

IN NOMINE JESU

THE OUR FATHER

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Our homily for this third Wednesday in Lent is taken from our inspired readings, with our thoughts guided by the following translated pericope:

*Our Father, the One in the heavens;
May Your Name be treated as holy;
Your Kingdom comes;
Your will becomes, as in heaven and upon earth;
Our loaf for the coming day you give to us today;
And forgive us our debts, as also we forgive those owing us;
And lead us not into temptation but rescue us from the evil one.¹*

Our Lenten emphasis has brought us to the teaching regarding the Our Father. It is fitting that this follows the teaching about the Ten Commandments and the Creed. We have heard how Christ Jesus fills the commandments for us, having shed His blood to cover our sins against the Law. We have remembered how our ancient confession centers us on the revealed mercy of the Father who sent His Son to die for us that we might receive the Holy Spirit, Who points us back to the Son, Who intercedes for us with the Father. Now, we have the Lord's own answer to the question: "how should we pray," so that we might be sure that God will hear us.

It is a revealed truth that when the Church says back to God that which He has first said to us, we are certain that the words are pure and acceptable to God. Remember, the Word of God repeatedly admonishes His people to neither add to nor take from His Word. Today, that was expressed in this manner:

Do not cause to add to His Words, lest He rebuke you and you be found (a) liar.²

We live in an era where it is acceptable, even expected, that people change or interpret for themselves the things of God. Repeatedly one can be faced with people's opinions that are guided by the overarching principal that holds that all biblical writing stands to be tested by each "Christian's" own standards. The thinking runs along the lines of: "I'll determine what the text means for me, you decide what it means for you." Therefore, this thought pattern continues: every person should find like-minded people in a church that teaches as they desire. That is a reflection of the spirit of our times.

It is a thought-pattern that stands against the pattern used by Jesus, confessed by the inerrant Word, and held to be true without reservation by all who, by His faith, submit themselves to the revealed Word. Those, you, I pray, who hold to Jesus' method of biblical interpretation, maintain that the Word interprets itself, and that one is called to conform to that Word. Such faithfulness to the Word's guiding allows one, by the faith of Christ, to hold to the admonition of this day's verse from Proverbs:

Do not cause to add to His Words, lest He rebuke you and you be found (a) liar.³

Jesus, in answering the request of His first mortal disciples regarding right

¹ Matthew 6:9b - 13.

² Proverbs 30:6.

³ Proverbs 30:6.

prayer, used the scriptural writings and their right interpretations available at that time to frame the model Christian prayer. In the words of the Our Father – without the doxology that was added for liturgical reasons (For Thine is the kingdom, etc) – Jesus uses some eight Old Testament texts, and three quotes from the Intertestamental Writings (the Apocrypha or Second-canon Works) to develop what we call now the Lord’s Prayer. In what comes next, try to hear the Words you have learned by heart, now spoken from some of their foundational verses:

Thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer ; thy name is from everlasting. ⁴

They shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob... ⁵

Nevertheless, as the will of God is in heaven, so let him do.⁶

Cause to feed me bread needful for me.⁷

Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. ⁸

There shall no evil happen unto him that feareth the Lord; but in temptation even again he will deliver him.⁹

The Lord Jesus, using Scripture to translate Scripture, formed what you have learned as the Introduction and seven petitions of His model prayer. In the words written into your hearts through your ears – some of you, many of you, while you were still in your mothers’ wombs – you began to learn what Jesus wants you to pray that He might intercede for you with His Father in heaven, namely:

⁴Isaiah 63:16b, KJV.

⁵Isaiah 29:23b

⁶I Maccabees 3:60. *The Apocrypha : King James Version*. 1995 . Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

⁷Proverbs 30:8c

⁸Sirach 28:2. *The Apocrypha : King James Version*. 1995 . Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

⁹Sirach 33:1. *The Apocrypha : King James Version*. 1995 . Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

- That you believe you have a dear Father in God who hears your prayers for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of His Son, Jesus;
- That you keep God's name holy by ensuring that His Word continues to be taught purely and in truth, and that in Christ Jesus you live holy lives;
- That you remember that God's kingdom comes when He gives His Spirit so that you believe His Word and lead godly lives into eternity;
- That you know God's will is done when He breaks, hinders and restrains every evil plan and purpose of the unholy Trinity, and that through His Word He strengthens you firm in His Word and His faith until your last breath;
- That you would remember that God provides you all you need for this body and life, and be thankful for those gifts in Christ Jesus;
- That you believe that, for Christ's sake, your Father in heaven does not look on your sins, nor remember them, and that, as forgiven sinners, you are truly free to forgive those who have wronged you in any way;

- That you would remember that, whenever temptation comes, it is not from God, but from either/or the devil, and/or the world and/or your sinful nature, and that God has given you Christ's victory on the cross over them;
- That, in the death of Jesus, God has delivered you from every evil of flesh and spirit, things and reputation, and that, on the moment of your death, God will for the sake of Christ, take you to be with Him in blessedness in His Presence forever.¹⁰

Those points, dear ones in Christ, are paraphrases of the treasures you learned, or are learning, from the *Small Catechism*. Lest you think that you have graduated from them, and that your pastors should not teach them from the pulpit, hear the encouragements of Dr. Martin Luther:

*It is not for trivial reasons that we constantly treat the Catechism and strongly urge others to do the same. For we see to our sorrow that many pastors and preachers are very negligent in this respect and despise both their office and this teaching itself.*¹¹

Lest you think that lets you off the hook with regard to the lessons of the Catechism, Dr. Luther continues:

Many regard the Catechism as a simple, silly teaching which they can absorb and master at one reading. After reading it once they toss the book into a corner as if they are ashamed to read it again...Therefore, it is the duty of every head of a household to examine

¹⁰ All bullets are paraphrases and adapted from the meanings of the Lord's Prayer in the *Small Catechism*.

¹¹ Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

*his children and servants at least once a week and ascertain what they have learned of it, and if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it.*¹²

It seems that a sad reality crept into the Church some decades ago, that is, that the teaching of the Small Catechism's biblical treasures is to be done primarily by our pastors. However, in congregations like ours there has been a recovery of Dr. Luther's intent – that the Head of each Household has the responsibility, joy and privilege of catechizing all the members of the household. How have you been doing with that?

If not well, then confess your neglect, turn and renew the teaching of God's Word in the Catechisms in your home. None of us has mastered completely the pearls of wisdom in them. If we did, we would be able to recite them perfectly, and be able to explain everything in their meanings at the drop of a question like this (There is little excuse for missing that one this week: it was on the website last week)!

What is the seventh petition? "But deliver us from evil."

What does this mean?

*Answer: We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that our Father in heaven may deliver us from all manner of evil, whether it affect body or soul, property or reputation, and that at last, when the hour of death comes, he may grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.*¹³

Of that last you may be certain, for in Jesus' death, the devil was defeated and bound, Hell was harrowed, and the world subdued on your behalf and for your

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church.* Fortress Press: Philadelphia

benefit. In Christ, you have all you need for deliverance from the evil one and all his minions, from the world, and even from yourself.

You have His victory before you every time you utter the words He has given you, without changing or adding to His Word. For you know, believe and live in Christ that His *is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever*. And that means that you are certain that the petitions of the Our Father are pleasing to Him, and are heard by Him; for He has commanded us so to pray and has promised to hear us.¹⁴ His Word is true!

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Lent III Wednesday

Proverbs 30:5-9; Philippians 4:4-7; Matthew 6:7-13

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Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

¹⁴ Paraphrase of the Conclusion, Dr. Luther's *Small Catechism*, p. 22.