

Teach Us To Pray

^{11:1} Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

² And he said to them, “When you pray, say:

“Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread,

⁴ and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation.”

⁵ And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves,

⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’;

⁷ and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything’?

⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent;

¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

(Luke 11:1-13)

Corporate Prayer

When we started our church over 20 years ago and I showed our liturgy to someone, I was told that you shouldn't have *corporate* prayers, prayers that everyone says together. The reason? It would kill the prayer. Prayer should be spontaneous, otherwise, it won't be from the heart. Do you hear the either/or dichotomy there? Only spontaneous prayers can be from the heart. No prayer that you didn't come up with, that you didn't just make up right there on the spot, could possibly be said from the heart.

I've heard something like this [related with the Lord's Supper](#). I grew up in a tradition that only had the Supper once a month. That Sunday was usually treated as a bit more special than the others because of it. The reasoning for having it once a month? I was told that if people had the Lord's Supper every week, it would grow old and boring and people wouldn't appreciate it like they should.

The word "[novelty](#)" comes to mind. That word means, "[the quality of being new, original, or unusual.](#)" This word has become [the definition of the American church](#) for at least the last half a century, if not more. If it's not new, it is tired old boring tradition, and God knows that "[tradition](#)" is the death of all true religious affection. After all, didn't Jesus

constantly pick on tradition whenever he dealt with the religious elites? So the thinking goes. Never mind that the NT repeatedly tells us to keep the traditions ... of the Apostles (1Co 11:2; 2Th 2:15; 3:6; etc.).

Returning to prayer, such ideas make me wonder about any written prayer ever penned, ever printed, ever sung by anyone before you. **The Psalms** are mostly prayers, should we never pray those? The Fathers, Reformers, Puritans, and so many others printed **whole books of prayers**; should we never pray those? Most of all, the Lord Jesus himself was asked, “**Lord, teach us to pray.**” His answer, “**When you pray, say...**” He then gave us words that many people fundamentally fail to process. “**Our...**” “**us.**” Plural pronouns. By definition they involve a group. How can a person obey the Lord Jesus if they refuse to pray written prayers together?

The Lord’s Prayer: Context and Structure

Today we are looking at **the Lord’s Prayer**. We are in Luke and so we will use his version as the baseline. However, it is quite instructive to look at it in conjunction with Matthew’s longer and better known version as we think about what it is that the Lord Jesus taught us to say.

The two prayers have **entirely different contexts, occasions** for arising, and **words** used in the prayer. **Luke's** comes at the second leg of the seven part journey to Jerusalem, somewhere in Samaria or Judea. Matthew's prayer takes place in Galilee up the hill from Capernaum far to the north. Both prayers have a kind of introduction. **Luke's** comes after Jesus finishes praying and is then asked *a question* by “**one of his disciples**” if he would teach them to pray. Matthew's comes in the middle of *a sermon* as—the famous Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has just changed subjects to prayer. **Luke's** prayer has *five* petitions. Matthew's has *seven*. Thus, Luke's is quite a bit shorter than the prayer in Matthew. Both have material that comes after them that is directly related, but they are vastly different. In **Luke**, Jesus wants us to ask God by *faith* for what we need and believe that the Father loves us enough to answer us with good things. In Matthew, Jesus narrows in on *forgiveness of sins* and the need to recognize that as his children, we must be about forgiving the way we have been forgiven. Thus, my belief is that Jesus taught people a basic way to pray, using a standard template on many occasions, but that he changed it up, depending on the circumstance to give different perspectives into the meaning of prayer itself.

The literary shape of the two prayers is interesting to think about. Both may be chiastic, each centering on “our daily bread,” which as we will see is very interesting. Luke may have chiastically married the second half of his prayer to the material that comes after it, so that the focus is on “ask, seek, and knock.” Meanwhile, the prayer in Matthew comes at the center of a structure that makes up the entire Sermon on the Mount (Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary* vol. 1, 212).

The Lord's Prayer in Luke	
<p>1a) Luk 11:4b, For we also forgive/ Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one;</p> <p>1b) Luk 11:5-8, The parable of the friend at midnight/ he will give his friend what he asks;</p> <p>1c) Luk 11:9, Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you;</p> <p>2c) Luk 11:10, For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened;</p> <p>2b) Luk 11:11-12, If a son asks his father for bread + fish + egg, will he give him a stone + serpent + scorpion?</p> <p>2a) Luk 11:13, How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.¹</p>	<p>P(11:1) 11:1 He was praying in a certain place (11:1)</p> <p>A(11:2a) 11:2 hallowed be your name (11:2)</p> <p>B(11:2b) 11:2 your kingdom come (11:2)</p> <p>C(11:3) 11:3 Give us each day our daily bread (11:3)</p> <p>B'(11:4a) 11:4 and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us (11:4)</p> <p>A'(11:4b) 11:4 do not subject us to the final test (11:4)</p> <p>A: Faith to the God. B: Salvation. C: Our daily bread.²</p>

¹ Christine Smith, “Luke 11,” *A Little Perspective* (March 17, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/luke-11-2016/>.

² “Literary Structure (Chiasm, Chiasmus) of Gospel of Luke, *Literary Structures of the Bible*, http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/42_Luke_pericope_e.html#67. Below is the Matthew version from the same site.

