

Maundy Thursday – Deliver us from evil (the evil one)
March 24, 2016
2 Timothy 4:18
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Dearly loved by God in Christ,

We have learned once more to pray for much with the Lord's Prayer. The final two petitions may be tied together, one stated in the negative "lead us not" and one in the positive, "deliver us." The Seventh Petition also may stand alone. In Greek it is, "Deliver us from the evil one." We pray this petition in order to direct the total weight of our collective petitions against the devil as the sum of all evil. Even as we pray, our archenemy raises barriers against all our petitions. Luther put it this way in the Large Catechism, "**Dear Father, help us get rid of all this trouble entirely.**"

How fitting we look at the final petition on Maundy Thursday in connection with our Savior's institution of his holy supper. Holy Communion is a major weapon in our arsenal of weapons against Satan. Because of Christ's body and blood offered on the cross and given to us under bread and wine, we fully expect our Father to deliver us from the evil one.

The apostle Paul had this trust that God would deliver him from evil. He was in a jail cell in Rome when he wrote his final epistle toward the end of his earthly career. He addressed it to Timothy in Ephesus. "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Paul stated his trust in the veracity of the Seventh Petition. We ask our Father to rescue or deliver us from the evil one and all the evil he creates, and to finally deliver us from this evil completely by taking us to heaven when we die.

A good definition of evil is everything God knows and judges to be not good and not spiritually healthy for us. Evil is all God knows is dangerous and deadly. Satan is the creator of all of those things. This fallen angel and the others seek to destroy our saving faith in Jesus Christ like a roaring lion seeks to devour its prey. Father, rescue us from them. Do not let us fall into their snares and traps and temptations to sin. Keep us from every sin.

There are many evils in this world we do not even perceive or recognize as evil. We are uncertain if they will benefit us or not. This petition asks God who knows to deliver us from those things. If something would be harmful to us, rescue us from it. And if God allows some messenger of Satan to inflict us like he did the apostle, this deliverance would come in the form of patience, consolation, and hope under it. Paul expressed that. "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest in me." [2 Corinthians 12:9]

The seventh petition finds its final and perfect fulfillment when I die. Paul knew that before a Roman soldier put the sword to his neck. I remember my supervising pastor when I was a vicar telling me this in a discussion we had about the seventh petition. It is a prayer for a peaceful death. It is a prayer for God's powerful and protecting hand to lead me through the uncertainties of death into its certainty, an eternity with Christ in heaven. Deliverance from the evil one is true as much in death as it is true in life. Luther again in the Large Catechism, "**For if God did not support us, we would not be safe from this foe for a single hour.**"

Such confidence does not come of us. Our confidence in all the petitions to which we add a song of praise, "For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever," comes from our Lord's Passion, the gospel. We add our "Amen," this is most certainly true, to all the petitions by the power of the gospel. We receive in the Lord's Supper that gospel that creates and strengthens faith.

Recall that “Maundy” refers to Jesus’ command, “Love one another.” Their love for one another would flow from his love for them; his total self-sacrifice on the cross. Our Savior then gave the church his body and blood he offered in that sacrifice as a memorial meal. We do not merely remember his body and blood by taking bread and wine. We do not earn forgiveness by eating and drinking flesh and blood no longer bread and wine. In the real presence of Christ’s true body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine, God gives us the forgiveness of our sins. And where there is the forgiveness of sins there is new spiritual life, and eternal salvation in heaven.

Holy Communion, Holy Baptism and the Word standing alone are the means through which God imputes to us his grace in Jesus Christ. That grace of God in Christ we experience in our Lord’s Passion underscores how intensely God desires that we have the confident certainty of prayer like the Lord’s Prayer.

How dare I have the audacity to boast that God heard my prayer though I am a poor sinner? My audacity is in Christ through whose poverty I have become rich. Prayer is not a gamble with those riches but an act of faith that all of God’s promises are yes in Christ.

It is my prayer that our look at the Lord’s Passion and its connection to the Lord’s Prayer will prevent you from mumbling these words coldly, and enable you earnestly to request all things from the heart in humble devotion. Amen. <SDG>