



TEACH US TO PRAY

A **LINC**[™] LENTEN
DAILY DEVOTIONAL
ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

LINC[™] empowers local leaders to impact their communities through the Gospel. Working together isn't just about giving a leader the practical resources they need to plant a church, start a coffee ministry, or finish their theological training. It means being there for each other in prayer, in coaching, in spiritual formation.

Each person in our community from City Director to a potential ministry leader, invests in one other, and shares the love of Christ and each other's burdens, so that we might all be stronger in ministry - together.

The work we do across all LINC cities is driven by the love shown to each of us from the Father through the Son. It's from that abundance our local leaders pour into our communities so that our city will know Jesus. Through intentional discipleship, we are seeing God do amazing things. His Kingdom is advancing!

Join the conversation online using the hashtag #LINCinLent

If this devotional was helpful for you, we'd love to hear it! Send an email to sjones@linc.org.

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Traditional Chinese and Spanish translations available upon request

Friend.

We've arranged this devotional to help you and others journey through the season of Lent with a focus on the Lord's Prayer. We begin with Shrove Tuesday (which is not technically one of the days of Lent). In Christian tradition this is a day of preparation. It seemed fitting to offer a devotion on this day to prepare our hearts for the days ahead.

We spend two days (Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday) reading and meditating on the biblical accounts where the Lord's Prayer is taught. Then, we begin interacting with the explanations of the Lord's Prayer offered in Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism. Luther's words provide thoughts for us to ponder further, and give structure to the rest of the devotional.

As we move through Lent, the pace is steady with one petition of the Lord's Prayer introduced each week. Once we enter Holy Week and the events of Jesus' life speed toward Good Friday and Easter, our pace will quicken as well.

Each new section is introduced with an excerpt from the Small Catechism. The following days draw on themes found there. Each day's devotion includes Scripture, a reflection, and a suggestion for further contemplation and/or action titled "Going Further."

The devotions take only a few minutes each day. If daily devotions are new for you, we hope you find this length approachable. For those with established devotional patterns, we hope these brief meditations can be added to your current rhythms.

We are grateful to LINC Bay Area for the opportunity to share these devotions beyond our local congregations. We are thankful to you for reading and sharing the words we've written, and the faith we've received. We are thankful to Jesus for teaching us to pray. May we pray together in the humility of Lent and the confidence of Easter.

soli Deo gloria

Rev. Matt Behrens

Rev. Andrew R. Jones

Luke 11:1-4

*Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say:
"Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation."*

My dad is an all-around handyman, and he's always willing to tackle a project when he visits. When I wanted to add exterior lights to our house I asked if he would help. I also asked him to show me how to do the job so I could learn.

I'm guessing the disciples could have asked Jesus to pray for them, and he would have done so gladly. I'm sure they wanted that, but they also wanted to learn.

As we begin this Lenten journey, we bring the same desire. We want to learn (or re-learn) how to pray. Thankfully, Jesus wants this too.

Going Further

Who is or was your role model in prayer? Contact them and thank them for being a teacher. If that person is no longer living, write the note you would have sent to them and share it with a friend.

Matthew 6:9-13

Pray then like this:

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

*Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

We hear the committal prayer “ashes to ashes, dust to dust” at Christian funerals. Ash Wednesday brings us to that same somber theme. The Lenten journey always begins in humble repentance.

The words of the Lord’s Prayer are humbling as well. They admit our frailty by pointing our hope outside of ourselves. Prayer and ashes this day remind us that we can bring our weakness and mortality and find hope in the forgiveness, strength, and eternal life of Jesus.

Going Further

Use ashes, dust, or dirt to get your hands dirty. Pray to God and confess your need for His forgiveness. Wash your hands and know that your God likewise has washed your life.



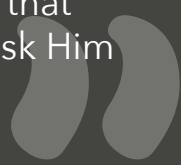
The Introduction

Martin Luther's Small Catechism divides the Lord's Prayer into an introduction, seven petitions, and a conclusion. The introduction and Luther's explanation provide the basis for the rest of this week's daily devotions. The Small Catechism's section on the Lord's Prayer begins:

The Introduction

Our Father who art in heaven.

What does this mean? With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.



Thursday, February 18

Children of God

1 John 3:1a

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

My dad is an all-around handyman, and he's always willing to tackle a project when he visits. When I wanted to add exterior lights to our house I asked if he would help. I also asked him to show me how to do the job so I could learn.

I'm guessing the disciples could have asked Jesus to pray for them, and he would have done so gladly. I'm sure they wanted that, but they also wanted to learn.

As we begin this Lenten journey, we bring the same desire. We want to learn (or re-learn) how to pray. Thankfully, Jesus wants this too.

Going Further

Who is or was your role model in prayer? Contact them and thank them for being a teacher. If that person is no longer living, write the note you would have sent to them and share it with a friend.

