

# Sermon for A Year with the Catechism The Lord's Prayer: The Fifth Petition

**Date:** January 30, 2022

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

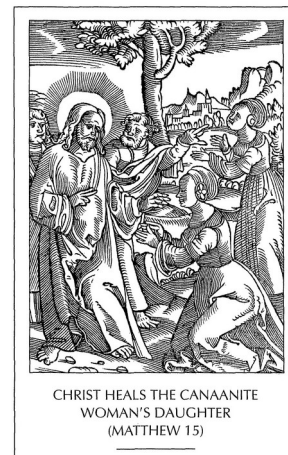
**Old Testament:** Isaiah 55:8-12

**Epistle Reading:** Titus 2:11-14

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 18:15-20

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 6:12

**Sermon Title:** The Lord's Prayer: The Fifth Petition



**Introit:** Psalm 91:10-13; Antiphon: Psalm 91:14

## Hymns:

LSB 912 – Christ is Our Cornerstone

LSB 527 – O Savior, Precious Savior

LSB 766 – Our Father, Who From Heaven Above  
(v. 1,6,9)

LSB 781 – We Give Thee but Thine Own (v. 1-2)

LSB 917 – Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise

## Liturgy:

Divine Service: Prayer and Praise I

## Songs:

Forgive our Sins as We Forgive

Broken Things

Forgiveness – Matthew West

Way Maker

## Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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**Text: Matthew 6:9-12**

<sup>9</sup> “This is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
let your name be kept holy.

<sup>10</sup> Let your kingdom come.

Let your will be done on earth  
as it is done in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us our daily bread today.

<sup>12</sup> **Forgive us as we forgive others.**

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace, peace, and mercy be yours in Jesus' name. Amen.

This Sunday we are looking at the fifth petition, or fifth request. There Jesus teaches us, "Pray like this, 'Our Father in heaven... forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.'<sup>1</sup>"

One of the things that hopefully is beginning to sink in, as we make our way through this exploration of the Lord's Prayer, is the 'plural perspective.' That the prayer is one we all pray: together, with Jesus. We touched on this last week in the 4<sup>th</sup> Petition as we Jesus taught us to pray asking our Father to give **us our** daily bread, not **my my** daily bread. Jesus has us pray asking for the whole community to have enough.

Right from the start Jesus tells us we are to go to the Father in heaven, not as **my** Father but as **our** Father. In fact if you dig through the entire New Testament there is only one person who ever talks about the Father as **My** Father and that is Jesus.

This is, of course because, as we just confessed:

[I believe in] Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord.<sup>2</sup>"

You and I are children of God but not like Jesus the only-begotten Son of the Father. We might have even expected Jesus to teach us to pray "*The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* who art in heaven..." but He says, "Pray like this, **our** Father in heaven..." It's really an amazing and gracious thing that Jesus gives us His identity when we bow before the throne of the Father. Not only does this mean that we come to Father with Jesus, it also means this prayer He gives us, is His prayer in which He invites **us** to pray with Him.

It is important to realize the plural nature of this prayer goes the other way as well. Not only are we fully identified with Jesus before the Father, but Jesus is fully identified with us before the Father. We come to the Father as Jesus' brothers and sisters. That's why we call Him **our** Father. Jesus, and we all together with Him, come to the Father and ask the Father to give us **our** daily bread and forgive **us our** sins and deliver **us** from temptation and from the evil one. Since Jesus is one with us in His humanity and one with the Father in His divinity, we know the Father hears Jesus when He prays and when we pray as the Son prays.

So, maybe this helps us understand why God will not do for us anything Jesus Christ Himself would not ask the Father to do for us? When we pray to the Father for what the Son does not pray to the Father we are disconnecting our prayer from

1 Matthew 6:9,12

2 Apostles' Creed

His prayer. We are coming to the Father apart from Jesus, which is always a very precarious thing to do.

This is what Jesus was getting at when He told His disciples:

“I will do anything you ask the Father in my name so that the Father will be given glory because of the Son. If you ask me to do something, I will do it.”<sup>3</sup>”

“In My name” means we pray with Jesus, and we pray for the things Jesus is praying. When we do we can be fully assured it will be done.

I wanted to set all of that up because this is important to understand if we’re going to hear the 5<sup>th</sup> Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” correctly.

Now there’s been a lot of confusion about this Petition at times. We may wonder is Jesus saying the Father forgives us only on the basis of, and in proportion to, the way we forgive others? That’s the way it might sound. The problem is this goes against everything else Bible teaches concerning how God forgives our sins by grace alone, for Jesus’ sake alone, even without our prayers.

This is the Word of Jesus, the holy Christ of God, and it comes to us through the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Who works without error, in perfect accord with the Will of God our Father, and without contradiction. So we can’t ignore the second part of this petition, or change it so it fits neatly into some box in which we want to place it, to keep things easy and convenient.

The box into which we would like this to fit is one in which God’s forgiveness for our trespasses completely disconnected from our forgiveness of those who trespass against us. If we pray God would forgive our trespasses, without connecting our willingness to forgive others their trespasses, we are not praying what Jesus is praying.

I would suggest that if we are confused about this petition it’s not because the petition is confusing. It is because it doesn’t say what we want it to say, or maybe more to the point, it says more than we want it to say. We wish Jesus had said, “Pray like this... Our Father in heaven... forgive us our trespasses.” We want it to stop right there. What are we supposed to do with this connection of our forgiveness to our forgiving.

