**The Lord’s Prayer**

**5th Petition**

***Forgive Us Our Trespasses***

***As We forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us***

*Mid-week Lent 5 – 03/29/2023*

*For our Lenten mid-week meditations we will be using the Lord’s Prayer, specifically as it is divided by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther in the Small Catechism. Today we will consider as our text, “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread.”*

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

Please open your hymnal to pg. 324 and find in the right-hand column, the 5th Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. Let us read it together: **The Fifth Petition**
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.

On more than one occasion, one of my catechumen’s has said something like, “Is trespassing such a big deal? My neighbors walk on our yard all the time, my parents don’t mind.” Of course, here in Wisconsin, trespassing is a huge deal…

…when it comes time for deer hunting.

Maybe we need to understand the Ten Commandments in light of the term, “trespassing.” As such, we could say there are ten places we are forbidden to go.

When you trust in someone or something other than God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – you are treading where you ought not.

When God’s name passes our lips in any manner other than in prayer, praise, thanksgiving, or to lead others to His holy name, we are trampling on holy ground.

When our week fails to begin in God’s house to receive the gifts of our Father through Christ in Word and Sacrament, we are on foreign soil.

When we fail to treat those in authority over us, with the respect and honor due to them, we are outside our home turf.

Where God has told us we are not to go, doing things we are not to do, we are trespassing. They are sins against God committed when we walk where we ought not to walk.

It is also trespassing when we do not walk where we are supposed to walk. Remember how Jesus declares that those who have not cared for their neighbors will be cast into torment? “Truly I say to you , as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” (Mt. 25:45)

Maybe you remember the days of your catechetical instruction? You were taught about sins of commission – sins you do against God or your neighbor; and sins of omission – failures to do what God has said you should be doing in love for Him and to the support of your neighbor.

Why does these things happen in you? It happens because you are a sinner, and you fail to keep your sinfulness in check. You allow your sinful flesh to override God’s will for your life.

Luther, in his discussion of the 5th Petition in his Large Catechism explains this well.

 *This part now relates to our poor miserable life, which, although we have and believe the Word of God, and do and submit to His will, and are supported by His gifts and blessings, is nevertheless not without sin. For we still stumble daily and transgress because we live in the world among men who do us much harm and give us cause for impatience, anger, revenge, etc. Besides, we have Satan at our back, who sets upon us on every side, and fights (as we have heard) against all the foregoing petitions, so that it is not possible always to stand firm in such a persistent conflict.*

*Therefore there is here again great need to call upon God and to pray: Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses. Not as though He did not forgive sin without and even before our prayer (for He has given us the Gospel, in which is pure forgiveness before we prayed or ever thought about it). But this is to the intent that we may recognize and accept such forgiveness.*

*For since the flesh in which we daily live is of such a nature that it neither trusts nor believes God, and is ever active in evil lusts and devices, so that we sin daily in word and deed, by commission and omission, by which the conscience is thrown into unrest, so that it is afraid of the wrath and displeasure of God, and thus loses the comfort and confidence derived from the Gospel; therefore it is ceaselessly necessary that we run hither and obtain consolation to comfort the conscience again.*

This petition however does not simply end with asking God to forgive us. Jesus continues it, “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Ouch! That really puts a different spin on things. To be sure, we know our need for forgiveness. Hopefully our forgiveness doesn’t hinge upon our willingness to forgive other. Let’s face it, do we truly want to forgive ***ALL*** those who trespass against us?

This is the petition which Jesus deals with immediately following His giving us of prayer. After the prayer He says, *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Mt. 6:14-15)*

If you cannot forgive, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you. That is all that truly needs to be said! But… Yeah, that’s a tough teaching. This does not sit well in the craw.

Jesus addresses it in another place besides His giving of the Lord’s prayer. It is important in our Gospel lesson. You might say that in it, we are given the reason why this is true. Let me see if I can explain what’s in the Gospel in even more simple terms.

Every sin you commit is a sin against God. Some of your sins are against God almost exclusively, some appear to be against your neighbor alone. But even your sins against your neighbor are sins against God, as God gave you His commandments, whichever one you break is direct disobedience to God and His will. So, the number of your sins against God is in the millions, if not higher – just like mine.

In the meantime how many sins has your neighbor committed against you? Your spouse or children have committed more against you than anybody else in your life. In turn, you have sinned more against them than against than say, John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt. Just as they have sinned more against you. You just don’t interact with John Jacob that often. But even then, the number of your sins against those whom you sin most regularly – or they against you – does not come near to the number of sins you have against God.

Has God withheld forgiveness from you? Have there been certain sins of yours about which He said, “Well that sin is so vile I cannot forgive it.” Or… “Well, I’m not ready to forgive that one yet.” God has never done anything like that, even though your sinfulness against Him is as great as Mount Everest.

Christ was sent by the Father into the world to tread only in the way of peace. He never strayed from the path set before Him, never trespassing upon the will of the Father or the good of His neighbor. He was baptized into your sin, He carried the guilt and shame of your trespasses in His own flesh to the cross. And there, He suffered the consequences of your trespasses unto death by crucifixion. He paid the debt you owe, and you are freely forgiven.

He died upon the cross to pay the debt owed for every sin, of every person – every sin against God, and every sin against every neighbor.

The question then is this…If Christ has already paid the price for every sin, if He has covered the cost of every trespass, how can you declare that there is a debt owed to you? If it is already forgiven, how can you declare it is not? Who are you to refuse forgiveness when the greater trespass was against God?

God your heavenly Father saw and accepted the sacrifice of His Son! He heard the declaration – “Τετέλεσται” – It is finished! All is accomplished! I have paid the debt owed in full, nothing remains.

What remains for you to hold against another? Trespassing has broken relationships.

Forgiveness is the only way to restore and re-establish broken relationships. So, we ask God to forgive us, for we know of our sinful unwillingness to forgive others. There’s is only one way that we can forgive, and that is to live in the forgiveness we have been given from God. Only our certain knowledge of God’s gracious forgiveness, and the incredible cost of that forgiveness by the very work of Christ accomplished on the cross can lift us above the trifling pettiness of unwillingness to forgive which would keep us separated us from our neighbors.

Only by the forgiveness of God, filling and dwelling in our heart, can we forgive others.

We have an incredible need to pray, “Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses – our debts – our sins.” That must be our prayer! Not because God does not forgive without and even before our prayer, but that we might come to know more deeply and trust more fully, His forgiveness.

You and I need to recognize, fervently cling to, and live in the forgiveness purchased with the precious and holy blood of Jesus Christ. The flesh in which you and I live daily is of such a nature that it does not trust completely nor believe God fully – sinfulness corrupts it so.

Jesus directs you to pray to the Father for forgiveness.

He is the One who Himself paid for it.

He comes to you to grant it and deliver it.

Hear Him deliver it to you from the lips of His servants.

He invites you to eat and drink of that forgiveness He purchased with His own flesh and blood.

And so, He directs you to pray to the Father for forgiveness.

You are to pray with the absolute confidence of knowing Christ comes to you and grants you forgiveness. This confidence comes from the assurance you have that your Savior, Christ Jesus, took upon Himself your sins – and purchased your forgiveness.

You are to come before your Father with a heart that know it has been made right with Him – and that now, right with God in Christ Jesus – you are able to make things right with others as well. You will forgive, as your heavenly Father, in Christ Jesus, forgives you.

Lord God, heavenly Father, grant this unto us all. In the name of Jesus. Amen.