

## **The Lord's Prayer and the Lord's Passion**

“Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven.” - Matthew 6:9

Christian prayer is not our idea. It comes from God. Nor is it left to our discretion whether or not we shall pray. God expects us to pray and has reinforced this expectation with many non-debatable commands. Jesus told his disciples to “pray like this,” and then gave them and us the Lord's Prayer. Just after this prayer, in Luke 11, Jesus says, “Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

Prayer is an act of Christian obedience; and obedience means work, hard work. But Christian prayer is more than that. It is a great privilege. Who would have ever thought of calling God “Father,” if Jesus had not told us to do so and shown us how? Who would dare to address God with such bold familiarity? Jesus did. And he gives us the privilege to do the same.

But just how did this unusual way of addressing God as “Our Father” come to be possible for us? To find the answer, we need to watch the Son of God wrestling in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. There with a cold and bloody sweat he prays, “Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee.” Here we discover that this precious right of praying is for God's children only.

It was as normal and natural for Jesus to address God as “Father” or “My Father” as it is for us and for our children to address our earthly fathers as “dad.” So close their fellowship, so inseparable, how could Jesus say any less? The Son of God used his natural right of addressing God as Father frequently. When he was 12 years old, he said to his parents, who had been looking for him for three days, “did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” His very last words from the cross echo that fond address once more, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” For more examples: John 10:14-17; John 11:41; John 14:2,6; John 17:1, 24-26.

### **Begin your prayer vigil with the Lord's Prayer.**

As the Son of God, Jesus dared to use Abba, the affectionate word of address to God. Abba is an Aramaic word which means, “dear Father.” It was the address of a small child to his father, one of the first words a tiny tot would learn to mouth. This is the word Jesus chose to use in nearly all his recorded prayers (see Matthew 27:46 for an exception).

Jesus spoke with God as a child speaks with his father, simply, intimately, securely. Housed in that word is Jesus' claim that he had been sent from the Father. He spoke that word with perfect, childlike confidence.

When you come to that place of prayer in Gethsemane, do you see Jesus' complete willingness to bow to his Father's will? In great need, groaning under the burden of the sins of the world, he still believes with all his heart that his Father can deliver him and Jesus is willing to submit to his Father's will.

How often do we shrink from doing the will of God? We squirm and postpone and try to find a way out. Jesus, the almighty Son of God, with all power at his command, could have escaped all this torture, but he would not. What he was about to do and what he was about to suffer on the cross, he did willingly.

Active obedience is what it is. Jesus perfectly fulfilled the will and law of God for us. That prayer in the Garden is part of his willing obedience. He had told his disciples, “Pray like this ...”, yet none of us has heeded that command to pray with regularity and completeness. Indifference, pride, stubbornness and doubt all get in the way. Jesus takes that failure on himself (his passive obedience) and steps into the gap to pray in our stead and to offer his perfect prayer to God for us (his active obedience).

In Matthew 18:3 he calls us to turn and become like children, and here in the Garden he kneels before his Father as his obedient child. In John 16:23, Jesus urged his disciples to have total trust and confidence. Now he shows his own complete faith and confidence as he prays, “Father, all things are possible for you.” In Matthew 6:10 he had urged his disciples to pray, “Thy will be done”. Now he concludes his prayer in the Garden, “Yet not what I will, but what you will.” Jesus here offers his life to God in our stead, to atone for our prayerlessness and to redeem us from our imperfection of prayer. Oh, one more thing ... he gives us the new right to pray. Jesus owned the natural right to pray, “Abba, Father,” and he now invites us to share that right with him.

### **Pray for God's guidance in your life and your receptiveness to His will.**

Does everyone, by virtue of their humanity, have this right and privilege of prayer? If we were by nature “children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (Ephesians 2:3), and if we must be born anew (John 3:7), and if “no one comes to the Father but by me (Jesus)” (John 14:6), then how did we get this great gift? In John 1:12-13, John writes, “But to all who received

him, who believed in his name he gave the power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (See also Galatians 3:26-27 and Romans 8:14.) God is our Father through Jesus Christ. We know him as Father by the power of the Holy Spirit, who works faith in us through Baptism and the Word. The Father of Jesus becomes our Father. Only then, as adopted sons, do we share with Christ the right to call his Father our Father.

Did you know that in the early church, the privilege of praying the Lord’s Prayer was reserved for baptized members of the church, and was called “the prayer of believers”? Those seeking baptism as adults were allowed to join in praying it for the first time in their first service of Holy Communion. After that, they prayed it daily and it became part of their identity as Christians. It was considered as one of the most holy treasures of the church. Jesus gave it to us as children of God for our fervent and constant use.

**"Our Father, who from heav'n above  
Bids all of us to live in love  
As members of one family  
And pray to You in unity,  
Teach us no thoughtless words to say  
But from our inmost hearts to pray.**

**Prayer starters:** (the form of *ACTS* is an abbreviation of *Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication*. What is presented is a suggested format for your prayers and you are invited to add to each one as the Spirit of God moves you.)

**A** We give honour and glory now and always to you, O Lord, for you are truly above all gods and your power holds all things together. We praise you for creation and for holding all things together by your mighty power. Before your presence the angels veil their faces, and with reverence and love, we acknowledge your glory.

