

**Text: The Lord's Prayer**

**Theme: The Windows of the Nave – The Intro and 1<sup>st</sup> Petition**



**During the six midweek services of Lent this year, we are going to study the most important prayer of the Church. While all prayer is important, both for the speaker and for the Lord who loves hearing our prayers, the Lord's Prayer is the model for all prayer. It was, of course given by the Lord himself. We are doubly blessed because our forefathers here at Trinity decided to magnify the Lord's Prayer by dedicating eight of the windows of the nave to this prayer. So, each Wednesday we will look at the windows and discuss the various parts of this prayer that Jesus gave us.**

**Tonight, we will look at the first two windows and the Introduction to and first petition of the Lord's Prayer. Open your hymnals to page 323 and read with me what the catechism says of the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer.**

**"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."**

**Now look at the first window on the south wall of the Nave. You see a hand reaching down through the clouds in front of a cross. This is one of the primary symbols for God the Father. He is the provider of everything we have from the cash in our pockets to the air we are breathing right this minute. Without His, magnanimous hand of provision, we would be unable to survive much less thrive. Of course, the cross, in front of which the hand floats, reminds us that He not only provides for our physical needs but also our eternal needs by dying on the cross for us. Without Him, the world would not be compatible for life and even if it were, we would have nothing to look forward to but Hell. The hand reaches down through the clouds which represent Heaven and you will notice that surrounding the hand are the sun, the moon and the stars representing all creation. The hand is in a circle which represents eternity and there three rays flashing out from the hand which symbolized the Father, the Sun and the Holy Spirit.**

**There is a lot packed into this window even as there is a lot packed into the introduction to the Lord's Prayer. We are addressing the Lord of the Universe, the creator of everything as our Father. Sometimes we gloss over this as though it were common. If you were fortunate enough to have a wonderful relationship with your earthly father, I suppose it might be easier for you to grasp this idea. If you had the sort of earthly father who really mirrored God the Father, this might be something familiar to you. But if you either had no relationship with your earthly father or a poor relationship with him, this concept might be really difficult for you but suffice it to say, God the Creator of the Universe, wants you to think of Him as your loving Father and wants you to approach Him as you would have liked to have been able to approach your earthly father. He wants you to be like that little child who climbs into her father's lap where she knows that she will be safe, protected and loved eternally. When you say "Our Father who art in heaven," that is what you are doing. You are climbing into God's lap and turning over to Him all the things that frighten you or worry you.**

**Look again at page 323 in the hymnal and read with me what the catechism says of 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!”**

**Look at the second window. There is a triangle in the middle which of course is a symbol for the Holy Trinity. In the middle of that triangle is what is called the Holy Tetragrammaton. Those are the four Hebrew consonants that make up the proper name of God, Yahweh. In Hebrew it means “He is.” Our God is so vast, so powerful that the only concepts we have in human language to describe Him is the verb of being. As powerful as He is, He does not need any help in keeping His name Holy. So, in this petition, we are not offering to help the Lord out with keeping His name holy but rather we are praying that He would empower us to keep His name holy. This is more easily done when we focus on the positive instead of the negative. I had two roommates in college who wanted to stop cursing before going to seminary. They agreed to punch each other in the arms as hard as they could every time they took the Lord's**

**name in vain. There was much bruising for a few weeks, but I didn't notice any substantial increase in morality. Luther suggests that, instead of focusing on what we cannot do, we focus ourselves on teaching the Word of God in truth and purity and living holy lives. When we are doing that, it is particularly difficult to take the Lord's name in vain.**

**So, in our opening look at the Lord's Prayer, first, we remember who our true Father is, the one for whom our earthly father was only a mirror. Some reflected God well and some did not but no matter, we still are invited to have a holy relationship with our true Father in heaven. Second, we pray that our Father would help us to live our lives in such a way that we keep His name holy. That anyone who sees our actions would, by our actions, know that we belong to Him.**

**As we move through Lent this year, keep your catechisms open to the Lord's Prayer and pray through not only the prayer but the meanings every day. If you have not already discovered it, you will come to see this prayer as some of the most powerful words ever uttered.**