

**Sermon for  
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost  
The Lord's Prayer: The Fifth Petition**

**Date:** August 11, 2024

**Location:** Zion – Colby, WI

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

LSB 786 – Lord of all Good (v.1,3) (*Offertory*)

LSB 917 – Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise (v. 1,2,4)

**Distribution:**

LSB 610 – Lord Jesus Think on Me

LSB 648 – Glorious Things of You are Spoken

LSB 554 – O Jesus, King Most Wonderful

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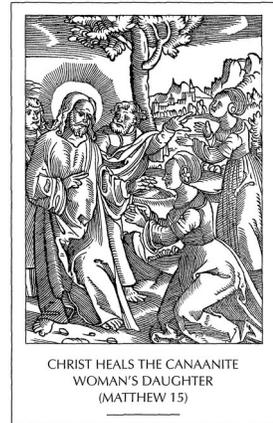
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**Text: Matthew 6:9-12**

<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 week we are looking at the fifth petition, or fifth request in the Lord's Prayer. 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 take root as we make our way through this exploration of the Lord's Prayer, is the 'plural perspective.' This prayer Jesus taught is one we all pray together with Jesus. We touched on this last time in the 4<sup>th</sup> Petition as Jesus taught us to ask: give **us our** daily bread, not **me 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 **our** Father in heaven, not **my** 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 confess in the creed:

*[I believe in]*

Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord.<sup>2</sup>

We 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 is really an amazing and gracious thing that Jesus gives us His identity when we come before the throne of the Father. Not only does this mean we come to Father with Jesus, it also means Jesus 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,<sup>3,4</sup> 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 Himself would not ask the Father to do for us? When we ask the Father for things the Son would not pray we are disconnecting our prayer from 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:

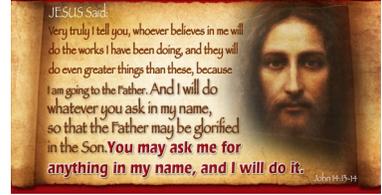
1 Matthew 6:9,12

2 Apostles' Creed

3 Athanasian Creed

4 This is also referred to as the "Hypostatic union of Christ." He is 100% human, 100% God, but not 200%.

Whatever you ask **in My name**, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything **in My name**, I will do it.<sup>5</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.

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 contain 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 mess is completely disconnected from our forgiveness of those who offend 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>6</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>7</sup> The Gospel<sup>8</sup> however is all about the Good News of God forgives our sins and giving 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 depend on how good you are. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is based on the fact that the love of God came first,<sup>9</sup> while we were still a mess.<sup>10</sup> God’s forgiveness for our sins always comes first.

So here’s the thing we need to understand. What comes first cannot be separated from what comes second. It’s the same connection



5 John 14:13-14

6 Romans 3:23

7 Luke 6:43

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

9 1 John 4:19

10 Romans 5:8

James wants to show us in the Bible when he talks about faith and works.<sup>11</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, "the communion of saints."<sup>12</sup> He knows His Christians are not always going to live together in perfect harmony. He knows there will be disagreements between the brothers and sisters, and they will treat each other sometimes 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.



Look at the Church in the world, how God's Church is fractured, splintered and shattered all over the world. That is what sin does. The mutual forgiveness of one another is what makes it possible for the community to make this "pilgrimage of faith," this journey in faith through this world, together as a community.

Here is something which we have lost. Many are too willing to give up on the community and go it alone, partly because we get tired of the fighting, partly perhaps 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 when Jesus 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,<sup>13</sup> in this sinful condition, 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, we may very well struggle a great deal spiritually and emotionally for weeks, or months, or even years. So we pray often and always, "Lord forgive me, help my unforgiveness."

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.

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



11 James 2:14-26  
12 Nicene Creed  
13 Romans 8:10

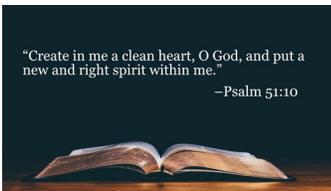
Nazis into a concentration camp where she experienced great and horrible suffering, including the death of several family members.

Several years after she was freed she met one of the Nazi soldiers who was from that 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.

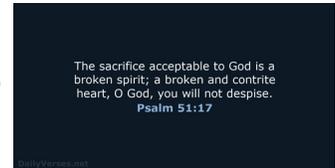
She writes how she later came into contact with a Lutheran pastor who helped her. He pointed to a church that had a bell tower on the roof. He explained that the bell was rung by pulling on the rope that hung down from the bell. As long as someone pulled on the rope the bell would continue to ring. When they would 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 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 we can do is to pray with David, as one who is “poor in spirit<sup>14</sup>” with a “broken and contrite heart<sup>15</sup>” asking for the Father to grant His Holy Spirit to “renew in us a right spirit.<sup>16</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:



Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?

In anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. So also My heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.<sup>17</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 we pray it and are saved.

Amen.



- 14 Psalm 86:1
- 15 Psalm 51:17
- 16 Psalm 51:10
- 17 Matthew 18:33-35