**C** We confess before you the shallowness of our prayers. We confess that often we neglect prayer, thinking we are unworthy, or that we go to the other extreme and think that we have earned the right to be heard by our works.

**T** We praise you, O God for the privilege of prayer in and through Jesus, our Saviour. We praise him that he has opened the way and given us access to the mightiest throne of grace.

**S** We pray for your Holy Church throughout the world, for our brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we unite in prayer every time we pray “*Our Father*.”

## **Part 2**

What does it mean to hallow God’s name? Martin Luther writes, “ God’s name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.”

As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, we want to uphold the family name ... to lift high the name of the Lord. This is certainly something very foreign to our self-centred, sinful human nature. So, when we pray this prayer, we are asking God to help us to live contrary to our nature. We confess that we have not been too successful at it so far and we plead for him to help us.

To find that help, we journey to Gethsemane to see our Saviour perform the very thing that we have been unable to do. We ask him to rid us of our sinful failing and to give us the victory and the power of his Passion, so that we too may live to hallow the Father’s holy name.

Consider these words from Jesus’ prayer in John 17: Father ... I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do ... I have revealed your name to the men whom you gave me out of the world ... O righteous Father, the world has not known you ... I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them.” Could we make such a boast about our past lives? Have we been that faithful even today? Is your life’s deepest and greatest goal as a child of God to consistently hallow God’s name?

To hallow means to set above everything else, to esteem and honour, to hold in reverence and to adore; to live in the truth that God is our greatest treasure.

If we are honest, we know that we are often more concerned about our own name. We are status seekers. The cars we buy, the clothes we wear, the place we live, are too often self centred efforts to thrust ourselves and our names into the limelight.

Sometimes the names of certain people on earth mean far more to us than God’s holy name: names on the news, star athletes, the boss at work ... Compared to them all, God’s name plays a small part in our thoughts and lives.

O, we use the name of God. We call on him in desperation and panic when the bottom is falling out of our lives, when we don't know where else to turn, when all else fails. We use God's name to make our speech more emphatic. We use it on Sundays at worship, but how many places do we keep God out? Have we failed to speak to someone who needed to hear about the Saviour?

We need to pray this petition as a cry of confession and repentance. Lord, your name is holy in itself, but we pray that you would forgive our unholy use of it. Help us to keep it holy and to hallow your name in our midst.

It is through Jesus that we are able to hallow God's name. We can call God "Father." In Christ we are made holy through the power of the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament. The person who lets God be Lord of his life becomes a new person and thereby is hallowing God's name. Christ strengthens us in daily renewal to overcome our sinful nature.

The answer to better Christian living and serving is found in this prayer. It lies in honouring God's name. As you do that, you may expect to worship God and praise him more. Your prayers, your searching of God's Word, and your participation in His Sacrament will not be restricted to frantic moments of personal need. You will want to praise him without ceasing. You will be a better church member. Your faith in Christ will lead you to stop letting little things get in the way of promoting the glory of your God in the community. Inconveniences and self-sacrifice will be your willing offering in serving your Lord with gladness.

You will avoid doing things in your everyday life that profane the name of God. The tongue that hallows God's name will refrain from cursing and swearing. The name you praise on Sunday is the same name you confess during the rest of the week. You will use that name daily, commending yourself and all things to God. In trouble, you will seek help sooner. In good times you will say, "praise to you, O Lord." You will pray that all may learn to hallow God's name.

**Your name be hallowed. Help us, Lord,  
In purity to keep Your Word,  
That to the glory of Your name  
We walk before You free from blame.  
Let no false teaching us pervert;  
All poor deluded souls convert.**

### Using the 'ACTS' format, pray the following prayer starters:

- A** All glory, honour, and praise be to You, O Lord. Your name is indeed holy and all your works display your glory. We acknowledge that your glory is seen as each day you show mercy and pity on those whom you have created. We praise you for your gift of a Redeemer.
- C** Lord, I have not lived my life in a way that consistently hallows your name or brings you glory. Too often in my pride I seek my own glory. Too often I misuse your name, calling on you only when all else fails. Too often I have failed to share your name and your salvation with others. Forgive me, Lord, for Jesus' sake.
- T** I thank you Lord, that your Son, my Saviour perfectly hallowed your name and brought you glory, and that he carried the burden of my sin to the cross. I thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit whose power enables me also to give you glory through my worship and praise, and through the works that he enables in my life through his power.
- S** I pray, O Lord, that those who do not yet believe in Jesus, would be brought to faith. As they see the glory of your salvation through the cross and the empty tomb, may they too bring you praise and honour. Help all of your people to keep your name holy in our midst in all that we think and say and do.

### Part 3

Do you know the vastness that is contained in your prayer, "Thy kingdom come"? Whole books have been written on the subject. This is a big prayer. Our Lord tells us to ask for the kingdom of God! Jesus says, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). Toward the end of that great "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus says, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33). Then, in almost the same breath he promised, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

In teaching us to pray this prayer, Jesus is telling us that we tend to bring requests to our God which are entirely too small, almost as though our God thinks we are too small to give us big things. Not that he isn't willing or able to grant us the little things too, but aren't we being a little insulting to our God when we never get beyond the stage of asking him for

only little things: a crust of bread, a healthy body, a suit of clothes, money to pay the rent, peace among the nations and so on? God will give his children these things too, as in love he sees fit. But first he calls us to pray, “Father, may your kingdom come.”