Let’s take first things first. Clearly the thing that comes first in this Petition is the request that our Father would forgive our trespasses. There are no if’s, and’s, or

but's about it. He doesn't say, "if you have sinned, then pray for forgiveness." We all sin and fall short of the glory of God<sup>4</sup> and Jesus compels us to admit it, out loud and on purpose. We are born with a sinful nature that cannot not sin. We are a bad tree that can only produce bad fruit.<sup>5</sup> The Gospel,<sup>6</sup> however, is all about the Good News, that being God forgives our sins and gives us His life and salvation by grace alone, for Jesus' sake alone.

This is what I like to call the singularity of Christianity, it is unique to the one true holy Christian faith alone, and different from every other religion. In all other religions, good works always come first, and forgiveness, life, and salvation are dependent upon how good you are. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is based on the fact that the love of God came first,<sup>7</sup> while we were still sinners.<sup>8</sup> God's forgiveness for our sins always comes first.

So, here's the thing that we need understand. What comes first cannot be separated from what comes second. It's the same connection James wants to show us when he talks about faith and works.<sup>9</sup> Faith always comes first, but you can't separate what comes first from what comes second, good works. The first produces the second in a true Christian.

So far in this prayer, Jesus has told us to pray for God's Name to be kept Holy, His Kingdom to come, and His Will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Now in this petition, we pray for the same thing but in particular that God's name is hallowed *among us*, and His will is done *among us*, and His Kingdom does come *among us*, when His **forgiven** people are also **His forgiving** people.

Here again we see Jesus' deep concern for His community of believers; what we have learned to call in the Nicene Creed, "the communion of saints." He knows His Christians are not always going to live together in perfect harmony as we should. He knows there will be disagreements between the brothers and sisters, and they will treat each other terribly at times. Unless His people are able to apply the forgiveness they received from God to one another, the community will suffer split apart and die. Isn't that exactly what has happened? Look at how God's Church is fractured, splintered and shattered all over the world.

The mutual forgiveness of one another is what makes it possible for the community to make this "pilgrimage of faith" together as a community. Here is

4 Romans 3:23

5 Luke 6:43

6 Gospel is a Greek word that means: Good News.

7 1 John 4:19

8 Romans 5:8

9 James 2:14-26

something of which we have lost sight, these days. Many are too willing to give up on the community and go it alone; partly because we get tired of the fighting, partly so we don't have to "forgive those who trespass against us."

I want to make two points about this business of forgiving those who trespass against us. I want to make them in light of the fact that even though we are forgiven sinners we are still sinners, and the full realization of what we are through Jesus and His Cross will not happen until the Last Day with Christ comes again.

The first point is simply this: forgiving those who have trespassed against us is not easy. As long as we live in this body of sin, the conscious decision that I am not going to hold a grudge, and I am not going to retaliate, and I am going to try to do good in return for evil, will not be easy. The greater the wrong done the harder it is to forgive. Even though we pray in all sincerity and diligence, we may very well struggle a great deal spiritually and emotionally for weeks, or months, or even years. We pray often and always, "forgive me, help my forgiveness."

The point here is we should not confuse the emotion, or feeling of forgiveness, with the fact of forgiveness. Just because we may not be totally free of the pain of being betrayed, or wronged, doesn't mean we haven't forgiven the one who has trespassed against us. Part of the joy that waits for us in heaven is the final and complete catching up of our emotions with the facts, or our heart with our head.

Maybe one of the most pronounced and clear displays of this is in the account of a woman named Corrie Ten Boom who was taken with her family, by the Nazis, into the concentration camps where she experienced great and horrible suffering, including the death of several family members. Several years after she was freed, she met one of the Nazi soldiers who was from the camp. In the course of a conversation he asked her for her forgiveness. Although she forgave the soldier she still couldn't find the peace she knew she should have.

She writes how she later came into contact with a Lutheran pastor who helped her. He pointed to a church that had a bell tower on the roof. He explained that the bell was rung by pulling on the rope that hung down from the bell. As long as someone pulled on that rope the bell would continue to ring. When someone decided to take their hands off of the rope the bell would not stop ringing immediately. It would slow down and the sounds would get softer until finally, over time, it would stop ringing. Forgiving someone can sometimes mean you stop pulling on the rope, and over time the memory will stop ringing.

The second point just adds some additional grace and patience onto the first. Sometimes the wrong that has been done to us may be so great, and so painful, we

find it very, very difficult to forgive the wrongdoer. Here we need to recognize there is a real difference between not being able to forgive and refusing to forgive.

There may well be times when the best that we can do is to pray with David, as one who is “poor in spirit<sup>10</sup>” and has a “broken and contrite heart<sup>11</sup>” and ask for the Father to grant His Holy Spirit to “renew in us a right spirit.<sup>12</sup>”

If we are simply unwilling to forgive and insist on holding onto the anger and the grudge, if we refuse to take our hand off of the rope, we should listen very carefully to Jesus’ parable about the unforgiving servant which ends with these terrible words,

Shouldn’t you have treated the other servant as mercifully as I treated you? His master was so angry he handed him over to the torturers until he would repay everything he owed. That is what my Father in heaven will do to you if each of you does not sincerely forgive other believers.<sup>13</sup>

This is why Jesus teaches us, “Pray like this, ‘Our Father in heaven... forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.’” He teaches us these things to save us.

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.

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



10 Psalm 86:1

11 Psalm 51:17

12 Psalm 51:10

13 Matthew 18:33-35