

Sermon for A Year with the Catechism Lord's Prayer: First Petition

Date: January 2, 2022

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

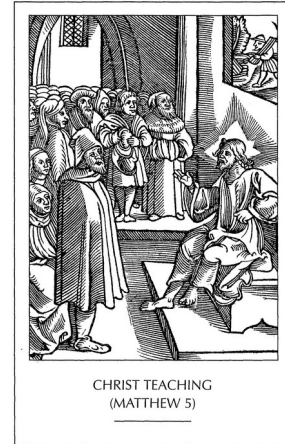
Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:1-15

Epistle Reading: James 2:14-16

Gospel Reading: Luke 11:1-13

Sermon Text: Matthew 6:5-9

Sermon Title: YwtC: Lord's Prayer: First Petition



Introit: Psalm 145:2-6; Antiphon: Psalm 145:1

Hymns:

- LSB 383 – A Great and Mighty Wonder
- LSB 766 – Our Father (v1,2,9)
- LSB 381 – Let Our Gladness Have No End
- LSB 387 – Joy to the World
- LSB 377 – On Christmas Night All Christians Sing
- LSB 368 – Angels We Have Heard on High

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151

Songs:

- A Christmas Alleluia
- Of the Father's Love Begotten
- Sanctus (Holy Holy Holy)
- Agnus Dei (Michael W Smith)
- Away in a Manger - Pentatonix
- Silent Night, Holy Night

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Matthew 6:5-9

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. But 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.

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. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name...”

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

The text we looking at this morning is the same as it was last Sunday, and will be for much of the summer. From Matthew 6:

When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They like to stand in synagogues and on street corners to pray so that everyone can see them. I can guarantee this truth: That will be their only reward. When you pray, go to your room and close the door. Pray privately to your Father who is with you. Your Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you.

When you pray, don't ramble like heathens who think they'll be heard if they talk a lot. Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven,
let your name be kept holy.

I said it last week, and I'll repeat it again, three times Jesus says, "when you pray..." "*When you pray*, you don't be like the hypocrites..." "*When you pray*, go to your room and close the door..." "*When you pray*, don't ramble like heathens..." "When you pray..." "When you pray..." "When you pray..." Jesus assumes you pray. Luther once said:

"A Christian without prayer is as just as impossible as a living person without a pulse.¹"

The assumption does not stop there. Jesus goes on to say, "This is how you should pray..." He assumes that we need to be taught how to pray. Without His instruction, we do what everyone does who seeks God outside of His Word. Without God's Word, we imagine God in our image. Without God's Word, we will fail to understand God as our Father, and ourselves as His children. Without God's Word, we will ask God for precisely those things which we do not need, and fail to ask God for precisely those things that we do need. We do this because, God says:

My ways are higher than your ways,
and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts.²

If we listen to Jesus, who is the Word made flesh, and do what He says, we will pray for precisely those things our heavenly Father knows we need, and He wants

1 Luther's Works Volume 24, page 88

2 Isaiah 55:9

to give to us. When we pray like this we do it with the complete confidence that He hears our prayers, and will give us what we ask.

It is in this context that Jesus teaches:

Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find.
Knock, and the door will be opened for you. Everyone
who asks will receive. The one who searches will find,
and for the one who knocks, the door will be opened.³

He is, after all, our Father, and a loving Father who is not going to give us what is harmful to us, no matter how much we may nag Him, and carry on with Him. He is our Father, and in His love for us, He is going to give us what is good for us, no matter how contrary that might be to the things for which we ask.

Here in the Lord's Prayer, the Lord gives us seven things to ask for, 'as dear children as their dear Father.'⁴ These seven petitions can be divided into two groups.

The first three petitions are "your" petitions; or if you prefer the older King James, "thy" petitions. "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

In these petitions we are directed to look for those things that are specific to the Father who is in Heaven. Here, Jesus is teaching us to lift up your hearts. We are to desire that which comes from above. James says:

Every good present, and every perfect gift, comes from
above, from the Father who made the sun, moon, and
stars.⁵

The first three petitions are 'vertical' in nature.

Then come the final four petitions which are all "us" petitions. "Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Here we are taught to ask the Father for those things that are associated with our life together in this world. These petitions are all horizontal in nature. They pertain to the things that we receive from God that are necessary for our physical and emotional well-being in this world in which we live and move and have our being, until that final day comes when we are removed from this world and these things no longer apply, and all of the Thy petitions are finally and forever fulfilled.

3 Matthew 7:7-8

4 Luther's Small Catechism

5 James 1:17

The thing that we should be sure to understand here, and that should form the way that we pray, even when we use our own words to do so, is the Thy petitions come first and the us petitions come last.