Our Father in heaven has a kingdom for which we do not have to pray. Its boundaries are the edges of a limitless universe. It is the rule of God the Creator over the infinity of his creation. It includes every creature. Truly “the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and all who dwell in it” (Psalm 24:1). We are part of that kingdom. We don’t have to pray to be in it or to remain in it. But as we pray, we ask that our Father in heaven help us to see his kingdom of power and his absolute rule over us in it.

Many people refuse to acknowledge the power and supremacy of God. Governments and those in power see themselves as gods of their own making. Yet the Lord has said that there is no power except from God. We need to pray that God would help our nation and all nations to acknowledge his power and supremacy in our world.

Satan’s great sin was to refuse to acknowledge the absolute power and sovereignty of God. He made war in heaven and was cast down to the earth where he still seeks to seduce the children of God and build his own kingdom in defiance of God’s kingdom.

We may not be much better. We try to build our own little kingdoms and empires. We scramble to reach the top of the ladder of success. We order and arrange our lives, providing for the future so expertly that we pat ourselves on the back for having been so clever. And when finally we have led ourselves to believe that we are sitting on top of our own little kingdom, we presume to not really need God any more. How much we need to acknowledge our sins of setting up fiefdoms in competition with God’s kingdom. We need to seek his forgiveness and pray that he would bring us back on the right track once more.

It doesn’t take a Christian to understand that God’s total ownership and rule of the universe has always been, is now, and will always be. It is not much more than saying, “there is a God.” When we pray “Thy kingdom come,” we are praying for much, much more. When we pray this petition, we are asking God to help us to see and to seek the kingdom of grace our Saviour came to establish.

God’s Old Testament people often had a mistaken understanding of this kingdom. As they considered the deliverer, the Messiah, whom God had promised to send, they grew to await a coming one who would rescue them from their constantly invading enemies. In New Testament days they wanted a Messiah who would deliver them from the lordship of Rome.

Jesus stood before Pilate and told him, “My kingdom is not of this world.” In the midst of a broken and fallen world, a world afflicted by sin and Satan, Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God. It is not a kingdom of might and force, but a kingdom of grace and love. He offered himself to God in our stead, to remove sin, death and the power of the devil, to hit at the heart and centre of human need. In Christ, the kingdom of God is established among us right where we are. The kingdom of God is God’s loving rule over us in Christ as he came to save us, that he might be supreme in our lives.

To be a member of that kingdom is to be a child of God. It is a radical change from having yourself as number one, to have Christ Jesus on the throne of your heart. That can never happen by our own strength. It happens when the Holy Spirit breaks through the deadness of our lives and plants faith in us through the power of the Gospel. The kingdom of God has been established in you by Christ. If you are a child of God, you don’t have to pray for it to come to you.

Still, our Lord bids us pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Citizens can become traitors, children abandon home and family, believers fall away from faith. So we need to pray that God would continue to hold and keep us in his kingdom, that he would defend and preserve us from the relentless attacks of the devil, the world and our sinful nature.

We also pray that the kingdom of God’s grace would come through us to others. This is a prayer for missions. We pray that the kingdom might triumph every-where, that more and more people might hear the message of Christ crucified and risen again for the sins of the world, and believe. We pray for the Spirit-given gathering of believers called the church, that as members of the body of Christ, we would recognize and take up the mission that our Lord has given us, to go out into the world and proclaim the kingdom that has already come.

Did you ever pause to realize that our prayer, “Thy kingdom come” is a prayer for the end of the world? The hymn says, “*And Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight. The clouds be rolled back as a scroll, the trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall descend; even so it is well with my soul.*” So we are called to pray that he will make us ready for the coming of his kingdom of glory, when our Redeemer will suddenly appear in the clouds of heaven. We pray that he would have us ready for that day and that hour when our Lord appears at our bedside to take us into the mansions of heaven. Either way, his coming kingdom of glory will have come once and forever. Eternity will not be long enough to praise him for having established his kingdom among us and in us and for us.

**Your kingdom come. Guard Your domain  
And Your eternal righteous reign.  
The Holy Ghost enrich our day  
With gifts attendant on our way.  
Break Satan's pow'r, defeat his rage;  
Preserve Your Church from age to age.**

**Using the 'ACTS' format, pray the following prayer starters:**

- A** Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Glory be to you, O Lord most high. Blessed is he who had come and is to come in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.
- C** Lord, mighty creator and preserver, take away our sense of self-sufficiency and help us see you as the owner and giver of all. Help us always to recognize that "unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain." In your mercy forgive our sin and free us from our selfishness.
- T** Praise be to you, O God our Father, who created all things by your power and who sustains the world for the sake of your church. Praise be to you, blessed Jesus, for you were made man, like us in all things except sinning, and were put to death for our transgressions and raised for our justification. Praise be to you, O Holy Spirit, that you have led us into all truth and poured into our hearts the love of God.
- S** Gracious God, your kingdom is in us and around us. We know that wherever people are in need of a Saviour, the voice of Christ needs to be heard and your kingdom needs to come. Send forth your people to share the good news of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen again for the sins of the world. Send your Spirit with your Word that his power might change hearts and rescue the perishing.