Friday, February 19

Boldness and Confidence

Hebrews 4:16

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Have you ever been nervous or afraid to ask for something? Sometimes the mood or personality of the person can make us fearful. I remember once in first grade, we were learning subtraction and my exceedingly kind math teacher was not having a great day. I could tell she was frustrated by all the questions the other students were asking, so I didn't ask for her help. I got every single question wrong because I was multiplying instead of subtracting. I had no boldness or confidence to ask for help in my time of need.

Because of Jesus, we can be confident before God in prayer. We will receive His grace and mercy. There is no reason to shy away from asking God for help. He's always willing and able to help.

Going Further

Write a prayer that begins: "Heavenly Father, I've been reluctant to ask, but I really need help with:

Saturday, February 20

Dear Children to a Dear Father

Galatians 4:6

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

One of the surprising things about God is that He invites us into such an intimate and familiar relationship. Though He is God, our all-powerful Creator, He adopts us into His family as His dear children. Paul speaks to this in Galatians 4 as he shows we have been invited to speak to God, not in an overly formal way, but in a familial way as dear children approach their loving parents.

As we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are not praying to a God who is predisposed to saying no or being angry with us. We are praying to a God who is predisposed to loving us and giving us what is best for us in all circumstances, just as loving parents provide for their children.

Going Further

Write down a list of three to five good gifts that God has given you that you didn't even ask for.



The First Petition

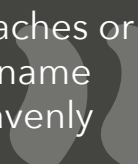
Sunday, February 21

Read the first petition of the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's explanation. We will reflect on this petition throughout the coming week. Martin Luther writes:

The First Petition *Hallowed be Thy name.*

What does this mean? God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

How is God's name kept holy? God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!"



Monday, February 22

Holy (Holy, Holy)

Isaiah 6:1-3

*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:
“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

It is not our prayer which makes God's name holy. The vision Isaiah received made this all too clear as the prophet stood in frightful awe before the mighty God. God is holy times three, emphasizing both the extent of his holiness and the holiness of Father, Son, and Spirit.

God will not compromise His holiness. However, when we read the rest of Isaiah's vision we realize God will not allow Isaiah's sin to be a barrier to relationship. The unchanging God changes Isaiah. Isaiah is made holy, and invited to take part in God's holy work on earth. In Jesus, this is what God has done for us too!

Going Further

Read Isaiah 6:1-8. What would it be like to stand in God's presence and know that you are unworthy to be there? How did verse 7 change Isaiah, and how does this picture of forgiveness change you?

Tuesday, February 23

Remember the Truth

Psalm 119:105

*Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.*

The Word of God has the power to make us holy. Yet, sometimes it's difficult to carry the truth of God's word into our day-to-day lives. Here are some reminders:

When the world says you need to earn your place, God's Word says you're already loved by the One who made you. When the world expects you to hide your faults and present a perfect image, God's Word says your faults are forgiven because He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for you. When the world says you need to make the most of today, God's Word says you'll live forever because Jesus rose to new life and shares His life with you.

Going Further

Write your own statements following the pattern, "When the world says _____, God's word says _____." If you need ideas, look at Romans 8:31-39, Psalm 139, or Luke 15.

Wednesday, February 24

Holiness Shining Through

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

God's holiness is amazing, awesome, and way beyond us. Yet, God doesn't want holiness to remain far off and out of reach. He's given His Holy Spirit to dwell in us and work through us. Our God is glorified when His holiness shines through our lives.

You and I regularly make a mess of this, and we constantly need forgiveness. In response, our heavenly Father forgives and sends His Holy Spirit. He makes us holy again... and again... and again... When the fruit of the Spirit shows up in your life, that's God's holiness shining through!

Going Further

Snap a picture of today's Bible verse or write it down and carry it with you. Throughout your day, reread it and ask this question: Where have I seen these fruits in myself and others? Give thanks to God for His holiness shining into our world.

Thursday, February 25
Help!

Psalm 54:5

Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.

Have you ever noticed that you speak to God more often when life isn't going very well? When we find ourselves in times of crisis, we often turn to God in desperation because we have nowhere else to turn. We may also do well at thanking God when everything is going very well.

But what about in the mundane? How often do we turn to God for help with something simple and ordinary? Have you ever asked God for help while washing the car, gardening, or changing a light bulb? Have you ever asked God for help when the internet went out or your Zoom call dropped?

God upholds us through every part of our lives. Whether in crisis or joy or the mundane, the Lord is the upholder of our lives.

Going Further

Consider something you'll do today that is ordinary and easy and ask God for help with that.

Friday, February 26

Sticking with Jesus

2 John 9

Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

I remember playing this game for the Nintendo Wii, a sort of follow-the-leader running game. A guide would appear on the screen running ahead of you. You'd have to run in place to follow the guide. Sometimes the guide would speed up, other times slow down, and you simply did what the guide did. What was humorous, however, was if you ran in front of the guide, your character would fall flat on their face. Running without the guide wasn't possible.

