

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

While I was doing my Clinical Pastoral Education at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, PA, I visited with a lot of patients who were dying with cancer. Day in and day out, I would spend most of my time on the oncology floor after group sessions visiting with patients and their families. There were times when we talked, times when we read scripture, and times when we prayed. Many of the older patients that were admitted and facing death liked to pray the Lord's Prayer. I'll never forget one of these patients. She was dying from some type of aggressive Leukemia. She was tiny and could not wear an adult oxygen mask. When I first met her she joked about the dinosaur oxygen mask that the nurses had gotten her from pediatrics. During her two weeks in the hospital before she died, we would pray together. She always asked me to say a prayer for her and we ended with the Lord's Prayer. One day she made the comment to me that if I came to see her and she could no longer recognize who I was to please sit with her and pray the Lord's Prayer. She shared that the Lord's Prayer told God everything that she wanted him to know. And so, as the Leukemia advanced I would go and say the Lord's Prayer with her until she died.

Every time I say the Lord's prayer or when it is read in worship like this morning, I'm reminded of this woman. I'm reminded of her words that the Lord's Prayer told God everything she wanted him to know. Each prayer petition of the prayer had significant meaning behind it. Our confirmation youth learn what each petition means in their confirmation journey. I think it's good to have a refresher every once and a while of what we are praying when we say the words of the Lord's Prayer Sunday after Sunday and in our homes and other places.

Martin Luther wrote the Small Catechism to help the church understand a variety of things. One piece in the small catechism is about the Lord's Prayer. Luther's explanation to the prayer is set up in a question answer format. He begins first with a segment of the prayer and follows it up with the question - what is this, followed by the answer.

When we pray the Lord's Prayer we pray:

Our Father in heaven.

What is this? With these words God wants to attract us, so that we believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father.

Hallowed be your name.

What is this? It is true that God's name is holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that it may also become holy in and among us.

Your kingdom come.

What is this? In fact, God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us.

Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

What is this? In fact, God's good and gracious will comes about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us.

Give us today our daily bread.

What is this? In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

What is this? We ask in this prayer that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins or deny these petitions on their account, for we are worthy of nothing for which we ask, nor have we earned it. Instead we ask that God indeed earn only punishment. So, on the other hand, we, too, truly want to forgive heartily and do good gladly to those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial.

What is this? It is true that God tempts no one, but we ask in this prayer that God would preserve and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and gain the victory.

And deliver us from evil.

What is this? We ask in this prayer, as in a summary, that our Father in heaven may deliver us from all kinds of evil – affecting body or soul, property or reputation – and at last, when our final hour comes, may grant us a blessed end and take us by grace from this valley of tears to himself in heaven.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

What is this? That I should be certain that such petitions are acceptable to and heard by our Father in heaven, for God himself commanded us to pray like this and has promised to hear us. "Amen, amen" means "yes, yes, it is going to come about just like this."

In a prayer that we may know by heart, we are praying many things. We pray to God as a parent, asking for help and guidance. We pray that God is holy and all powerful, and we

ask God to provide for our needs, to help us forgive others, and to do his work in the world. We also pray in the Lord's Prayer for help when are tempted to do something wrong, and to bring us at last to God in heaven.

The Lord's Prayer is a beautiful prayer that helps us tell God what is in our hearts. In times when we don't know what words to pray, remember this prayer. As one patient shared with me during CPE, it's everything that she felt she wanted God to know.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.