The Lord's Prayer in Matthew

<p>3: Our Father who art in heaven, hal- lowed be Thy name</p> <p>2: Thy kingdom come</p> <p>1: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven</p> <p>0: give us this day our daily bread</p> <p>1': and forgive us our debts as we for- give our debtors</p> <p>2': and lead us not into temptation</p> <p>3' but deliver us from the evil one³</p> <p>3 / 3': Our Father / the evil one 2 / 2': The age to come / the present age 1 / 1': The Divine will / the human will 0: The "daily bread" the super essential bread of life.</p>	<p>A(6:7-8)</p> <p>B(6:9)</p> <p>C(6:10a)</p> <p>D(6:10b)</p> <p>E(6:11)</p> <p>D'(6:12)</p> <p>C'(6:13a)</p> <p>B'(6:13b)</p> <p>A'(6:14-15)</p>	<p>6:8 Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (6:8)</p> <p>6:9 hallowed be your name,(6:9</p> <p>6:10 your kingdom come (6:10)</p> <p>6:10 as in heaven.(6:10</p> <p>6:11 Give us today our daily bread;(6:11)</p> <p>6:12 as we forgive our debtors (6:12</p> <p>6:13 do not subject us to the final test (6:13)</p> <p>6:13 deliver us from the evil one.(6:13)</p> <p>6:15 neither will your Father for- give your transgressions. (6:15)</p>
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The Lord's Prayer

Luke 11:1-5	Matthew 6:5-13
<p>¹ Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."</p>	<p>⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have re- ceived their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in</p>

³ Fr. Sava Medakovic, "The Shape of the Lord's Prayer," *Pravoslavia* (Nov 25, 2016), <https://pravoslavie.ru/98920.html>.

	secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.
² And he said to them, “When you pray, say:	⁹ Pray then like this:
^{2b} “[Our] Father [who is in heaven],	^{9b} “Our Father in heaven,
^{2c} hallowed be your name.	^{9c} hallowed be your name.
^{2d} Your kingdom come [Your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us].	¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
^{2e} [Your will be done, as in heaven also upon the earth]	^{10b} your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
³ Give us each day our daily bread,	¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,
⁴ and forgive us our sins (<i>hamartia</i>), for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.	¹² and forgive us our debts (<i>opheilēma</i>), as we also have forgiven our debtors.
^{4b} And lead us not into temptation.”	¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
	^{13b} but deliver us from evil.
[] = Later copy additions	^{13c} [For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen]
	¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses [paraptōmata], your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

One of the interesting things about **centering the prayer on our daily bread** involves **possible backgrounds** to Jesus’

prayer. The disciple in Luke asked Jesus to teach them to pray *as John taught his disciples*. It was popular for Rabbis in those days to give their students specific forms of prayer. And clearly, John had done this for his students. Certainly Andrew, who was one of his disciples, would have known this. Such a question shows great courage and faith on the part of this disciple. He wants to know how he should pray.

Knowing that others were teaching how to pray, several known prayers that seem to have been contemporary with Jesus have been offered as at least background material to contrast. One of these is the *Mourner's Kaddish*, an Aramaic prayer that may date to the first century. It is rather long, but it is worth hearing in its entirety.⁴

Lord's Prayer (Luke)	Mourner's Kaddish	Amidah (18 Benedictions)
[Our] Father [who is in heaven]		Graciously favor us, our Father, with understanding from you. (4)
Hallowed by your name	Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will.	
Your kingdom come. [Your will be done, as in heaven also upon the earth.]	May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel,	

⁴ The following is just one of several versions of it. This one I took from

	speedily and soon; and say, Amen.	
	May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity. Blessed and praised, glo- rified and exalted, ex- tollled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen.	
Give us each day our daily bread,	May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen. He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.	Bless, O Lord our God, this year for us, and let it be good in all the varieties of its produce. Hasten the year of our redemp- tive End. Grand dew and rain upon the face of the earth, and sate the world out of the treasuries of Your goodness; and grant a blessing to the work of our hands.
And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves forgive everyone who is in- debted to us.		Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned against you. Blot out and remove our transgres- sions from before Your sight. For Your mercies are manifold. You are praised, O Lord, who abundantly pardons. (6)
And lead us not into temptation.		

A second prayer is called the *Amidah, or Eighteen Prayers*. It (along with other prayers of the Second Temple⁵) addresses God as “Father,” has a long plea for him to bless our **crops**, and asks him to forgive us for sinning against him. Because of these, Byargeon explains that, “Over the years the general consensus among many NT scholars has been that the Lord’s prayer is very similar to and perhaps even based upon first-century synagogue prayers.”⁶

What strikes me is **how long these prayers are**. Yes, they are similar, but Jesus’ prayer is quite short in comparison and to the point. Perhaps he had flowery language of hypocrites who love to be heard in mind as he thought about these other prayers? We don’t know.

But though these other prayers were out there, it is also important to see that **the OT itself has almost all of this same language** in one place or another. Here is just one example of how we can string together OT verses to get something similar to the Lord’s Prayer:

⁵ See **James H. Charlesworth**, “[A Caveat on Textual Transmission and the Meaning of *Abba*: A Study of the Lord’s Prayer](#),” *The Lord’s Prayer and other Prayer Texts from the Greco-Roman Era*, ed. James H. Charlesworth with Mark Harding and Mark Kiley (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1994), 1-14.

