



Love and Serve Through Christ

**WHEN
YOU
PRAY**

Lenten Devotional
March 6 thru March 10

* Worship @ 9:15 a.m. (*contemporary praise, lower level*)
10:30 a.m. (*blended traditional, sanctuary*)

Ash Wednesday

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. — Matthew 6:16–21

It's very appropriate during Lent, a season of repentance and increased focus on God's work for us in Christ Jesus to be reminded that God is our Father. How is God our Father? Sometimes people talk about God being our Father by the Creation. This is true that God created us. We are creatures. But that's not quite fully revealing about our Father. Creation is sometimes a scary place. Things in creation die. There is so much out of our control in creation. It can be frightening. Even worse, our many sins tear into our thinking about how our Father looks at us.

There is another way to think of God as our Father. Yes, He created us. He has done so much more than that however. God is our Father because Jesus is our brother. The Son of God was sent by the Father to redeem His creatures. Now instead of just seeing the raw power of creation or the wrath we deserve for our sins and offenses, a new way to see God as our Father emerges. God is our loving Father. He showed this in sending His only-begotten Son. The power of Creation is under the same Son who suffered all punishment for us. This Father is our Father. Because of Christ we know Him to be a loving Father.

Dear Father in heaven, help us trust you as our loving Father who gave us Jesus to redeem us. Help us to call you during this Lenten season with all boldness and confidence. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven...

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

— John 14:6–7

Christ Jesus is the Son of God. God is His Father. He is also true God in the mystery of the Trinity. These words were spoken by Jesus to His disciples on the first Maundy Thursday, the night when He was betrayed. Here He gladly teaches His disciples the way to the Father.

Christ Jesus is the way. In fact, the whole Gospel of John lays out this fact, that to know or see the Father you need only look at the Son. Through the Son we have such access to the Father. This is very important in our prayers. This access of course came at a price – the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus has made it possible for you to come to the Father. He has made it possible to know the Father. He has made it possible to see the Father. This is because knowing and seeing Jesus is knowing and seeing the Father.

Throughout this devotional we are going to see examples of prayer from our Lord’s Passion accounts. This is the first account, where our Lord Jesus Christ is teaching the introduction of the Lord’s Prayer to the disciples. He says plainly to them: “you do know him and have seen him”. This is a sure statement and promise from our Lord. This fact can encourage you in your prayers. Jesus says the Father is your Father. When you pray to the Father, it is as certain as Jesus Christ says. He has bled and died to give you access and provides you His Word to encourage your prayers. All while He Himself was approaching His own crucifixion. Such is the love of Jesus for you.

Dear Father in heaven, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus so that we may not only pray to You but also that we may know you. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer for Lent

Friday after Ash Wednesday

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” — Matthew 6:9

Jesus taught His disciples to pray the Lord's Prayer. Since then, pastors and parents have used the Lord's Prayer to teach children not only how to pray but what to pray.

Why do we pray? There are ultimately two reasons. First, God commands us to pray. The Second Commandment (You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God) commands prayer, or the right use of God's name. It is not an option for the Christian. It is commanded. It is a sacred thing that God demands. Let this then encourage you and also reveal your sins against this Commandment.

The second reason why we pray is that our Father has promised to hear and answer our prayers. Jesus Himself promises that what we ask will be given. This should encourage us to realize the great joy and pleasure it is to pray. Our Father has put His own reputation on the line by promising to hear and answer our prayers. His Word is certain.

Our prayers take on a serious nature. They are both in response to God's command and promise. Our Father provides the motivation and words to pray for the Christian. Our prayers shouldn't be thoughtless. They should be serious and faithful. This doesn't mean that we avoid repeating prayers like the Lord's Prayer. In fact, when Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer He commands it to be prayed. Our thoughtlessness is never the problem with the words but with our hearts, which fail to keep the Second Commandment or properly believe the promise of God concerning our prayers. Lord have mercy upon us.

Dear Father, help us to pray as we ought, obeying Your Word and trusting Your promise. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven...

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

— Romans 8:15–17

Scripture teaches that we are by nature born dead in our sins and trespasses. It is only the work of Christ that changes that. Here St Paul teaches us why we can with all boldness and confidence call upon God our Father as His dear children. We have been adopted. We are children of God. The Spirit Himself bears witness to this in us.

When we pray “our Father” we are saying that we are His children. We are confessing that Christ Jesus has shed His own blood to atone for our sins and that the Holy Spirit has given new life where there was only death. The Spirit makes us heirs by giving us faith in Christ’s Word and work. This is the work done in the water of Holy Baptism. Baptism is our testimony of the Spirit that we are indeed children and fellow heirs with Christ. Praying the Lord’s Prayer then is an exercise of the baptized life of the Christian.

The last part of this verse sheds some light on what our baptized lives will encounter in this temporal existence. In this world we will have suffering. Just like Christ. Baptism puts us into Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. Where He has gone we will go too. This means that as He was no stranger to suffering, especially in the passion accounts, we too will have to suffer in this life. But the promise is that we are fellow heirs. Our suffering now serves to point us to glory that is coming. This is true for the baptized and the believing both now and forever.

Dear Father, grant me confidence in my prayers as the Spirit has made me trust in Your Son Jesus. Amen.

Sunday of Lent 1

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" — Matthew 4:1–4

God's name is certainly holy in itself, because God is certainly holy in Himself. We may profane the name of God among us by cursing, swearing, lying, or deceiving by His name, but we cannot desecrate God's name in itself, no matter how profane our words and deeds may be. For God is perfect, and His perfection cannot be sullied by sin.

Satan learned that lesson long ago in the wilderness. There he arrogantly attempted to tempt the very Son of God to profane His Father's name by turning stones into loaves of bread to satisfy His hunger, putting the Lord His God to the test by throwing Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and gaining all the kingdoms of the world and their glory by falling down and worshiping Satan. But Jesus would not be deceived or misled. He answered each temptation with nothing but the true and pure Word of God. In word and deed, Jesus kept God's name holy, in order that He would go to the cross as the holy, perfect sacrificial offering for the world's sin.

Indeed, God's name is certainly holy in itself. Neither the devil, nor the world, nor the sinful flesh can change that. Jesus proved it in His temptation in the wilderness. But by the Word of God, God's name may be kept holy on earth among us also. When we follow the example of our Lord in teaching and learning God's Word in truth and purity and in living holy lives according to what is commanded in the Scriptures, God's name is kept holy among us. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven!

Protect us from the devil's temptations, who would lead us to teach or live contrary to Your Word, heavenly Father! Amen.

“The Lord’s Prayer in the Lord’s Passion”

Lenten Devotions

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