As we follow Jesus and His teaching, we can't run ahead of Him. We stay with Him, walk with Him, dwell with Him. We abide with Him. And He continually abides with us, even when we try to race ahead of Him and fall flat on our faces.

Going Further

Find a recording of the hymn Abide with Me, listen to it, and reflect on God's continued presence in your life.

Saturday, February 27

Refuge of Protection

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble

One of the common ways to talk about God in the prayers of the Psalms is to refer to Him as a refuge. When I hear the term “refuge,” I tend to think of a castle with tall, thick walls, perhaps a moat around it, and lots of soldiers on the walls ready to defend the people inside the walls.

A refuge is all about safety from danger. In our lives of faith, we face many dangers. Jesus is our safe place from each of them. And—though we will suffer and face the enemies of sin, death, and Satan—Jesus will deliver us from each of these and bring us into the new creation with Him where the new heavens and new earth will be one giant refuge of safety.

Going Further

What is a danger you are facing today? Bring it to Jesus and let Him be your refuge.



The Second Petition

Sunday, February 28

Read the second petition of the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's explanation. We will reflect on this petition throughout the coming week. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther writes:

The Second Petition
Thy kingdom come.

What does this mean? The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God's kingdom come? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

Monday, March 1

Come to Me

Mark 4:26-29

And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

The kingdom of heaven is present wherever the King reigns. The King is on the move, and he will arrive whenever and wherever he likes. His plans are moving forward even while we are unaware.

If our knowledge of this King were limited to his power and his imminent arrival, we could be frightened. However, we also know the King is gracious. He's not coming to conquer us, but to rescue us. We are harassed by sin, death, and longing, but our King is coming with freedom for his people. Let His kingdom come!

Going Further

Which is the more imposing adversary to you - sin, death, or longing? What does freedom from that enemy look like?

Tuesday, March 2

Come Through Me

Exodus 33:15-16

And [Moses] said to [Yahweh], "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"

Moses wanted no part of carrying out God's plans apart from God's presence. He knew it would be a lost cause. You and I are called into God's plans just as much as Moses. We're not called to the same tasks, but we are called into the same mission.

God has plans for the redemption and restoration of the world. He desires to bring salvation to all people. His kingdom is coming. He calls us to join him in this awesome work. Let us never go alone, but only with our King.

Going Further

Look up your favorite Bible verse and read it out loud. Remember the Holy Spirit is present in those words.

Wednesday, March 3

King of the Extremes

Psalm 97:1

*The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!*

Our God is the King who reigns. Psalm 97 opens by claiming this reign extends to the “many coastlands.” This is a way of saying all of the earth, even the extremes. The psalm encourages praising God even there, because He reigns even at the extremes.

This is good news when we find ourselves in a culture of extremes. Our political and social climate brings out many extreme opinions on both the left and right. We have friends, family, and coworkers who may carry extreme opinions. We find ourselves in difficult conversations which can feel far from the reign of our God. Yet, even in the extremes “The Lord reigns!”

Going Further

Look at a globe or a map and find the point you imagine to be furthest from where you are right now. Thank God for reigning there, and here, and all places in-between.

Thursday, March 4

The Kingly Gift of the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

These words in Acts 1:8 are the final words Jesus speaks to His disciples before ascending into the heavens. Ten days later, as these same disciples are gathered for the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes upon them and gives them power to proclaim God's Word in a miraculous language that all can understand.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a kingly gift indeed. And it is not only the twelve Apostles who received the Holy Spirit, but we all do. The Holy Spirit is present in God's Word. Every time we hear or read God's Word, the Spirit is there establishing territory in the reign and rule of Jesus.

Going Further

Make a list of 5-10 people you're likely to see or interact with virtually or in-person in the next 24 hours. These are people God has placed in your life. That means you're called to serve and care for them in God's kingdom work. Pray over your list and ask God to go with you into each of these interactions.

Friday, March 5

Believing Jesus' Words

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Faith is a simple concept. It might not be easy, but it is simple. Faith means believing another person's words, trusting that they are telling the truth. If you order a pizza for delivery, and the person taking your order says it will be 30 minutes, will you believe them? That depends. In your previous experience has this restaurant delivered on time or late? You might have faith. You might have your doubts. You might disbelieve them entirely.

Our faith in Jesus comes from listening to His words. Do Jesus' words come true? Yes. The most ridiculous thing that Jesus says is that He will die, but on the third day rise from the dead. He says this three times. Then it happens! Jesus' words are trustworthy because what He says happens. We trust Him. We have faith in His words.

Going Further

What is your favorite thing that Jesus said? Write it down on a sticky note and put it where you'll see it regularly.