That might be in complete contrast to the way that we would pray on our own, apart from the Word of Jesus who teaches, “Pray like this...” Isn’t it true that apart from this form for prayer, that our Lord gives to us, we would begin with the us petitions and more often than not, end with them too?

Here we find, in the Lord's prayer, a very unnatural way to pray. We are so self-centered, that without His instruction, the content of our prayers would be focused solely on our physical and emotional well-being in this world, with little or no thought to the Name, Kingdom, and the Will of Our Father in Heaven.

Because we are so focused in on ourselves, when Jesus says, “Pray like this...” we can feel the tension as He straightens us out so that we can lift up our head to “our Father who is in Heaven” and ask that in all things, even those earthly things of daily life, that Thy name be hallowed, that Thy Kingdom would come, that Thy will be done.

Let the giving of our daily bread, and the healing of broken relationships, and the daily struggle with the temptations that surround us in this world, all work to the honor of “Thy name” and the coming of “Thy Kingdom,” and fulfillment of “Thy will.”

Jesus' teaching is changing the direction of our life. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”⁶ As contrary to our nature as this may sound, this is precisely what is best for us.

With that introduction and understanding let's look at the first of the three Thy petitions: “hallowed by Thy name.”

In the Large Catechism, Luther begins his explanation of the 1st Petition by saying , “this is not a common way for Germans to speak.” I think that rings true for most Americans as well. I would bet that we probably never use the word, “hallowed” except when we pray the Lord’s Prayer.

“Hallowed” is one of those old King James words that wants to cram a whole phrase into one word. “Hallowed” is short for “may it be made holy.” A literal translation of the Greek is, “let the name of yours be holy.” God’s name is how the eternal, invisible God makes Himself known to us. His name is the point at which people are able to approach God and communicate with the God who is completely unlike us, because He is God.

6 Matthew 6:33

At the burning bush, Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I Am who I Am.”⁷

In the book of Leviticus, God speaks through Moses saying, “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.”⁸ In the book of Isaiah, the prophet sees the angels in Heaven over the throne of God and hears them singing the unending hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of armies.”⁹ In his Revelation, St. John sees and hears the same thing. “The four living creatures... day and night never cease to say, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.’”¹⁰

To be “holy” is to be pure and righteous and set apart from all that is impure and unholy. What is Holy is what is real, true, good and right. This is who God is.

So, when we pray, “hallowed be Thy name,” we are not asking God to make His name holy. That would be like saying, “may the water be wet,” “may the fire be hot,” or “may the tree be wood.” God says, “I Am who I Am.” “I the Lord your God am holy.”

When Jesus says, “Pray like this...Hallowed by Thy name...” He is refocusing our life to its proper relationship with the Father. He teaches us to pray in such a way that we would see God as the Holy God that He is. God is holy with or without our prayer.

“We pray in this petition that His name would be kept holy among us also.”¹¹ We are taught to pray that we would believe God is real, true, good and right, and everything contrary to God is unreal, untrue, ungood, and wrong, and therefore to be rejected and avoided.

In this Petition, Jesus is telling us to pray that Our Father in Heaven would change the direction of our lives, so that we may think on, and honor, God in our daily life in this world in which we live and move and have our being.

Luther says about this petition, “I know of no teaching in all the Scriptures that so mightily diminishes and destroys our life as does this petition.”¹²

There is only one man, in whose life the Name of God is truly ‘hallowed,’ and that is Jesus Christ, the one who says, “Pray like this, ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name...’”

7 Exodus 3:13-14

8 Leviticus 19:2

9 Isaiah 6:3

10 Revelation. 4:8

11 Luther’s Small Catechism

12 Luther’s Large Catechism

Isn't it surprising that Jesus does not say, "Pray like this, 'Our Father in heaven, make my name holy...'"? Isn't it strange that there is nothing in this prayer in which Jesus directs us to ask the Father to make us holier, or more devout, or more pious, or more pure? There is no petition that directs us to say, "Father, help me to improve my life and be a better person so that I may be as holy as You, the Lord my God is holy."

In fact every petition of this prayer is answered completely and perfectly only in Jesus Christ. It is the only-begotten Son who 'hallows' the name of the Father among us, and for us, and in us. Jesus Christ is the One upon whom the Father has written His holy name. We hallow the Name of the Father through faith in Jesus His Son.

It is through faith in Jesus, and when we pray in His Holy Name, we may stand up straight and lift up our heads and pray "hallowed be Thy name," with the complete and total confidence that it has already been done, and it is to that one, true, holy, living God that we pray, and in whom we place our trust, and have our salvation.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