#### **Part 4**

"Lord, I can't beat you, so I might as well join you. Your will be done." "Lord, I give up. I have resigned myself to what will be, will be. Your will be done." "God, I wanted things my way, but it's obvious that they are not turning out that way. So I shall turn them over to you, since you're going to have your way anyway."

Is that how you pray, "Thy will be done"? The battle is about over and you are forced to say "uncle." You are at the end of your rope and you're ready to throw in the towel.

Is it our Lord's intention that you and I should come out of our times of prayer with a fatalistic, futile attitude? Is that what Christ had in mind when he taught his disciples to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? Is that what he did when he bowed before the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane and said, "Yet not what I will, but what you will"? Or is this petition about the willing heart that trusts God enough to say, "I want what you want"?

Just outside of Jerusalem at the foot of the Mount of Olives, there is a secluded spot sheltered by gnarled old olive trees. There are eight men waiting in the background. Not far away there are three others, sprawled on the ground, apparently asleep. A stone's throw away is One who calls himself Jesus, the Son of God. We watch him drop to his knees. He falls on his face in prayer.

We observe that he who taught us to pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" not only prayed exactly as he taught, he also carried out the will of his Father in his prayer life. By his action he earned a new life for us and at the same time gained access for our prayers to come to our heavenly Father.

Jesus had invited the strongest and ablest disciples to pray along with him, but they could only sleep while the eternal history and salvation of the world was being battled out and won.

Alone he prays, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will. Wave after wave of agony sweeps over him as he prays the same words. His sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.

Is this confusing? The Son of God was ready and willing to die. If you think this prayer battle shows his fear of death, you are wrong. Many a person has been far more courageous in the face of death. To understand what is happening, you and I need to look into the cup that Jesus is about to drink. It contains more than the pain of physical death. That cup is full of the world's sins. It holds the sins of the sleeping disciples, the treachery of Judas, the mocking of the mob. It holds your sins and mine. It holds our prayerlessness, our cursing lips, our sinful minds, our hands and feet so lazy about serving him, our thankless hearts, our wallets so tightly sealed against our neighbours' needs, our souls totally steeped in sin.

In the face of all this, Jesus prays in effect, “Father, all things are possible to you. If it is possible to redeem the world and to let your kingdom come without suffering and death, then let it be so; but if not, I am ready and willing to face what is to come. Your will be done.”

Luke tells us that at that moment an angel appeared and strengthened Jesus. This was the Father’s answer. The cup looks sweet now, for Jesus’ will and the Father’s will are blended in it. Jesus was at peace. The Father’s will was certain. Jesus strength was unailing.

Don’t forget the second half of this petition, *as it is in heaven*. How is God’s will done in heaven? Up in the cosmos above us, the heavenly bodies orbit in flawless perfection in accord with the will of God. Millions of stars radiate their light. But stars and planets have no eyes or ears. They have no mind, no life. But as creations of God they carry out his will. God’s angels, his heavenly host, populate heaven as well. They have soul and mind and self-determination. They are engaged in doing the Father’s will and they do it with joy and contentment. They are no longer interrupted and torn with the rebellion of sin. “Confirmed in their bliss” is what the catechism calls it. Their wills are not impeded by temptation. They experience no pain brought on by selfishness and stubborn-ness. They are God’s own willing messengers to help protect and strengthen his children on earth.

Above us too are all the saints who died in faith in Christ. They had their faults and sins here on earth. They often pitted their own desires against the will of God. They suffered heartache, but now their tears are gone. Their wills are perfectly blended with the Father’s will.

How do you pray “Thy will be done”? Perhaps you prayed in earnest and didn’t get what you wanted. You don’t really like God’s will, but you know you must accept it, so you have resigned yourself to the inevitable.

Perhaps your prayer has been stained by a faulty understanding of God that sees him only as an omnipotent tyrant. I am convinced that we have the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer in the order we have them for a reason. *Father* sets the stage for understanding the one to whom we are praying. *Thy kingdom come* shows us the love of God in Christ who came to the cross that we might come into God’s kingdom *of grace*. These petitions tell us in no uncertain terms that God’s will is a perfect and loving will. When we believe that God in his grace always wants what is for our eternal good and for the eternal good of others, we will seek to want and to do his will and we will have the “peace that surpasses all understanding,” believing that God’s will is always the best.

Do you realize that as sons and daughters of God, we are no longer fighting a losing battle against the devil, the world and our own flesh? Christ has conquered these for us. All we have to do is ask, and the Father will give. We want the Father’s will supreme in our lives because we have learned the folly of chasing after our own selfish will. With Martin Luther we pray, “Thy will be done, dear Father, and not the will of the devil or of our enemies, nor of those who would persecute and suppress Thy holy Word or prevent Thy kingdom from coming; and grant that whatever we must suffer on this account, we may patiently bear and overcome, so that our poor flesh may not yield or fall away through weakness or laziness.” “Thy will be done” is not a statement of defeat. It is a declaration of war, asking the Father that every will that opposes his will on earth or under the earth might at last be defeated.

