

Jesus tells us in John 4 that we are to worship God **"in sincerity and truth."** Therefore, as you stand before God, if you remember that some brother has anything against you, be sure to go to him and seek peace with him before you come to worship or commune with God at His altar.

III.

Now let us find the most wonderful assurance and comfort in the closing "doxology" in the Lord's Prayer – **"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."** The "kingdom" or "rule" of the whole universe belongs to our God and Father, Who created it. And remember this: In all His ruling, our God works for the good of the Church – the "body" and "bride" of His Son! He has power to grant our every request in time of need. His faithfulness toward us causes us to praise Him now and forever!

Everything, including all the turmoil in the Middle-East and the decisions of the rulers of this world – everything exists, is orchestrated, managed, and massaged for the sake of Christ's Church, the "children of our heavenly Father." Even by being the first man to set foot on the moon, a true American hero, Neil Armstrong did not "choose his own destiny", as was said at his eulogy last week. All the real power and authority is God's – "in heaven and earth"!

The unchanging glory, power, and majesty belongs to our God in all things. Yet He will never refuse His believing children who humbly approach Him in Jesus' name to find grace and help in time of need. That is why we are taught by our Lord to close the Prayer of Prayers with a confident **"amen,"** which means "Yes! It shall be so!"

When all that is written in the Book of Revelation has been fulfilled concerning the last days of the Church, then the final "AMEN" to the Church's prayers will be recorded. Then your soul and glorified body will be with God in heaven forever. Then you will not need to ask anymore for anything! For as Revelation 22 promises: **"There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in" that blessed, heavenly city; "And His servants shall serve Him." And you shall "see His face; and His name shall be" on your "foreheads." And "there shall be no night there; and you "shall need no candle, neither the light of the sun, for the Lord God" shall give you "light." And "you shall reign forever and ever!"** (Rev. 22:3-5) **Amen!**

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INI

Matt. 6:9-13

Dear fellow redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

One evening last week, while sprinting after my grandson in a game of tag, I was thankful to be able to catch my breath. Isn't it a strange thing to say that we need to "catch our breath" as if it is running away from our bodies, when, in fact, it is within us? God put it there when He brought us into this world. We have been breathing ever since, instinctively. We do not arise one morning at the age of 50 and say to ourselves: "It's going to be a rough day today, I think I had better breathe before going to work!"

Likewise, the Spirit of God first expanded our spiritual lungs when He breathed into us faith in Jesus Christ through Baptism and the Gospel. From that point, prayer became the natural air of our day-day-lives, as James Montgomery wrote in the hymn we just sang. As we sprint through this earthly life, we often find it necessary and good to stop and catch a breath of prayer – breath that is within the Christ-believer. Indeed, the Christian "enters heaven with prayer."

What a wonderful gift our Lord gave us when He taught us

THE PRAYER OF PRAYERS.

I.

The Lord's Prayer is first of all the prayer of Christian fellowship. Have you ever thought of it that way? The Lord's Prayer was not given to the world; it was given only to His believing disciples of all time. The opening words, "Our Father Who art in heaven," tell us that those who pray this prayer are to be brothers and sisters in Christ. On the morning of His resurrection from the dead, Jesus said to Mary: **"Go to my brethren and say unto them, 'I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God.'"**

Unless God is my Father through faith in Jesus Christ, God is not my Father at all! For as Paul wrote to the Christians in Galatia: **"You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"** (Gal. 3:26). On the other hand, if we possess that Spirit-worked faith that we are saved from our sins by nothing but the righteous life and blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we can say with the Apostle John: **"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us**

that we should be called the sons of God! . . . Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1John 3:1-2) This is the joyful confidence you should have when you pray to your heavenly Father.

Remember also that you have been commanded to pray, "Our Father." When you pray "Our Father" in the Lord's Prayer you are confessing your oneness with all the members of Christ's invisible Church, wherever they may be on the face of the earth! The apostle Paul was speaking of this One Christian Church, the invisible fellowship of believing saints, when he wrote to the Ephesian Christians: "**I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.**" (Eph. 3:15)

You have the comfort of knowing that every true Christian who prays the Lord's Prayer anytime, anywhere on earth, is praying for you. Whether they know you personally or not, whether they are separated from you by thousands of miles or denominational barriers, YOU are included in every petition of the Lord's Prayer!

II.

But what should you ask of God in your prayers? The Lord's Prayer sums up all that can and should be included in the Christian's prayer. The Lord teaches us to put first things first. "Hallowed be Your Name. God's name is God's Word. We are asking that His Word be taught in its truth and purity and that we may live godly lives according to that Word.

When we pray "Thy kingdom come," we are asking that God's gracious rule through the Gospel may come to us and to others here in time, and that finally when our last hour comes, He may graciously take us and all believers to Himself in heaven.

When we pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we are begging our Father to break every evil will and counsel that would not let us keep his name holy or let his kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, of the world, and of our own sinful flesh.

Now, God gives daily bread without our asking, even to the wicked. But we are to pray this petition so that we are led to recognize that it is God Who gives us all that we need for our daily

life, and we are to receive it with thanksgiving. The last three petitions – "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us," "Lead us not into temptation," "But deliver us from evil" – return again to our spiritual needs.

Although our God permits temptations or testings to come into our earthly lives, He does not tempt us to sin; the devil does that. So in the sixth petition we pray that God would keep us from falling into sin and guard our faith so that we may finally overcome and obtain the victory.

In the seventh petition we ask that our heavenly Father would deliver us from everything that is evil to body and soul, property and honor, and "finally, when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and take us to Himself in heaven."

I skipped over the fifth petition – "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;" but not because it is less important than the others. All of God's truly believing children, need to remember that "the forgiveness of sins" is the central teaching of the Christian Church and the essence of our eternal salvation!

Many centuries ago, Bishop John of Alexandria, Egypt, could not convince a member of his congregation to make peace with a brother who had sinned against him. All of this pastor's admonitions and warnings failed to remove the anger of his member. So John took his member into the church and they began to pray the Lord's Prayer together.

But when they reached the fifth petition – "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"– John stopped, and let his member go on alone. The man's conscience was stricken. He fell down on his knees and asked God's forgiveness for his refusal to forgive his brother. Then he went straight to his brother's home and made peace with him.

Jesus said in another place: "**When you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may forgive your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.**" (Mk 11:25) We should not bear any grudges against one another in our hearts, lest our faith and our worship are without sincerity.