Saturday, March 6

Leading Godly Lives by Grace

Titus 2:11-12

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

Part of praying for God's kingdom to come means that we are praying for ourselves to live under God's reign and rule and do what He says. This means that when we lead godly lives, it is evidence of Jesus' reign and rule as King. If we behave poorly in this world, we poorly reflect our King in this world. If we follow our King's behavior, it is a much better reflection of our King to the world.

Titus 2 shows us that we are trained to live like Jesus not by extra effort and willpower, not by threat of punishment, but by the grace of God. God's grace and salvation is what leads us to follow Jesus and reflect His love and grace into the world.

Going Further

Purchase or make a small gift for someone today for no reason other than to show them grace.



The Third Petition

Sunday, March 7

Read the third petition of the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's explanation. We will reflect on this petition throughout the coming week. Martin Luther writes:


The Third Petition

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done? God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die.

This is His good and gracious will.



Monday, March 8

God's Will is Good

Genesis 50:20-21

But Joseph said to [his brothers], "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

Joseph had been attacked by his brothers, tossed in a pit, sold as a slave, falsely accused of attempted rape, and subsequently thrown into prison. It would not be surprising if he was bitter at God. It would not be surprising if he held a grudge against his brothers who started this chain of events. However, he's not bitter and he doesn't hold a grudge. Instead, he sees that despite these negatives, God is doing something positive.

In the third petition we ask that God's good will would be done. It's also a prayer that we would see that good. When we have trouble seeing the good, this petition becomes a prayer that we would have faith to believe He will bring good despite what we see.

Going Further

Listen to the song "The Silence of God" by Andrew Peterson. You'll find recordings on YouTube and music streaming apps.

Tuesday, March 9

The Flavor of Blessing

Matthew 5:13

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

When we have French fries with a meal at home, my kids have learned to ask if the fries have salt on them. They know that fries taste better with salt. If you're used to that salty flavor, it's a rather disappointing experience when the salt is missing. Once we know Jesus, imagining a life without Him is similarly disappointing.

In Matthew 5, Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount with a series of blessings. In the midst of difficulties, we are blessed by the presence and promises of Jesus. He transforms the disappointments of life by bringing the flavor of blessing. It's no coincidence that those blessings are followed by the verse printed above. Once Jesus is a part of your life, you bring the flavor of blessing to the world around you.

Going Further

Enjoy a salty snack today while reading Matthew 5:3-13.

Wednesday, March 10

Unstoppable

Acts 12:11

When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

God sent an angel to free Peter from prison. Peter's chains "fell off his hands," he passed by two guard posts, the iron gate opened "of its own accord," and Peter was free. God's will for His church included Peter's continued leadership.

Martin Luther reminds us that God's will is done when He "breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil." Peter's release is one small example of God's will moving forward, despite obstacles beyond human power to overcome.

Where does God's will appear blocked in our world? In what situations do you see obstacles beyond human power to overcome? We pray faithfully, "Thy will be done," and trust that it is. No obstacle can stop God's will.

Going Further

Look at a couple of today's headlines and pray with confidence over each one, "Thy will be done."

Thursday, March 11

A Dangerous Prayer

2 Samuel 12:7a

Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"

As Nathan says these words to King David, they are an accusation of wrongdoing that calls out David for what he is - a murderer and an adulterer. David had abandoned God's will and plan and developed his own evil plan. Every time we sin, we are abandoning God's will.

Through Nathan confronting David, God breaks and hinders David's evil, sinful plan. David's plan included never being questioned for abusing his power. But Nathan confronts David with God's power and brings David to confession, contrition, and repentance.

As we pray "thy will be done" we are praying for God to stop us from sinning. It is a dangerous prayer, but oh so very necessary.

Going Further

Go back and read 2 Samuel 11:1-12:6 to see what leads up to Nathan's words and the depth of David's sin.

Friday, March 12

Jesus, the Perfect Keeper

Psalm 121:8

The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

If you've ever played a sport such as soccer, hockey or lacrosse, you know how important a good goalkeeper is. A good goalkeeper can give confidence to a team to be more daring and focused on their objective of scoring goals. A poor goalkeeper can make a team much more hesitant.

Imagine life as a game of soccer, and Jesus is our perfect goalkeeper. Nothing is going to get past Jesus. Sin and Satan attack us, knock us over, but they can't score on our team because Jesus keeps us. Jesus' excellence at keeping us allows us to take risks in spreading the good news of Jesus' forgiveness for all. Even if we as individuals fall on our face, we know our team will score many goals, and certainly win, because Jesus is our keeper.

Going Further

Read Psalm 121. How many times does the author use the word "keep"?

Saturday, March 13

God Is for Us

Revelation 2:10b

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life

People often wonder about God's will for their lives. They often worry that if they make the wrong choice at some point that their lives will be irreparably damaged. Yet God's will is not terribly complicated. His will is that all people are saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, His truth in Jesus Christ.

God's will for our lives is that we remain faithful to Him for our entire lives, even if life gets uncomfortable, even if we face persecution. Even if we face these things, our salvation is secure because of Jesus' death and resurrection.

