

Lent Midweek 5—March 13, 2024
Text: The Lord's Prayer
Theme: The Windows of the Nave – 5th Petition



We continue our series on the Lord's Prayer tonight as we look at the window on the south side of the nave. Tonight, we look at the fifth petition. Turn in your hymnals to page 324 and read the fifth petition with me.

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.

The artist shows us the two tablets of the 10 Commandments in the window. Before we can ask for forgiveness, we need to know what it is for which we need to be forgiven. Luther suggested that if you are sitting in church and you are unsure of whether you need

the Lord's Supper, you should put your hand to your heart and see if it is still beating. If it is, you need the Lord's Supper. If you are uncertain about what it is for which you need forgiveness, look to the 10 Commandments. All we need to do is read through the 10 Commandments, and we will quickly see all for which we need forgiveness. Remember that we sin not only in deed but in thought and word as well.

In this petition of the Lord's Prayer, we not only ask God for forgiveness for all the ways we have offended Him and others but that He would empower us likewise to forgive one another and ourselves. The prayer is not that God would forgive us IF we forgive others but that God would empower us to forgive others with the same power that He forgives us. We forgive others BECAUSE He has forgiven us. Our Lord has died on the cross and suffered Hell to forgive us, so we are free of guilt and without blemish. That's what St. Paul means when he says in Ephesians 5,

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." That's us he is talking about. "...without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,

that she might be holy and without blemish.” We are holy because of what Christ did for us, so we call upon God to make us “little Christs” in this world, doing for others what He has already done for us.

When you need forgiveness for something you have done, thought, or said, pray the Lord’s Prayer. But, if you are having trouble forgiving someone else for something they have done, thought, or said, pray the Lord’s Prayer. In that simple phrase, “And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” we say everything necessary about forgiveness. We are a conduit of God’s love and forgiveness to the world.

Lastly, the hardest part of forgiveness is forgiving ourselves. From a psychological perspective, a lack of self-forgiveness causes much of our inability to forgive others. We might say that we have forgiven ourselves but if you are struggling to forgive others, you probably have not forgiven yourself. Refusing to forgive yourself causes a dam to be built behind which the waters of grace are trapped. Forgiving yourself opens the floodgates of grace. When you are no long keeping a tab of all your own sins, and whether you have earned forgiveness for them, you also cease to keep a tab of the sins of others. That is the power of God flowing through you and into the lives of others.

Forgiveness is the center point of Christianity. It is where grace abounds. When we embrace the reality that we have all sinned much and deserve nothing but damnation, but Christ has chosen to pay the price of our sin with His own life and soul, we can begin to forgive. That reality is not head knowledge. Even the Devil knows what Christ did. It is heart knowledge, embraced by faith created by the Holy Spirit and fed with Word and Sacrament. If you are having trouble forgiving, feed you faith. As your faith becomes stronger, grace will abound and you will be able to fully and completely forgive yourself and others and bask in the light and love of Christ.

I once said this to a person who had done some terrible things. He said, it's not fair! Why should I just get off for what I have done? You shouldn't, I said. You should be damned to Hell for the things you did, but Jesus decided otherwise and took your punishment upon Himself. It is finished. There is no more offense. You are free.