**Your gracious will on earth be done  
As it is done before Your throne,  
That patiently we may obey  
Throughout our lives all that You say.  
Curb flesh and blood and ev’ry ill  
That sets itself against Your will.**

**Using the ‘ACTS’ format, pray the following prayer starters:**

- A** We praise you, O God, we acknowledge you to be the Lord. You created us, you sustain us, you love us with an everlasting love and give us the light of the knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
- C** Lord God, we confess our prayerlessness, our cursing lips, our sinful minds, our hands and feet so lazy about serving you. We confess our thankless hearts, our wallets so tightly sealed against our neighbours’ needs, our souls totally steeped in sin. We confess our doubt of our love for you and how we have turned your invitation to pray into a fatalistic resignation to your will, not recognizing that your will is always for our eternal good.
- T** We praise you, O God, for the gift of Jesus Christ, your only-begotten Son; for the grace and truth which came by him, and for his willing obedience unto death, even death on a cross. We praise you that by his resurrection from he dead he has broken the power of sin and Satan and death for us.
- S** Gracious God, we pray for your church throughout the world, that you

would bestow on the ministers of your Word and Sacraments the abundance of your grace and truth. Confirm your people in the faith of the Gospel that Christ may be exalted as head over all.

## Part 5

Is almighty God concerned about a simple thing like food when he has a whole universe to look after? Where did we ever get the idea that we had the right to ask for food to eat, water to drink, and clothes to wear? Why should God allow us to trouble him with these personal needs?

On the cross, as Jesus hung between life and death, he spoke these words: “I thirst.” Who is he asking? He is asking his heavenly Father to do something about his physical needs. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for daily bread, and Jesus always did as he taught. He who took on flesh and blood to become one of us and to experience real flesh and blood needs, shows us from these words that material needs are important and that we should pray to and trust in our heavenly Father for them.

Yes, Jesus did indeed pray for his earthly need in the midst of his thirst. But he didn’t pray for it first. We might have cried out for water, or any kind of physical relief at the very outset. We tend to pray for the “I need” and “I want” and the “I have to have” things first, and if time permits we may get to the other stuff. Thanks be to God that he has laid on Jesus the “iniquity of us all,” and gave him to be hung on the cross for our sins, even the sin of selfish and self centred prayer.

Notice what Jesus prays for on the cross. It is a much higher priority for him to pray for his enemies and for their salvation, than for his own needs. In the midst of the midday darkness Jesus feels the full load of the sins of the world. He is separated from God, a more intense suffering than all the physical and mental torture he is under. From the depths of inner torment he prays, “my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” then, as if brought back from the brink, he brings this small need to his Father in heaven: “I thirst.”

There is a parallel between the place of this fifth word from the cross and the place of the fourth petition in the order of the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus’ first word from the cross is “Father.” He teaches us to pray first for the glory of God’s name, then the eternal welfare of God’s people in God’s kingdom and their willingness to do the will of God from the heart. All of these are great spiritual needs. Then he urges us to pray, “give us this day our

daily bread.” Prayer begins with a life that is right with our Father in heaven, then continues with the physical needs of the whole person.

Our material needs matter to God. He formed us out of the dust of the ground with physical bodies. On the last day he will raise our physical bodies and transform them to be like Jesus’ glorified bodies. But they will still be bodies. God created us to need food, clothes and shelter, and to rely on him who alone can supply those needs. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. But our need for daily bread is intended to teach us to rely on our heavenly Father for every need, every day.

Our material needs are not trivial or unimportant. “Daily bread” means much more than the neatly wrapped package that comes from the supermarket. It includes your daily job and the health to do that job; the clothes to wear to work and for Sundays. It is that car you drive for business and pleasure. It is safe highways and beautiful scenery. It is for the place you call home, and the opportunity for a vacation. It is *everything* we need to support our body and life.

Does God really care if we eat or drink or have warm clothes to wear and a place to sleep? Is he concerned when we are sick? Did Jesus leave the lame man lame or the blind man in the dark just because the spiritual is more important? God has made many wonderful promises to us. In the Sermon on the Mount he promises that his sun will rise on the evil and on the good, and that he will make his rain fall on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:45) After giving us the Lord’s Prayer, he tells us, “Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. . . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all” (Matthew 6:25, 32). Our Lord wants to give us the faith of David, who could say, “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” (Psalm 145:15, 16)

Jesus has promised that our Father will supply all our needs in the best way for us. When we pray in faith for daily bread, we are demonstrating trust in God’s goodness and wisdom. God in his mercy may continue to give good things to all men, even to those who do not ask, but it is an important exercise of our trust to seek only a daily share of his grace, believing that his storehouse will be open to us again tomorrow. Such faith puts worry in its place.

Each time we pray this petition, we are saying thanks be to God for all good things we are receiving in and through Christ.

We also pray for others who have no daily bread, no clothes or shoes, no job, no place to live. We believe that God gives us what we need, and that he entrusts us with more than we need so that we might share it with others. We are here asking our Lord to lift us from our knees and cause us to look after the needs of others with our money and our means and with our hearts and minds and lips.