⁶ **Rick W. Byargeon**, “[Echoes of Wisdom in the Lord’s Prayer \(Matt 6:9-13\)](#),” JETS 41.3 (Sept 1998): 353-65.

“My Father, you are the friend of my youth” (Jer 3:4).
“Look down from heaven, and see” (Ps 80:14). “Blessed be his glorious name forever” (Ps 72:19). “[Your kingdom] break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end” (Dan 2:4). “Do whatever seems good to you” (Jdg 10:15). “Feed me with the food that is needful for me” (Prov 30:8). “For your name’s sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt” (Ps 25:11). “We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say” (Neh 5:12). “The LORD ... keep you from all evil” (Ps 121:7). “Please deliver us this day” (Jdg 10:15). “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory” (1Chr 29:11).

The point here is **not to diminish** Jesus’ teaching. Far from it. Jesus was saturated in the Word of God. And he was able to string together ideas from the Scripture that are trying mind-blowing and helpful and get the heart of our needs in prayer.

As for the way the prayer is **organized**, it is quite simple. We have the address, two vertical (three in Matt) petitions directed at God. Two horizontal petitions directed at us (which form an antithesis), and a concluding request.⁷ So

⁷ Emerzan Ragel, “A Critical Analysis of the Lord’s Prayer,” *Academia* (n.d.): 1-36.

let's turn to the prayer and see what it is that Jesus is having us pray, especially as we find it in Luke.

Luke 11:1-2—The Preface

Unlike Matthew, Luke's introduction to the Prayer is very short, essentially just one verse. “**Now Jesus was praying in a certain place...**” (Luke 11:1). Luke records nearly a dozen times when Jesus prays. He prayed at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22). He would withdraw to desolate places to pray (5:16). Before choosing the twelve, he prayed (6:12). He prayed after he fed the 5000 (9:18). He prayed on the mountain of transfiguration (28-29). He has just prayed when the seventy came back rejoicing (10:21-22). How important it is to see the God of the Universe, the one through whom all things were made, humbling himself and showing his utter dependence upon the Heavenly Father, the God of the Universe, the one from whom all things were made. How can any mere created man ever think that they do not need to pray when Jesus Christ himself needed to? The arrogance of that idea is stunning.

But it also shows you the intimate fellowship that the Son had with the Father, fellowship that did not begin here

on earth, but was an eternal communion of thoughts, words, and interaction in the Godhead that also included in the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we will see the **Spirit** himself a couple of times today, for he is never far away when the others are present. If God has such communion among the Persons, then what does this tell us about the purpose of prayer? So many people think prayer is just asking God for things. The reality is, it is about learning to have fellowship with the God of the universe. You actually get to talk to him through Christ and God listens and answers back with groans that words cannot express.

“... and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples’” (**Luke 11:1**). Clearly, **Jesus was praying out loud**, both **to talk** to his Father and **to be a model** of prayer for his disciples. But now, an unnamed disciple wants to learn how to pray, and we’ve discussed that context.

So Jesus answers him. “**When you pray, say...**” (2). It is important here to **contrast** this with what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount. As he introduces the prayer there, he says, “**Pray then like this ...**” (**Matt 6:9**). “**Say this.**” “**Pray like this.**” Do you hear the difference? In Luke, Jesus is going to be giving **a rote prayer**, a prayer to memorize, a prayer to

repeat. He's going to be giving the very thing that some feel is so inappropriate that it would kill prayer. "When you pray, say..." The reason Jesus says this is because the disciple asked for it. "Give us a rote prayer." "OK, here you go."

Jesus didn't seem to think that rote prayers, written prayers, prayers offered by others would kill your faith. He thinks the opposite. But you must understand the prayer and realize that this is no incantation he is giving you. What is an incantation? It is a word or phrase, often mystical or cryptic, recited or chanted to invoke a spell or other supernatural phenomenon, or to influence an outcome. Devil worshippers, occultists, those who deal in black magic use incantations to force a deities hand. Here, the mind does not matter, only the words and ritual. Some claiming to be Christians, especially in the Word-of-Faith movement are essentially using "faith" the same way. Name-it-and-claim-it. That's an incantation. Jesus' prayer is the opposite of this, even though we are to "say this." This is the danger to beware of as you say the prayer together. Use your mind as you pray these words; do not think of it like magic. It is anything but that.

In Matthew, however, Jesus is teaching how to pray. The preface in Matthew is deeply concerned with not praying like a hypocrite. That's how Jesus introduces the prayer

there. “When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites” (Matt 6:5). What does that mean? It means they love to be seen when they pray. They love to have people hear how elegant they are, how flowery their speech is, how long they spent putting their prayer together. You’ve seen the type. When they pray it feels like a show rather than like someone talking to their God. The point here is that the prayer must involve your heart as well. But heart and mind are not an either/or. You must pray using both. Luke and Matthew’s teaching are both needed.

Thus, he also talks there about the “empty phrases” (7) of the Gentiles—mantras, mumblings, “Ommmmmmmm.” Now, Jesus never went to Tibet (we dealt with that in when we looked at his so-called “lost years”), so in his flesh he almost certainly would have never come into contact with a Tibetan monk. Nevertheless, I thought it would be interesting to type in “Buddhist mantras” to *Google* and see what came up. I found a page that gave seven mantras for you to “pray.” I decided to put them into *Google Translate* and see what happened. Now, *Google Translate* has come a long way in the last few years. I rarely have a problem. It detects and translates right away. Not here. Not a single one translated into anything other than the gibberish I pasted into it. The

point of a mantra, you see, is actually **to eliminate thought**, not enhance it. You say “ommmmmmm” because the sound vibrations work on *your body*, not *your mind*. You are god and talking to the universe is merely another way of talking to yourself. But Jesus is no Hindu Guru. So again, when you pray, you are to pray with your mind.