In short, God's will is for us and our salvation. God is not against us. God wants to award us with the crown of life. And that is an encouraging thought.

Going Further

Find the Nicene Creed (in a hymnal or online) and note the two places where the phrase "for us" is used.



The Fourth Petition

Sunday, March 14

Read the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's explanation. We will reflect on this petition throughout the coming week. Martin Luther writes:



The Fourth Petition
Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

Monday, March 15

Daily Bread & Renewal

Psalm 104:30

When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

Psalm 104 references the act of creation, then mentions ongoing gifts like springs of water, grass of the fields, and trees of the forest. These provide drink for animals, food for grazing beasts, and homes for other creatures. All the animals of the earth, along with the men and women God has created, have filled this world with life. All these living creatures depend on God to provide what we need to live.

Later, the psalm is honest about death which comes to all creatures. It also points to the Spirit of God as the source of renewed life. Praise God for the full renewal of life He has provided for us in the resurrection of Jesus! Even as we ask for daily bread, we give thanks to God for daily life.

Going Further

Read Psalm 104. Interrupt your reading every few verses and pray "Give us this day our daily bread."

Tuesday, March 16

More, Please!

Philippians 4:6b

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Martin Luther suggests our prayer for daily bread is a place where we learn to be thankful. At first, that seems out of place. After all, in this petition we're not thanking, we're asking.

Maybe we can think of it this way: God has gone out of His way to prepare a magnificent meal. He's given you a taste yesterday, and invited you to come back for more today. There's no good reason to decline this offer. We thank God by receiving what he's prepared for us. We also thank God by showing up again and requesting, "More, please!"

Going Further

Recall five things from the past day for which you're thankful. As you list each, offer the prayer, "More, please!" If you're willing, ask a friend what they're thankful for. As they answer, offer a simple prayer of, "Thank you, Jesus. More, please!"

Wednesday, March 17

We Need to Ask

Matthew 6:26

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

When we ask for daily bread, the answer is not unknown. Our heavenly Father supplies what we need. He provides for our physical needs of food, shelter, and clothing. He cares for all of creation, and He will certainly care for us.

Yet, the request needs to be made. God doesn't need the reminder... we do. He already knows what we need, and He knows how to supply it. We get confused between needs and wants. We forget who supplies for all our needs. We need this prayer, because it brings us back to the truth that we are loved and well-supplied by our heavenly Father.

Going Further

The clothes you're wearing right now are "daily bread." Go through them item-by-item and ask God to allow each of these to meet your needs today. Thank Him for supplying these before you even asked.

Thursday, March 18

Daily Bread = Family and Friends

Mark 5:19

[Jesus] said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

Martin Luther suggests our prayer for daily bread is a place. In Mark 5, Jesus meets a man possessed by many demons. This man is such a danger to himself and his community that the community has tried to chain him up but even that hasn't worked. Jesus casts out the demons (in dramatic fashion), and the healed man wants to go with Jesus. But Jesus doesn't allow this. Jesus sends the man back home, back to his friends and family with the good news of his healing.

There could be many reasons for Jesus' actions. One possibility I see is that, though this man has been healed of the demons, the disconnection this man experienced from family, friends, and community has not been dealt with. Jesus sends the healed man back to the good daily bread of restored relationships.

Going Further

Call an old friend today, just to catch up.

Friday, March 19

Daily Bread = Creation

Genesis 1:31a

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

One of the saving graces for me through the past year has been the ability to get outside and enjoy God's creation. Probably my lowest point throughout the Covid-19 pandemic were the weeks of bad air quality from the numerous fires burning throughout the region where I live. Forced to spend even more time in the house, I felt malnourished, unable to receive the good gifts of sunshine and fresh air.

We often equate the daily bread we pray for in the Lord's Prayer simply with food, but it encompasses everything we need. That includes sunshine, oxygen, rain, and so much more. God's very good creation is given to us every day to sustain us.

Going Further

Take a look outside. Write down two or three things you see or hear in God's creation that are very good.

Saturday, March 20

Daily Bread = Community

1 Kings 19:18

Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.

When God utters these words to Elijah, he's just traveled more than 350 miles to escape from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel who are trying to kill him. Elijah has laid down in the wilderness hoping to die. Standing before God, Elijah believes that he is the last remaining believer in Yahweh, the God of Israel.

God comforts Elijah with these words. He's not alone. He has a community of faithful people to still be a part of. Through the Covid-19 pandemic, many of us experienced a similar famine of community. But we are not alone either. Our community, friendships, and church gatherings have looked different for the past year, but God has continually provided the daily bread of community.

Going Further

Find a map that shows Jezreel, Beersheba, and Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai) to see just how far Elijah ran.



The Fifth Petition

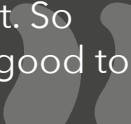
Sunday, March 21

Read the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's explanation. We will reflect on this petition throughout the coming week. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther writes:

The Fifth Petition

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.”



