord and Savior. By whose grace and power, the Holy Spirit. We pray with all boldness and confidence for if God stands with us and for us, who can stand against us? Nothing and no one. "We (Christians) have this comfort and confidence: the devil's will and purpose and all our enemies shall and must fail and come to nothing, no matter how proud, secure, and powerful they know themselves to be" (LC III:70). God does all these good and saving things in our lives. You and all members of Christ's Church stand as intercessors for one another and for the world. The gates of hell shall not prevail against us and Christ's Church. Thanks be to God for your prayers and godly lives that witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

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

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.