What we learn from these two introductions is that the Lord’s Prayer is **at the same time** a prayer for you to **model** your own prayers on and a **rote** prayer that you should be praying, not only by yourself (in your closet; **Matt 6:6**), but with others. If it is a model, that means understanding its parts is important in helping you model your own prayers and if it is a rote prayer, it means it is important for you to actually be praying it, especially with others.

Luke 11:2—The Address

What then are we to say? Luke begins very simply: “**Fa-ther.**” You address God as “Father.” Now, Matthew has “**Our Father in heaven**” (**Matt 6:9**). So Matthew very clearly uses the plural pronoun here. Luke does not, although it should be noted that some manuscripts also say, “**Our Father who is in heaven.**” The reason? Matthew’s prayer was the

one that became the liturgical prayer and so some monk must have thought a previous copiest accidentally left those words out. He was mistaken. Luke only wrote, “Father.” It could be either “My” Father or “Our Father.” It is open ended. Let’s consider the word.

First, most obviously, “Father” implies a [familial relationship](#) between you and God. If God is your Father, then you, by definition, are [his child](#). Jesus has just spoken about this twice, telling the disciples that they needed to receive him like a little child ([9:48](#)) and praising his Father that he has revealed himself to the seventy, his “[little children](#)” ([10:21](#)), even as Jesus himself has just been called “[beloved](#)” or “[chosen](#)” Son on the transfiguration ([9:35](#)).

But some people have [not had good fathers](#) or even a father at all that they remember. A great problem here, perhaps for each of us, is to [superimpose](#) our own fathers onto God, as if what it means for him to be our Father is exactly what it was with our earthly fathers. If you had a terrible Father, then if you do this to God, you will certainly not appreciate that God is a Father. You may even hate it. In this, you must not create God in your father’s image. Whether you had a good or bad father, a present or totally absent father, a father for 70 years or one for only a handful

of years, you must never superimpose your earthly father onto God the Father. For he is unique.

How so? **2 Corinthians 6:18** says, “I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord *Almighty*.” *Almighty* (*Pantokratora*; cf. **Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22**) is the word used in the Creeds to preface Father. Very often, the LXX translates this from *Sabaoth*, “**The LORD of Hosts.**” It is a title that gets at the heart of describing God as a Warrior, but also the Head, the Captain, the Ruler of all. If you don’t know him through faith, you could fixate on this as if it means God is out to get you. But if you trust in him, then he fights *for* you. That’s why “Father” *precedes* this title. The truth of the matter is that this is a glorious promise that the Lord Almighty, LORD of Hosts, Ruler of the Nations should tell those who have rejected the very knowledge of him that he will be their Father. Who can imagine what such a privilege really means?

It is interesting that **Muslims will not call God “father.”** They will only refer to him as Lord and Creator. In fact, the Quran castigates those who say, “**We are the children of God.**” It says, “**Why would God punish you if you are really**

his children?”⁸ Of course, Christians do not believe God “punishes” us, but that he *disciplines* us, two very different things. One is punitive. The other is corrective. One is rooted in pure law. The other in love. Says a lot about the kind of deity Allah is.

Contrast this now with Paul who tells the Athenian Gentiles that they know that they are in some sense God’s “offspring” (Acts 17:28). And to the Ephesians he says that there is “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:6). So God has in fact revealed himself as Father to all of Adam’s children. And yet, there is a *special sense* in which only Christians call God “Father.” Jesus did not teach *the crowds* to pray, “Our Father who art in heaven,” but his *disciples*. Paul says, “All who are led by the Spirit of God are *sons of God*” (Rom 8:14). He says, “In Christ Jesus you are all *sons of God, through faith*” (Gal 3:26). It takes *faith*, true belief and trust and delight, to be God’s son in the sense of this prayer. Thus, from the very first word, when you address God as Father, you are called to examine yourself to see whether or not you are in the faith.

Now then, if we have faith, it is because we were *adopted* into the family of God as sons (Gal 4:5). And the Apostle says

⁸ I didn’t look into the reference, but took it on faith based on an article at qaranspeaks.com.

by the Spirit we call God *Abba*, Father (**Rom 8:15**). *Abba* is the word used by Jesus here. For a long time, it has been popular to say that the word *abba* means “daddy.”⁹ Scholars who have done their homework on the many other times this word is used in second temple literature for God have noted that we never translate it as “daddy” there. So why here? It isn’t that the word wasn’t used by little children to mean that, but that, as Charlesworth says, “we should be cautious” in taking this meaning here.

And yet, I think Luther is right when he says, “The Hebrew word ‘Abba’ ... is the word which the tiny heir [inheritor] lisps in childlike confidence to its father, calling him ‘Ab, Ab’; for it is the easiest word the child can learn to speak: or, as the old German language has it, almost easier still, ‘Etha, Etha.’”¹⁰ Is it not remarkable that God makes the word for father so simple in every language? It is usually the first word that a child will learn. In **Spanish** it is the repetitious “papa.” Same in **Swedish** (*pappa*). In **French** it is “papa” or “peri.” In **Nepali** it is *bubā*. In **Chinese** it is *bàba*. Same in **Swahili**. **Italian** is the same as the **English**: *dada*, *daddy*. God

⁹ **Charlesworth** puts the modern source in German theologian Joachim Jeremias (1900-79). But see Luther below.