**Give us this day our daily bread,  
And let us all be clothed and fed.  
Save us from hardship, war, and strife;  
In plague and famine, spare our life,  
That we in honest peace may live,  
To care and greed no entrance give.**

**Using the ‘ACTS’ format, pray the following prayer starters:**

- A** *(your turn to pray this one from your heart, giving praise to God for who he is. Think about some of the names Scripture uses for God ... Lord of hosts ... Shepherd, guardian, friend ... )*
- C** We acknowledge, O Lord, that we have not always received our daily bread with thanksgiving. We have been worrywarts. We have been doubters when the pantry has neared empty, the pocketbook thin, and the skies looked black. We have been excessively concerned about material things and have put material needs first, instead of first trying to be faithful children of God, hallowing your name, extending your kingdom, and trying to do your will. Forgive us, O Lord.
- T** Almighty God, we lift up our hearts in gratitude to you, and for all your loving kindness we bless your holy name. For life and health, for love and friendship, and for the goodness and mercy that have followed us all the days of our lives, We praise you, O God.
- S** Lord of all, we pray for those in need, who do not have enough of this world’s goods to survive. Help us to see that the plenty you have bestowed upon us is intended to be shared. We pray for those who are unemployed that you would provide meaningful labour. We pray for those who are sick that you would grant healing and that you would lead us to bring your comfort. In all these things, Lord, reveal yourself to your creation as the God of grace that you are.

## **Part 6**

It would seem that from time to time all of us have done some editing of the fifth petition of our Lord’s Prayer, as if Jesus had taught us to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses,” but then advised us, “but don’t get soft and forgive those who deliberately trespass against you.”

How willing and anxious we are to ask for and accept our Father’s forgiveness, but we have not been too anxious to forgive those who hurt us or our feelings. We allow our Lord to cancel huge debts registered on our accounts; but we turn around and grab someone who owes us and insist that they “pay what you owe” (Matthew 18:28). Or we have done the civilized thing ... we ignore them, avoid them, or give them a cold, icy stare.

Jesus did not recommend either approach. He startled his enemies, and the whole world, when he prayed from the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He practiced what he preached. He prayed as he had taught. And he calls us to pray, “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Do we need forgiveness? We need it as much as we need daily bread. The Lord’s prayer connects the fourth and fifth petitions with that little word, “and.” God created us to need daily bread. By the fall into sin we made ourselves to need daily forgiveness. Our Lord said, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” We need bread ... *and* we need God’s Gospel gift of forgiveness.

We need forgiveness because of all that we owe to God. Whether you call them debts or sins or trespasses, it’s all the same thing. They all cry out for payment, satisfaction, and forgiveness before God.

Our debts stand like a huge wall between God and us (see Isaiah 59:2). Reconciliation can never happen unless there is forgiveness borne out of love. This is the kind of forgiveness we need from our God. But will God indeed forgive us? How can we ever make it up to God for our sin-stained, guilt ridden, debt-laden lives? “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24)

The good news is that God does care. God loves. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). “The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). In Christ we have forgiveness. The wall of separation is broken down,



even as the curtain in the temple was torn asunder when Jesus died. The debt of guilt is paid. Our heavenly Father has accepted his own Son's perfect life and sacrificial death in place of our imperfect life and has spared us from the horrors of eternal separation from God. The cross of Jesus has been laid across the yawning chasm that separates us from God. The Holy Spirit has taken us by the hand and enabled us to cross over to the Father by faith in Christ.

When you pray for forgiveness, remember that Jesus told you to do that, and that he is there to pray along with you. Remember also that little word "us." Pray consciously for others who need that same forgiveness, even your enemies, that your Father in heaven would have mercy on them and bring them through the Gospel to forgiveness in Christ.

We want to pray this petition in its entirety. We really do. We have such a loving and gracious and forgiving Father in heaven, and we love him so much that we want to be like him. But to do that, we need to pray for the power to forgive those who have trespassed against us.

To forgive others is about the hardest thing in the world to do. By nature we would much rather curse someone who sins against us. We would rather nurse a grudge, keep score on our spouse's faults, rub it in, be a little spiteful, find a way to get even.

There is a way out of this. Instead of magnifying our brother's sins against us and condemning him, we can forgive him through Jesus Christ. Luther writes, "This is how you should think: although your neighbour has acted out of malice, he is confused, captivated, and dazzled by the devil. Therefore you should be pious enough to take pity on him for being overpowered by the devil. As far as the devil is concerned, this may be called a great and unforgivable sin, since he has put the man up to it. But as far as the man himself is concerned, it should be called a trespass and a fault."

I can't do that! I can't find it in me to forgive that easily. Of course *you* cannot! But in Christ you can. By redeeming you and forgiving you, Christ has made a new creature of you. He has made you to be like unto him. Now you too can pray, "Father, forgive them..." As he cleanses us by the power of his Word and Sacraments, he gives us that same power to be forgiving.

