

Large Catechism Lesson 20
Part 3: Lord's Prayer | Introduction

Opening Discussion: The Introduction | 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.

¶ 1-34

How does the Catechism view prayer?

Lutherans are criticized for not having a developed theology of prayer.

Often, prayer is seen as anthropocentric. (i.e. St. Louis Arch prayers)

Rather, the Catechism shows that prayer begins with God's Word to us; then we respond to God

Prayer is commanded by God. It is not optional for the Christian.

- Prayer is not about my performance.

- The promise of prayer emphasizes the nature of God's Lordship and his graciousness

 - For those who feel unworthy to pray or pray by off-chance

 - Not treating prayer like lottery dice

To pray is to ask.

- Prayer is not prayer if you have not asked for something.

- 7 petitions of asking

- Reflect our position before the Creator – of the sinner before the Judge

- Shows dependence and faith – a means of faith instead of a means of grace.¹

- “God invites us to believe so that we may ask! Prayer as petition highlights the receptive character of faith itself.”²

Above all else we pray for faith and against unbelief

“Therefore, nothing is more necessary than that we should continually turn towards God's ear, call upon Him, and pray to Him. We must pray that He would give, preserve, and increase faith in us and the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments” [III. 2].

“We must know that God will not have our prayer treated as a joke. But He will be angry and punish all who do not pray, just as surely as He punishes all other disobedience. Furthermore, He will not allow our prayers to be in vain or lost” [III. 18].

Closing Discussion: The Structure of the Lord's Prayer

Thy Petitions (1-3)

Our Petitions (4-7)

- In the meantime, before our final deliverance, here is what we need.

“Prayer becomes most decidedly the struggle of faith itself in the ongoing life of the Christian...Prayer is rooted in this situation of now and the not yet polarity.”³

“Therefore, there is no nobler prayer to be found upon earth than the Lord's Prayer” [III. 23].

1 Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 164.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid, 164-5.