¹⁰ **Martin Luther**, *Luther’s Epistle Sermons: Trinity Sunday to Advent* vol. III, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis, MN: Luther Press, 1909), 176.

wants his people to see, by way of earthly analogy, that he is the first and easiest person to speak to. Indeed, very often in the NT especially, “God” is simply a synonym for the “Father.” To speak of God is to speak of the Father. *My Father; our Father.*

It is into this that Jesus will conclude the prayer with this teaching, “Ask ... seek ... knock ... What father among you, if his sons asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?” (Luke 10:9, 11-12). But we are getting ahead of ourselves. In summary, addressing God as Father “teaches us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father able and ready to help us; and that we should pray with and for others.”¹¹

Luke 11:2c—The First Petition: Hallowed be Your Name

As the prayer seems deliberately chiastic (more so in Matthew), there are two ways we can proceed. We can take each petition in order or we can look at the matching pair. It makes better sense to go in order, as this is the way the

¹¹ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, A. 100.

prayer unfolds, but I will point out the matches as we go along. In the case with the **Father** and **the first petition** that follows, it is contrasted with “**lead us not into temptation.**” In this way, the Father is contrasted with the **evil one** (see Matthew) and temptation is contrasted with the first petition: *hallowed be your name.*

The **first thing** to recognize is that **the petition is vertical**. That is, it is from man to God (upward). This is not a request for us (horizontal), but something we pray to God about God.

What does it mean to “**hallow**” something? “Hallow” comes from the old English *haligan* (Proto-Germanic *hailagon*; Old Norse *helga*), “**to make holy, sanctify; to honor as holy, consecrate, ordain.**” **God’s name is holy** and in saying this, we acknowledge that he is holy and set apart. This “otherness” of God is underscored in **Matthew 23:9** when Jesus says, “**Call no man on earth Father.**”¹² This is the idea of *solī Deo gloria*—To God Alone Be Glory.¹³

Thomas Manton brings up **Psalm 115:1** here (“*Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy Name give Glory, for thy*

¹² **Mark Kiley**, “The Lord’s Prayer and Matthean Theology,” *The Lord’s Prayer and other Prayer Texts from the Greco-Roman Era*, ed. James H. Charlesworth with Mark Harding and Mark Kiley (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1994),

¹³ Point brought out by **J. I. Packer**, *Praying the Lord’s Prayer* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 42.

Mercy, and for thy Truth's sake") and says, "It is not a Doxology, or Form of Thanksgiving, but a Prayer; not for our Safety and Welfare, so much as thy Glory: Not to reek and satisfy our Revenge upon our Adversaries, not for the Establishment of our Interest, but for the Glory of thy Grace and Truth, that God may be known to be a God keeping Covenant; for Mercy and Truth are the two Pillars of the Covenant." Then, citing Augustine he says, "It is a great dishonouring of God, when anything is sought from him, more than himself, or not for himself. It is but a carnal Affection in Prayer, when Men seek Self more than God. *Self and God* are the two things that come in competition."¹⁴

But there is more here than just hallowing God. It is hallowing God's "name." This has a **double meaning**. First, it teaches us about the person God has revealed himself to be. In this case, it is not strictly "God" as he exists in himself.¹⁵ Everyone already has a sense of this. Rather, it is Father. "Father" is his *name*.

And yet, as many have noticed, God has also revealed his Name primarily *through Jesus*. Manton said out, "God has

¹⁴ **Thomas Manton**, *A Practical Exposition of the Lord's-Prayer by ... Thomas Manton*, Early English Books Online (London: J.D. and are to be sold by Jonathan Robinson .., 1684), 131.

¹⁵ **Herman Witsius** and William Pringle, *Sacred Dissertations on the Lord's Prayer* (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1839), 185.

given him a Name which is above every Name, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father (Php 2:10).” Witsius points out John 17:6, “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.” Indeed, these ideas come from the OT.

In the OT, the Name is a person.¹⁶ Perhaps the easiest place to see this is, “Behold, *the Name* of the Lord comes from afar, burning with *his* anger, and in thick rising smoke; *his* lips are full of fury, and *his* tongue is like a devouring fire” (Isa 30:27). But there are many others. The Angel of the Lord has God’s “Name” in him (Ex 23:21). The Angel tells Samson’s parents that his “Name” is “Wonderful” (Jdg 13:18). But then Isaiah says of the coming Messiah, “His name shall be called Wonderful, Angel of the Great Council” (Isa 9:6 LXX). Indeed, when we hallow God’s name, we are acknowledging God’s Son Jesus, elevating him to the same prominence as his Father, for they are One. In summary, the first petition teaches us that “we pray that God

¹⁶ “God’s name has become virtually an independent entity, separate from God, i.e. a hypostasis.” H. B. Huffmon, “Name,” ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 611.

would enable us and others to glorify him in all that in he makes himself known; and that he would dispose all things to his own glory.”¹⁷

Luke 11:2d—The Second Petition: Your Kingdom Come

The second petition is, “Your kingdom come” (Luke 11:2). This is also a vertical request. However, rather than staying in heaven, we are asking for heaven to come down to earth. This is seen in Matthew’s version (and in some additions in Luke), “... on earth as it is in heaven.” This idea is ancient, and almost all holy places were built around the ancient world as emulations or mirror of the heavens. But far from having its roots in paganism or the occult,¹⁸ as some Christians seem to forget, it is taught by our Lord. But what is he teaching us exactly?