**Forgive our sins, Lord, we implore,  
That they may trouble us no more;  
We, too, will gladly those forgive**

**Who hurt us by the way they live.  
Help us in our community  
To serve each other willingly.**

**Using the 'ACTS' format, pray the following prayer starters:**

- A** *(your turn again to pray this one from your heart. This time give praise to the Holy Spirit for who he is ... the Lord and Giver of Life ... the one who plants faith and causes it to grow ... the one who sanctifies us and keeps us in the true faith ... the one who intercedes for us with sighs that words cannot express.)*
- C** Lord, I acknowledge that to forgive others is about the hardest thing in the world to do. By nature I would much rather curse someone who sins against me. I would rather nurse a grudge, keep score on the faults of others, rub it in, be a little spiteful, and even find a way to get even. Forgive me, O Lord.
- T** Thank you, Lord, that by redeeming me and forgiving me, you have made a new creature of me. You have made you to be like unto yourself. You enable me to pray, "Father, forgive them..." As you cleanse me by the power of your Word and Sacraments, you give me that same power to be forgiving.
- S** *(Another assignment for you: Pray consciously for others who need that same forgiveness, even your enemies, that your Father in heaven would have mercy on them and bring them through the Gospel to forgiveness in Christ.)*

### **Part 7**

The Passion story is filled with every kind of temptation. Peter, in his pride boasts that he will never fall away. Judas is always thinking about money. Faced with the authorities who came to arrest Jesus, all the disciples were tempted to turn tail and run away. When we look into ourselves, we are confronted with the truth that our lives are fraught with temptations. If temptations are a reality of life this side of heaven, then certainly we need to pray, "Father, lead us not into temptation."

Temptations are inevitable. If the disciples were tempted, if Jesus himself was tempted, if Old Testament greats like Moses and David were tempted, just who do we think we are to walk around with the attitude that it can never happen to us?

Why can't we just pray for God to keep all temptation far, far away? God, just make us temptation exempt, or something. Luther thought that moving to the monastery would free him from temptation. It didn't. He thought keeping himself awake all night would keep him from sinful and lustful dreams. It didn't. He thought pain and hunger would help keep his mind on spiritual things. It didn't.

Nowhere has Jesus promised that you and I could ever hope to be temptation exempt this side of heaven. In John 17:15 Jesus prays, "I do not pray that you would take them out of the world, but that you would keep them from the evil one." When Christ redeemed you and made you a child of God and an heir of heaven, he put you right back into the middle of the world. He wants you to be his light in a world full of temptations. And while you are a child of God and an heir of heaven, you still have within you that nasty bit of chronic spiritual infection called a sinful nature. The only thing that will cure it is death. (That's why death is a blessing for a believer. We finally get to leave our sinfulness where it belongs ... six feet under)

The Greek word for temptation means "a testing." It can be one of two things. One is a trial of our faith, as when there is illness in the family or when a loved one dies unexpectedly, or when everything seems to go wrong. Such trials, chasten us, strengthen us, and discipline us. They help to keep our sinful nature under some control and lead us to depend on and trust in our Father in heaven.

The other kind of temptation is "seduction to evil." We are going to face those kinds of temptations as long as we live. These are the times when all we have learned about doing God's will from the heart instead of following the sinful desires of the flesh will be put to the test. Christ had both kinds in mind when he taught us to pray this prayer.

Temptations have their value for us as children of God. Yes, we will be rocked by them, but if our faith were never put to the test, we would either lose it completely, or it would become weak and flabby. Of what value is a faith that has never been tried?

Luther once said that there are three basic sources for our temptations: the flesh, the world and the devil. Temptations are inevitable and real. If we want to recognize them when they come prowling around, we need to keep a wary eye on ourselves and on the world around us. Most important is that we need to keep looking into the Word.

We need to realize that when it comes to facing temptation, we are weak and the foes are formidable indeed. Our strength is no match for the cunning of Satan. There is only one

defence, one weapon. It is Christ. Our heavenly Father realizes the helplessness and impossibility of sinful flesh and blood overcoming temptation. That's why he provided his Son to become our flesh and blood substitute. He was, in every way tempted as we are, yet without sin.

It started in the wilderness at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It continues for three long years as the devil threw everything he could think of at Jesus. But Jesus refused to be diverted from his cause of perfectly carrying out his Father's will in our stead. They nailed him to a cross, the devil tormenting him to curse God and die.

But Jesus won the victory on the cross and by his victory we are freed from the sins we fall into when we succumb to temptation. He has forgiven us. But there is more. He urges us to pray "lead us not into temptation." And he has put teeth into our prayers by giving us his victory over temptation in advance. Finally he urges us to take up his Word and sacraments, his own mighty weapons to support us.

It is Word and Sacrament that enable us to walk out into the world prepared to combat and overcome all future temptations. Our God wants us to be so saturated with his Word that we can tell Satan as Christ did, "Be gone, for it is written ..." In Holy Baptism we were buried with Christ into his death and in his resurrection we were raised to newness of life. In Holy Communion our Saviour adds the seal of his body and blood, "given and shed for you ... may this strengthen and preserve you."