Monday, March 22

What Sin?

Psalm 25:7

*Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!*

We can read these words from Psalm 25 and wonder if David wrote them as an old man looking back on decades of life, or as a teenager looking back a few short years. In reality, you and I can take up his prayer no matter our stage in life.

We all have something in our past we'd rather not remember, and we'd like God to forget it too. The good news for you and I is that Jesus has taken all these sins to the cross. Because our sin died and was buried with Jesus, God does not remember our sin or hold it against us. When we confess we are forgiven. Then, He looks at you and says, "What sin?"

Going Further

Bury an ice cube in some dirt. If you like, go look for it a few hours later. It will be gone... like your sin.

Tuesday, March 23

Clean-Up Crew

Psalm 22:6

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people

If we take an honest look at our lives, we're forced to admit we have no right approaching a holy and perfect God. We're a mess, and we make a mess of everything around us. It's laughable to think we would ask God to clean up our mess. We can readily pray the psalm above as our own.

However, this psalm describes Jesus. Jesus voluntarily took our place; took our sin; took our mess. He carried it to the cross. He has invited us to rely on His death and resurrection as the answer to our predicament. He's invited us to know Him as our Savior.

Going Further

Clean up someone else's mess. Clear their plate at dinner, or pick-up trash on the sidewalk, or cover over graffiti at a park. Thank Jesus for cleaning up your mess.

Wednesday, March 24
Faithful. Just. Forgiving.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

When God utters these words to Elijah, he's just traveled God is faithful in forgiving sins. He is true to His Word. He follows through on His promises. You can depend on Him to do this.

God is just in forgiving sins. He paid your debt by sending His Son to die in your place. He's done all that was necessary to remove your guilt. You have a place in His family as a son or daughter.

You are forgiven by no work of your own. In fact, you are forgiven despite every effort of yours which has fallen short. God has done all this for you simply because He loves you.

Going Further

Re-read those last three sentences three times, slowly. If your setting permits, read out loud.

Thursday, March 25

Daily Sin. Daily Forgiveness.

Romans 7:19

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

One of the most frustrating things about the Christian life is that we keep on sinning. We know right from wrong. We know what things we should not do, yet we still keep on doing them. No matter how hard we work, no matter how desperately we pray, we keep on sinning.

We're not alone in that. The Apostle Paul recounts his frustrating struggle with sin in Romans 7. Sin clings to us. It daily drags us away from Jesus. Since we sin every day, we would do well to pray these words of the Lord's prayer every day as well, "forgive us our trespasses."

Going Further

Consider a sin that you struggle with on a daily basis. Write it down. Now cross it out and write, "Forgiven."

Friday, March 26

Forgiving Others

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Forgiving others can be challenging. Our own hurt and emotions are powerful and painful when people sin against us. How much more challenging is it to forgive someone who has sinned against you before, someone whom you've already forgiven on several occasions?

Peter asks Jesus how many times he has to forgive his brother before he can just give up. Jesus' response shows that there is no magic number. We keep forgiving again and again and again.

The reason we do this is because of how often and how much God has forgiven us. As we reflect Jesus to the world, we reflect His endless forgiveness as well. For Jesus never gives up on us, but always stands ready to forgive.

Going Further

Read Matthew 18:21-35 and write down two things you find interesting in the parable Jesus tells Peter.

Saturday, March 27

Forgiving and Doing Good Go

Luke 6:27

But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.

Have you ever had the experience of forgiving someone but finding you still harbor a grudge toward them, finding that you aren't able to treat them kindly or do good to them quite yet?

The call to forgive others includes doing good to them, not allowing grudges and anger to stand in the way of forgiveness. Jesus calls on us to love even our enemies and do good to people who hate us. This is not easy. Sometimes it takes years for us to get to such a point of forgiveness.

Thanks be to God that He forgives even our struggle to forgive others, that He does not hold grudges against us but is always quick to forgive.

Going Further

Consider a person you struggle to forgive. Write a prayer that begins: "Heavenly Father, I know I should forgive (name of person) but I am struggling to do so. Here's why:



The Sixth Petition

Palm Sunday, March 28

Read the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's explanation. We will reflect on this petition over the next few days. From the Small Catechism:



The Sixth Petition
And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean? What does this mean? God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.”

Monday, March 29

Safety in Battle

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Growing up in Wisconsin, I remember snowball fights with the neighbor kids. We would each build a wall of snow as our "base," and then try to attack one another. Your base was a fortress. It was a place to rest and refocus before returning to the melee.

The spiritual attacks we face each day can do much more damage than a snowball. We're regularly blindsided by temptations thrown at us. In Psalm 46 we're invited to call on God as our refuge. He's our base - our safe place - in the midst of battle.