He is teaching us about the Father’s kingdom. *The Shorter Catechism* teaches we are praying, “That Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept

¹⁷ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, A. 101.

¹⁸ For example, the Emerald Tablets of Thoth begins, “Truth! Certainty! That in which there is no doubt! That which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above.” Eric J. Holmyard, “The Emerald Table,” *Nature* 122 (1923), 525-526.

in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.” The idea is that the Father is King and therefore he has a kingdom. His kingdom is in heaven and this is seen everywhere in the OT when God is sitting on his throne (e.g. Ps 9:7; 45:6; 47:8; Isa 6:1; 66:1; Lam 5:19; etc.). God rules with absolute power and sovereignty over his universe.

Now, I actually think the *Catholic Catechism* here is a little better than the Presbyterian, and this should not be upsetting as the Protestants never had a problem with Rome on a doctrine like this. It focuses in on the person through whom the kingdom comes. It says “The Kingdom of God lies ahead of us. It is brought near in the Word incarnate,” but it has been “coming since the Last Supper,” yet refers “primarily to the final coming of the reign of God through Christ’s return.”¹⁹ So as Sproul rightly says, “Jesus’ kingship is not something that remains in the future. Christ is King right this minute.”²⁰

Jesus ascended to the right hand of Power where he now rules over all the powers of heaven and earth. But even on the earth, Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of the is

¹⁹ CCC 4.3.2.2816, 2818.

²⁰ R. C. Sproul, *The Prayer of the Lord* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2009), 48.

world” (John 18:36). Indeed, at the beginning of his ministry, he was all about bringing the kingdom near to people through the Gospel. If they believed, then they would become citizens of that otherworldly kingdom which is intruding upon the kingdoms of men in space and time.

So, we are not merely praying for *the future* of a perfect kingdom on earth, but for *a present reality* of the kingdom to manifest itself here and now. This happens through Christ’s church, when she uses the keys, the means of grace, and church discipline, when she worships the God of the kingdom as the King has taught us, and even as we go out into the world bringing good news and changing lives.

Catholics and historic Protestants (Reformed and Lutheran) have traditionally been better in many ways *at going into the world* than Evangelicals who seem to want to escape the world or to create in the world Christian bubbles of culture. Why? Because they have taught that we are to discern according to the Spirit the growth of the Reign of God and the progress of the culture and society in which we are involved. But this is a distinction, not a separation. “*Man’s vocation to eternal life does not suppress, but actually reinforces his duty to put into action in this world the energies and means received from the Creator to serve justice and*

peace.”²¹ God did not call us out of the world, but to be lights in it, the means through which the world would come into Christ’s kingdom through faith. If only Rome would better adhere to its own creed. If only all of us would!

In this prayer, we are really asking God to involve us in the spreading of this great kingdom, a kingdom promised to Jesus in multiple OT prophecies; a promise that has been inaugurated today in his First Coming; a promise that will be consummated in the Second. Our involvement in this is confirmed in an old variant reading that traces its origins to the second century, which seems to have been a liturgical adaptation.²² It says not, “Your kingdom come,” but “Your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us.” Gregory said that what one evangelist called the kingdom, the other called the Holy Spirit.²³ Since the Holy Spirit comes upon Christians, this means that *we* are the kingdom and indeed Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you.” Therefore, are we not asking God to do something without us, but to conform our lives to his kingdom.

²¹ CCC, *ibid.*, 2820.

²² Joël Delobel, “The Lord’s Prayer in the Textual Tradition,” *The New Testament in Early Christianity*, ed. by Jean-Marie Sevrin (Louvain, 1989), 293–309.

²³ Bruce Manning Metzger, United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)* (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 130.

Luke 11:3—The Third Petition: Our Daily Bread

This takes us to [the third petition](#). Now, in Matthew, the third petition is, “[Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.](#)” In fact, this also appears in some manuscripts of Luke, but it is clearly not original. Luke originally did not have it. This petition is in some ways along the lines of what we just discussed. We are asking God’s will to be done on earth, that is in us, in his church, and through us, throughout the whole world. Perhaps because it is so similar, Jesus skips it in the prayer as he taught his disciples to pray in Luke.

Something strikes me here that I mentioned earlier. Unlike the much longer, more flowery prayers of the Jews, [Jesus’ prayer is short and to the point](#). He does not have us waste words, repeating the same thing ten different ways. For this prayer is to God and he knows full well what you said the first time. Nor is this prayer something we say to impress others with our knowledge. Rather, it is a basic prayer that hits our needs at the crucial point.

Nothing could be more appropriate to this than [Luke’s third petition](#), the central petition in Matthew and Luke, “[Give us each day our daily bread.](#)” Matthew’s is only

slightly different, “Give us *this* day...” In the one, we look to God day to day. In the other, we depend upon him this day, today. One has *right now* in mind. The other has *the progress of our lives*. This petition now moves us from a vertical dimension to a horizontal one, though as we will see, there is still a vertical dimension. Now we are asking God for things for us, here on earth. Jesus does not think asking for things for us is bad. He wants us to ask the Father for these things. But what things?