Of course the flesh is weak. That is why our Saviour warns us, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation." It would be very easy to let our weak flesh have its own way. By standing against temptation, we are inviting trouble. We are asking for a fight. But this is the will of our Lord. And we have his promise that he will not allow us or any other brother or sister in Christ to enter into any temptation that we cannot bear. As long as Christ is truly in us and fighting with us, and has already achieved the victory for us, our heavenly Father promises that he will not forsake us in temptation.

**Lead not into temptation, Lord,  
Where our grim foe and all his horde  
Would vex our souls on ev'ry hand.  
Help us resist, help us to stand  
Firm in the faith, a mighty host,  
Through comfort of the Holy Ghost.**

**Use the ‘ACTS’ format:** *(This time you’re on your own ... not really ... remember that the Holy Spirit helps us pray, and that Jesus himself intercedes for you.)*

**Adoration**

**Confession**

**Thanksgiving**

**Supplication**

**Part 8**

As Christians we treasure the victory of Christ on the cross. It lies at the very heart and centre of our Christian faith. But we dare not forget that a victory always implies a previous battle ... and what a battle this was. It is so easy to overlook the fact that our salvation did not come easily. Jesus Christ, the Son of God was waging war for us. Satan was the fearful foe, the awful, aggressive antagonist in the Passion story. He planned the hardest. He manipulated people and caused them to do his will.

But he lost! Christ won! And what he won, he won for us. That is why we can say in triumph and pray with complete confidence this last petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “deliver us from evil,” as a conclusion and victory song at the end of our prayer.

With Christ’s death for our sins and his resurrection on the third day, evil is ended and the devil is done. Christ has crushed the power and dominion of Satan. How we need to hear that message again and again, especially since Satan still tries to oppose both God and his people.

The devil’s defeat doesn’t mean we can sit back and just relax. There is evil around us with which we must contend. There is a purpose in it that we must remember. Around us are poor, lost souls who will be dying eventually without Christ, without hope, without a future. So we dare to venture out of the safety of our homes and our church into a world that is hostile to Christ and his followers. But God has promised that his Word will not return to him empty, but will accomplish the purpose for which he sent it ... to be the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

There is also evil with us that we cannot just ignore. Our sinful nature is incorrigible (beyond fixing). It is lazy when it comes to spiritual things. It’s always ready for a fight. Is it any wonder that Paul calls us to drown the old Adam in us daily and to let the new man come forth and arise.

We who are in Christ know that, even as we have been praying this prayer, the devil has been working, trying his best to throw a roadblock in front of the very things for which we have been praying: the glory of God’s name, the coming of God’s kingdom, the doing of our Father’s will, the thankful receiving and gracious sharing of daily bread, our forgiveness in Christ and our forgiving of others, our endurance in trials. Satan is fighting to the bitter end of our prayer.

It is true that thanks to our Saviour’s victory, evil is ended and the devil is done, but we still have a fight on our hands. So, as we pray, we, the children of God, join hands with one another and with our Saviour to make this fervent plea, that our heavenly Father deliver us from the inevitable evil that continues to attack our lives, that he continue to preserve us in faith unto life’s end, and finally take us home to heaven.

**From evil, Lord, deliver us;  
The times and day are perilous.  
Redeem us from eternal death,  
And, when we yield our dying breath,  
Console us, grant us calm release,  
And take our souls to You in peace.**

**Use the ‘ACTS’ format:**

**Adoration**

**Confession**

**Thanksgiving**

**Supplication**

## Part 9

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

As we conclude, we confidently and triumphantly join with the twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, and all the company of heaven pictured in Revelation 5. We are bold to say “amen” and are reminded that it is an Easter Amen. Read Revelation 5:9-14. We, the sons and daughters of God, our heavenly Father, the brothers and sisters of Christ, our triumphant Lord and Brother, fellow family members with one another in Christ and with the saints and citizens of heaven join together at the empty tomb to pray a great Easter Amen.

This is the great wrap-up of our Lord’s Passion. It points us to completed and fulfilled historical fact. Jesus is risen and the grave is empty. The great debt for the sins of the world has been paid in full. “It is finished!” Hell had opposed what heaven had proposed. But heaven and the Father and the Son have now won. The ransom has been paid. Period. Exclamation point. Amen. Amen is God’s word of certainty, of guarantee to us, just as the rainbow was to Noah. Now God instructs us to put that same word at the end of our prayers. All our prayers are yes in Christ. Each petition’s answer is guaranteed.

Amen is a word of faith. It makes prophets of us. The greater our faith, the more we are saying, “So shall it be.” We are predicting with confidence that all those things we prayed for in the Lord’s prayer are positively going to happen in our lives, because God is going to continue to make them happen, as he did when he first raised us up with Christ in Baptism. His name will be hallowed by us. His kingdom will come to us and grow through us. His will shall be done by us, as it is in heaven. He will give us the daily bread we need. He will continue to forgive our trespasses, and we, the children of God, will forgive others. He will be with us in our trials and temptations. He will deliver us from every evil and will at the last day raise up us and all the dead and give unto us and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true!

**Amen, that is, so shall it be.  
Make strong our faith in You, that we  
May doubt not but with trust believe  
That what we ask we shall receive.  
Thus in Your name and at Your Word  
We say, 'Amen, O hear us, Lord!'"**