

EPIPHANY 2 January 15, 2012
Text: Luther's Small Catechism
Theme: "Talking Out Salvation"

Jesus told Nathanael that he would see greater things than these. Later on, he taught the disciple the Lord's Prayer and I think the Lord's Prayer is a tool for us to help us grasp the greater things we are seeing. It is way for us to continue talking out our salvation. Luther wrote an explanation of the Lord's Prayer in his small catechism and today we are going to review this amazing prayer that Jesus taught us. Nathanael was impressed because Jesus knew that he had been under the fig tree without having seen him. In the Gospel, Jesus said that Nathanael hadn't seen anything yet.

It takes time and effort to get your mind around Jesus. No one grasps salvation the moment he is saved – that's what Jesus was insinuating when he told Nathanael that he would "see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Both our Old Testament text and our Gospel today point to the idea that there is some work to be done as we grow in our relationship with God and prayer is our primary tool for doing that. Open your bulletins and read aloud with me.

"Our Father who art in heaven."

“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.”

God invites us, like he invited Nathanael, to open our eyes and see the kingdom of God. It is all around us, if we are looking. That near miss on the freeway? No such thing as coincidence – that was an angel descending from heaven and intervening for you. That remission in your disease? Not luck or medical science. That was the hand of God giving you more time on this earth. That paycheck you put in the bank on Friday. Not the result of your amazing work ethic but a gift from God because all you are doing is selling your time and ability which he gave you. Read with me.

“Hallowed be Thy name.”

“God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also. 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!”

He invites us to live in the holiness of his name, even as Jesus invited Nathanael to be part of something that was infinitely bigger than he was. Hallowed be thy name is Gospel because his name is our name. We are not requesting but proclaiming. His name and therefore our name is already holy. Our challenge is to believe it. Read with me.

“Thy kingdom come.”

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

Imagine if the wall split and we saw the kingdom of heaven over this altar every weekend. This place would be flooded. But that is exactly what happens. His kingdom is here. We are purified by Baptism, His Word and His body and blood so that we are moving from the world that is dying into his kingdom that is eternal. This whole life is like a giant shipwreck. The boat we were on is sinking and we are climbing into life boats and rowing across to a beautiful luxury liner while this old tub slowly sinks. The Kingdom of God came when Christ saved us from Hell and now we begin to explore the kingdom within which we live. Read with me.

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

“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. 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.”

The will of God is wonderful. It takes time during this life for us to grow in faith, but slowly we learn that what we call fun is sometimes not fun at all but works of Satan that diminish our faith. As faith grows, it hungers, and we crave God's good and gracious will. Read with me.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

“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. 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.”

I am certain that one of our biggest quandaries in heaven will be why did we ever worry on earth? If God created everything and gave us life and sent his very Son to die for us, why would he not provide everything we need? Why would he fail to take care of us and keep us when he sacrificed his son for us? Imagine all the time and energy we would have if we gave up worrying. Read with me.

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

“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.”

If the biggest quandary in heaven is why did we worry, then surely the second biggest quandary will be is why did we waste any time being angry with each other? Forgiveness is so much easier in the long run and it is free. Why not just forgive everyone as freely as God forgives us and use that energy we were using for grudges to do something good and productive? None of us lives a perfect life so

why try to hold anyone else to a standard that we are incapable of meeting? Wouldn't it be amazing to just live life and let others live their lives and forgive where people hurt us as God forgives where we hurt him? It's not normal. Like Nathanael, anyone who follows Jesus is in for some surprises. Read with me.

"And lead us not into temptation."

"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."

Of course God never leads us into temptation so there is a comma missing in that petition. Lead us, not into temptation as we would go on our own. We celebrate that God walks with us and keep us strong even when we get lost. Nathanael learned that Jesus was with him even when he didn't see him. Read with me.

"But deliver us from evil."

"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."

We don't know exactly what Nathanael was doing that day before Jesus came into his life, but we do know that his life was forever altered when Jesus broke into it. Like Samuel and Nathanael, we are often unprepared when the Holy Spirit marches into our soul and takes up residence but it was a glorious day when we were all delivered from evil. Read with me.

"For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen."

"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."