It has been rigorously debated over the centuries what “daily” means. Does it (*epiousion*) derive from (*epi* and *ousia*) “for existence,” and thus mean give us what is necessary for survival? Does it derive from *epi tēn ousan hēmeran*, thus simply “the current day.” Or does it derive from *epienai*, meaning “forthcoming,” thus the next meal (including tomorrow)? If so, does this last meaning have any-thing eschatological in mind?²⁴ Few think it means that Jesus is having us ask God for the absolute bare necessities, as this contradicts what will follow the prayer in Luke. The Shorter Catechism tells us that “we pray that of God’s free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and

²⁴ Byargeon, 360.

enjoy his blessing with them.”²⁵ The idea probably means a dependence upon God for each new time we will eat. It is a recognition that God is sovereign over our lives, but also that he provides exactly what we need.

The prayer here is not that God might make us fat and happy, gluttons, stuffed pigs. But that he would give us enough to help us recognize our dependence upon him. If we have plenty, then the prayer still stands and we must constantly be on the lookout if our hearts betray us, thinking that we, not God, give us our food. The fact that this is the central petition reinforces this teaching greatly.

Too many people fill their lives with worry, thinking that God will not provide for them, fretting here and there, constantly refusing to humble their pride that God is in fact in full control of their lives, even down to their basic meals. Too many others are filled with a different kind of pride, the pick-me-up-by-my-bootstraps American individualism that relies upon God in no way, shape, or form, believing they are the source of all daily bread. Still others turn the government into their god, as they refuse to work but also worry, as they live hand to mouth off welfare programs, making idols of the state. This petition is central because it removes

²⁵ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, A. 104.

all such thinking and corrects us to a proper view of God's sovereignty in our lives.

But I want you to notice what we have not seen in Luke (except the textual variants) up to this point. The pronoun here is “us,” not “me.” Give “us” our daily bread. If there is an “us,” then the prayer is corporate. And if it is corporate, then this has two implications. If you and I are praying this prayer together, and I have bread but you do not, then **I am obligated by this prayer, to help you**. This is the Law. Love your neighbor as yourself. This is what it means that the kingdom of God will come through us, through the Holy Spirit, through the church. In other words, God uses means. I have no right to sit there and pray this with you will a belly full of food while you go hungry and then turn to you and tell you how lacking your faith is because you are hungry and God didn't provide for you.

Second, as the church has seen from the beginning, **Jesus is our daily bread**. There he is yet again in this prayer. His *Name*. His *Kingdom*. His *Food*. He is **the Manna from heaven (John 6:51)**. Together, when we gather around the means of grace, the word preached and the word eaten in the Lord's Supper, we are consuming the Bread of Heaven—Christ

and all his benefits. Thus, this prayer necessitates that Christians are **living in corporate communion** in churches with each other. It is simply impossible to pray, “our” by yourself on a mountain. Obviously, we are talking “ordinarily” here, and there are always extenuating circumstances, either temporary or permanent, that can intervene. But deliberately refusing to be with God’s people is not one of them.

We might finally ask **if it is only talking about bread**. The answer is, of course no. Bread substitutes for **the necessities of life**, or as the catechism said, “**the competent portion**.” God knows all that you need and more. And he is your Father and he loves to bestow more than you ask or imagine.

Luke 11:4—The Fourth Petition: Forgive Us Our Sins

The **fourth petition** is also horizontal, and it is very important. In Luke, it is the only one that has the fuller portion that we find in Matthew. “**And forgive us our sins (*harmartia*), for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us**” (*ophelō*). The two halves are directly related. We ask God to **forgive us** of our sins **because** we have **forgiven others**.

The way this is put presupposes that you *have* forgiven others. In other words, you dare not ask God to forgive you of your sins when you harbor grudges and unforgiveness in your heart towards someone else.

This does not mean that God will forgive us only if we forgive others, for this would nullify salvation by grace. But **Jesus isn't talking about justification**. He is talking to disciples, not people who want to know how to be saved. Disciples know that God requires of them to forgive others; that is the law of love. And disciples know that if they stubbornly refuse to obey, even if they think they have a good reason (that person is a real jerk, they don't deserve forgiveness, etc.), that it is the height of hypocrisy for them to ask God to forgive them when they themselves are jerks and don't deserve God's forgiveness! Thus, the prayer here is for our sake. As we think through it, we understand with our mind that we are mandated to go to our brother first. In this way, we again bring heaven down to earth, the kingdom down to men. For God's kingdom is a forgiving kingdom to all who love Jesus and his Father. Thus, the shorter catechism teaches, **"We pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to**

ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.”²⁶

Perhaps you’ve heard the Lord’s Prayer sometimes says, “Forgive us our *sins*” and other times, “Forgive us our *debts*” and other times, “Forgive us our *trespasses*?” It is interesting that Luke uses “sins,” while Matthew uses “debts.” A debt is an obligation that you owe. A sin is a moral disobedience you have committed. But the two can be interchangeable and sometimes one can lead to the other. Thus, Luke’s gets to the heart of the matter, not the mere external.

Luke 11:4b—The Fifth Petition: Lead Us Not Into Temptation

The last petition is the concluding one, though Matthew has one more, which is related (“but deliver us from evil” or “The Evil One”²⁷). It is “And lead us not into temptation.” But doesn’t James, our Lord’s half-brother tells us, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one” (James 1:13)? How can we square these two? Speaking of the two petitions in Matthew, Calvin explains,

²⁶ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, A. 105.

