SERMON TAKE-HOME NOTES — July 27, 2025

A Small Catechism on the Lord's Prayer

The Serenity Prayer is identified with what modern organization?

Apparently, something like this was a thing in the First Century. Disciples of Jewish rabbis were identified by prayers taught to them by their rabbis. In today's Gospel, Jesus's disciples ask him to teach them such a prayer. That prayer, the Lord's Prayer, has marked disciples of Jesus for two thousand years now!

Let's try for a fresh reading this morning, beginning with my translation of Luke's trimmed-down version from the one we know:

Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our promised (victory) bread.
And forgive us our sins, as we ourselves also forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not lead us into testing.

We were taught Luther's Small Catechism on the Lord's Prayer. Let's try today for something fresher than 500 years ago, petition by petition.

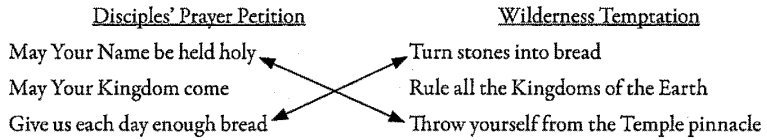
"**Your kingdom come**." This is the heart of the prayer and the center of revitalizing the Gospel for our time. The Gospel is not about going to heaven when we die. It's about the opposite, learning to pray for God's heavenly reign to come into our world. Yes, if we die before God's reign fully comes, then we dwell with God in heaven until that time. But the ultimate hope is that we get resurrection bodies at that time so that we can fully enjoy God's New Creation. The launching of God's reign began in earnest on Easter, so Jesus teaches us to live and pray into the coming of that reign. Everything is about New Creation. Everything is about praying and living, "You kingdom come."

"**Give us each day our promised (victory) bread**." Lost in translation for 2000 years has been the word we usually translate as "daily." The Greek word is *epiousias*. And the extraordinary thing about it is that, not only is this word used in the Bible only for the Lord's Prayer, but we've never found it used anywhere in all of the Greek speaking world! The early Christians seem to have made-up this word to capture something special that Jesus was saying in his native tongue of Aramaic — something more than "daily." Given that the heart of this prayer is the coming of God's reign, I suggest it is about a bread that linked to the promised victory celebration of God's reign. We eat this bread at Holy Communion, which is why we've added to our liturgy songs like, "This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia!" We need this 'bread' each day to live into the coming of God's reign.

"**And forgive us our sins, as we ourselves also forgive everyone indebted to us**." Recall in Luke's Gospel that Jesus begins his ministry in his hometown synagogue reading from Isaiah 61 and proclaiming that it is being fulfilled. Isaiah 61 is the Jubilee Year, the year of God's reign being fulfilled. It is marked by all human beings set on an equal footing: The blind can see. The lame can walk. The prisoners are set free. And all our debts are released — most especially those debts we hold against each other, which cause so much division. No, in the Jubilee Year, the time of New Creation, one thing will be most evident: we are all created equal. We are all created with an equal potential to find our lives flourishing. We are brothers and sisters in God's family of humankind and the rest of creation. Which is why:

We address God in this prayer: "**Father, hallowed be your name**." The coming of God's reign is marked by us learning to see all human beings, and the rest of creation, as brothers and sisters, as family.

"**Do not lead us into testing**." Luke shows us how Jesus was tested in the wilderness by Satan (4:1-11). That testing matches with the Lord's Prayer:



Even if and when we are tested, Jesus has shown us how to defeat it.