My walls of snow took hits from snowballs to keep me safe. You're protected by the cross of Jesus. That's where He took the impact of every attack thrown at you. You're safe with him.

Going Further

Listen to the hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" online or sing it out loud. (The hymn is based on Psalm 46)

Tuesday, March 30

Not Deceived or Misled

1 Timothy 4:1-2

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.

Misinformation has been a problem since the Garden of Eden. Satan has used such misinformation to deceive and mislead people for centuries. In today's world, misinformation can be shared on social media sites and spread with rapid speed. The church is not immune to this problem. Christians are just as susceptible to this deception as non-Christians.

As we pray to not be led into temptation, one thing we are praying for is that we would not be deceived or misled, that the Holy Spirit would guide us to be wise and discerning. May we all be more cautious with what we share and more dedicated to the truth.

Going Further

Today before you look at social media, read the newspaper, or watch the news, pray this brief prayer: "Holy Spirit, lead me, not into lies, but into Your truth."

Wednesday, March 31

Confidence and Caution

Ephesians 6:13

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

We are certain of the victory we have in Jesus. We can also be certain our enemy will continue kicking, screaming, and lashing out to the very end. Therefore, we live in both confidence and caution.

We boldly stand on the promises of Jesus. We are also careful to protect ourselves with the armor He provides. We have a sure and certain hope as children of God. Still, we do not overstep the authority or responsibilities given to us. In baptism, we have confidence as children of the living God. In this family, we are cautioned against the twin dangers of arrogance and apathy. We are firm in faith, and we pray "lead us not into temptation."

Going Further

Read Ephesians 6:10-18. As you read about each piece of spiritual armor, place a hand where it would be worn on your body. Pray that God would equip you today.

1 Corinthians 15:57

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Maundy Thursday, or Holy Thursday, certainly doesn't look like a day of victory. Jesus is betrayed, arrested, abandoned, denied, and put on trial. Everything looks like it's going in the opposite direction of victory. Jesus looks like He is headed toward defeat.

On this Thursday of Holy Week, Jesus experiences a temptation to claim victory by a different path, to call on legions of angels to fight for Him and protect Him from suffering and death. But such a victory would have left us dead in our sins. Jesus wins a permanent victory by rising from the dead on Easter. In so doing, He makes us victors as well as we share in His victory over sin, death, and Satan.

Going Further

Write down a temptation that has been bothering you lately. After it, in big, bold letters write the verse for the day.

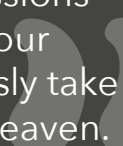


The Seventh Petition

Throughout this Lenten journey, we've allowed the Sundays to move us into each new petition of the Lord's Prayer. Holy Week is different, and requires a different rhythm. The seventh petition of the Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's explanation will prepare us to reflect on the crucifixion and the tomb in which our Lord's lifeless body lay.

The Seventh Petition
But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.



1 Peter 5:8

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

If the devil were to run around with a pitchfork in his hand and horns on his head for all to see, it would be easy to avoid his attacks. Unfortunately, we do not live in a cartoon world. Instead, he prowls like a lion. Lions move silently. They're smart enough to approach their prey from downwind. They can creep through underbrush unseen. Lions are dangerous.

The Devil is a danger to us, but not when we are protected by Jesus. This is why we pray for His protection. In the Lord's Prayer, we do not ask God to deliver us from bad things, but from evil itself. We need this daily. We need Jesus. He is the Good Shepherd who protects His sheep from every enemy.

Going Further

Make a list of 5-10 people close to you. Then, go through your list and pray "Deliver us from Evil" over each relationship

Isaiah 25:8a

He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.

On this day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, Jesus rests in the tomb. It is a day unlike any other as we solemnly reflect on the sacrifice of Christ for us but also look forward in certain hope to the joy of Easter. Today contains grief and joy, tears and smiles.

As we pray for God to deliver us from evil, we are praying for the day when we will no longer live in this paradox, a day when grief and tears will be gone and only joy and smiles will remain. Our ultimate deliverance from evil will come when Jesus returns and we receive our own Easter day of resurrection victory. Then we will be taken out of this valley of sorrow, and brought into the new creation where God will wipe away all our tears.

Going Further

Rest today in the certainty that "It is finished," and "Christ is risen."





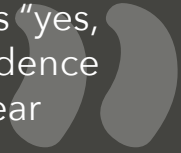
The Conclusion

The waiting of Lent, and the tensions of Holy Week bring us to a grand conclusion on Easter morning. In a similar fashion, the prayer our Lord taught us moves through topics of increasing darkness before concluding with confidence in His glory, light, and salvation. During Easter Sunday and the days following, our devotions will reflect on the conclusion to The Lord's Prayer and Martin Luther's explanation.



The Conclusion *Our Father who art in heaven.*

What does this mean? This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen means "yes, yes, it shall be so. with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father."



Easter Sunday

Sing Praise!