²⁷ “Evil” being a substantival adjective.

Some people have split this petition into two. This is wrong: for the nature of the subject makes it manifest, that it is one and the same petition. The connection of the words also shows it: for the word *but*, which is placed between, connects the two clauses together, as Augustine judiciously explains. The sentence ought to be resolved thus, *That we may not be led into temptation, deliver us from evil*. The meaning is: “We are conscious of our own weakness, and desire to enjoy the protection of God, that we may remain impregnable against all the assaults of Satan.”²⁸

But of course, **Luke doesn't have the second petition**, so is it justifiable to do interpret it this way? Yes. First of all, the word “**temptation**” (n. *peirasmos*; vb. *peirazō*) is used in the LXX *for God*. For example, “**After these things God tested Abraham**” (**Gen 22:1**). Or, “**Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not**” (**Ex 16:4**). As you can hear, we translate these as “**test,**” not “**tempt.**”

²⁸ John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 327–328.

In English, word “test” is usually used of a trial, while “tempt” seems to have moral overtones. Clearly, James is using the word in the latter sense. *No one should say that God is being evil, maniacally causing us to sin.* In other words, people are ascribing evil motives to God (“God made me do it”). In Matthew, because it is followed by The Evil One, it is very clear that we are asking God to *preserve us* from evil and protect us from Satan, and hence, do not lead us into a temptation that might come from the world, the flesh, or the devil.²⁹ Stay with us and protect us.

But even without the last petition in Matthew, the context in Luke comes off the heels of our own sin, so it’s the same. Thus, this petition goes to the root of the sin problem, for our sins result from our consenting to temptation. We therefore ask our Father not to allow us to enter into temptation and not to let us yield to temptation. We pray that he would set us free from evil. We ask him not to allow us to take the way that leads to sin. This is our spiritual battle.³⁰ Origen taught, “There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from

²⁹ This is essentially Aquinas’ take. Paul Murray, *Praying with Confidence: Aquinas on the Lord’s Prayer* (London; New York: Continuum, 2010), 84-88.

³⁰ CCC. *Ibid.*, 2846.

him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us.”³¹ And, Augustine concludes, “When then we say, Lead us not into temptation, what we ask is, that we may not, deserted by His aid, either consent through the subtle snares, or yield to the forcible might, of any temptation.”³² The catechism agrees. “We pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.”³³

Luke 11:5-13—The Follow Up

Obviously, there is much more that could be said, but this is enough to give us the sense and help us learn to think about what we are saying and to say it with the heart. But I also want to look now, briefly, at [how Jesus finishes his teaching on prayer](#) in Luke. I’ll preface it with the words of Herman Witsius, one of first Reformers to help us think

³¹ Origen, *De Orat.* 29.

³² Augustine, Epist. 130, 11. Cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected out of the Works of the Fathers: St. Matthew*, ed. John Henry Newman, vol. 1 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841), 234.

³³ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, A. 106.

covenantally about the Bible. In his book on the Prayer he says, “It is a very extraordinary and almost incredible familiarity of intercourse which a man is permitted to maintain with God in holy prayer. That a base wretch,—a sinner under sentence of condemnation, a worm that deserves to be trampled under foot,—should be admitted to intercourse with the Divine Being, whose majesty the brightest inhabitants of heaven approach with lively praise, and yet with the lowliest adoration, is certainly a high privilege.”³⁴

His words ring true, and yet maybe for some of us, they ring so true that we tend to think *only* of our sin and not of our God, thus ironically not coming to him in prayer as we should out of fear or terror. In his conclusion to the prayer, Jesus gives us a teaching that centers on asking, seeking, and knocking. But on either side of it, he helps us to think more biblically about our Father, for he knows our weakness.

He said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you

³⁴ Witsius, 185.

anything’?” (Luke 11:5-7). Imagine your best friend, hearing a sudden and unexpected knock on the door in the middle of the night only to peep out the hole, see it was you, and then refuse to open the door even though you tell him you need his help because of your negligence. It probably would never happen.

But Jesus wants you to imagine that it did happen. Nevertheless, “I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs” (8). In other words, your friend is angry that you woke him, but because of your own impertinence and boldness to knock on his door, he will give you food, just to make you go home.

This is the front side of Jesus saying, “And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened” (9-10).

But maybe you are still only thinking of God through this parable, as a friend who gets mad when you ask him for things. Thus, the backside of the teaching. “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a

scorpion?” (11-12). First of all, Jesus now tells you that this “friend” is your “father.” Yet, those words are all the more powerful when you understand that serpents and scorpions were used just a few verses earlier to refer to demons! God isn’t going to give you demons if you ask him for what you need. He is going to protect you from them. He concludes, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (13). In other words, **God isn’t evil**. He is good. He isn’t answering you because you are rude, but because you are his child. If evil people will still answer prayers and give good things, how much more your Father in heaven, who loves you as a Father?

Having heard these things, may you thus **learn the Lord’s Prayer** and say it together, **with your hearts and with your minds**. May you learn to **model** your own prayers on what it teaches. And may you **boldly** go before the throne of grace, knowing that your heavenly Father loves you, his child, and that his Son—to whom be all glory—mediates for you day and night before the throne of heaven.

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