Colossians 1:15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

We have waited through these past six weeks to make that wonderful announcement. In these devotions, we have allowed the Lord's Prayer and themes from Martin Luther's explanations to guide our meditation. Now, our waiting comes to an end. Now, our prayer comes to its glorious conclusion.

The original words behind the verses above are believed to come from a hymn. Early Christians would have sung these words proclaiming Jesus as Creator, Lord, and Reconciler of the universe. He is all of these things. The resurrection is our proof. The resurrection of Jesus is proof that the kingdom, power, and glory are his alone!

Going Further

Today is a day to sing praise to God. Choose a favorite hymn or song of praise and sing it to Jesus!

Monday, April 5
Always Good

Luke 11:9-10

And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Martin Luther reminds us of the certainty with which we pray. He could insist on this confidence because Jesus teaches it. After Jesus presented the Lord's Prayer to His disciples, He continued His teaching about prayer. Today's scripture comes from that teaching section.

When we ask, we will receive. When we seek, we will find. When we knock, a door will be opened. If we kept reading in Luke 11, Jesus would assure us that even if we ask, seek, and knock for the wrong things, our Father will always provide the right things. We have confidence not because our prayers are always good, but because our Father is always good.

Going Further

God's people had prayed for a savior. The Friday Jesus died did not look like a good answer at first, but now it's known as Good Friday. Which of your past hurts has God used for good?

Tuesday, April 6
Always Ready

Psalm 141:2

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!

As the truth of the resurrection ripples out from that first Easter, we know we've been restored to our place in God's family. He is our true Father and we are His true children. God loves His children, and He loves to hear from His children. Conversation with His children brings God joy.

Prayer is the conversation we have with our heavenly Father. Prayer is going to Dad knowing He will always have time for us; confident He will listen; and trusting His response will be good. Our Father is always ready when we want to talk.

Going Further

Set a 1 hour timer on your watch or phone. When the timer sounds, say a quick prayer knowing that your Father is always ready to listen. Then reset the timer. Continue praying hourly throughout your day. Imagine God smiling each time you call His name.

Wednesday, April 7
Always Heard

1 John 5:14

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

I have a friend with poor hearing. When we drive together, I've noticed I have to talk extra loud because his eyes are on the road. Without seeing my lips move, he's unaware that I'm talking to him.

Thankfully, our God's hearing is excellent. He always knows when we're talking to him. He's attentive to the tiniest whisper of a prayer, even from the person who feels furthest from him.

Plus, because we share in the resurrection life of Jesus, God hears us as His own children. We share the place of Jesus in God's family. God knows His children's voices, and He always hears their prayers. He's constantly straining His ears and hoping to hear from you.

Going Further

Whisper a prayer to God and know that He hears you loud and clear.

Thursday, April 8

Pray in this Way

1 Timothy 2:1

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.

As we near the end of this prayer journey together, perhaps your prayer life has improved through this season. Perhaps it has not. In either case, we will all struggle in remembering to pray as frequently and fervently as we should at some point in the future. However, one of the things I just love about our God is that He gives us so many different examples of how to pray.

We have the entire book of Psalms. We have dozens of other prayers scattered throughout the Bible. And we have the Lord's Prayer. If ever you find yourself in a place where you are not sure what to pray, pick the first person that comes to your head and pray for them, pick out a Psalm and read it aloud, or pray the Lord's Prayer.

Going Further

Pray the Lord's Prayer three different times today.

Friday, April 9

God's Promise to Listen

Isaiah 65:24

Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.

Have you ever had to remind somebody of something because they forgot? It can be frustrating to speak and not be listened to, to be ignored by colleagues, friends, and even family.

Sometimes when we pray to God, we may feel this way. Perhaps we are desperate, and God's timing is much slower than we would prefer. Perhaps God's answer to our prayers is even "no."

But this one thing we can be sure of: God never ignores us. God always hears our prayers. Even when our prayers are inarticulate sighs and screams, God hears us. Even when we have no idea what to pray for, God hears us. Even when we are left speechless by grief and pain, God hears us.

Going Further

Write or speak a prayer that begins with these words:
"God, I know You always hear me, but I haven't heard much from You about _____"

Saturday, April 10
Amen

Revelation 22:21

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Many of our prayers conclude with the word, "Amen." Amen is a Hebrew word of agreement. In English we might use words or phrases like, "Indeed," "So be it," or "Certainly."

As we pray the word "Amen," we are agreeing to everything that was said previously. We say "Amen" as we begin our worship services in the Name of our Triune God. We say "Amen" when we receive absolution and are forgiven. We say "Amen" after the benediction or blessing where God's favor is placed upon us.

Amen is the final word of the Bible. And Amen is how we conclude the Lord's Prayer and this devotional. Thank you for joining us on this journey of learning to pray from Jesus Himself.

Going Further

Pick your favorite Psalm (if you're not sure, look at Psalm 23, 42, or 46) and conclude it with a hearty "Amen!"

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