I Believe… The Lord's Prayer (Part 1)

Over the last eight weeks we have shared reflections on Christian faith as it comes to expression in the Apostles' Creed. This week we turn our attention to Christian hope as it comes to expression in the Lord's Prayer. This not only follows the traditional pattern of catechetical instruction, but also flows from the final words of the creed. The first and second article of the creed have a predominantly backward-looking orientation, as they narrate the mighty acts of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. The third article of the Creed, however, is consumed with the forward-looking works of the Spirit: the life of the church and the life of the world to come -- ecclesiology and eschatology. At the center of the life of the church is the practice of prayer. And the focus of prayer is the future: asking God to act for his ends and for our good. Prayer is hope in practice. So ecclesiology and eschatology pave the way for reflection on prayer.

Prayer is human words addressed to God. There are many kinds of prayer, each of which can take a multitude of forms. The two most basic types of prayer are praise and petition. There are other important types, such as confession, contemplation and lament. But these are two are the most basic. As we say in Sunday School, "Does anyone have any praises or prayer requests?"

The creed is proclamation: human words about God addressed to other humans. But the creed is also praise: human words addressed to God in gratitude for who he is and what he has done. **Praise is saying "Thanks" to God**. The creed is such a word of thanks and praise. It is a doxology to God. Thus we have been exploring prayer-as-praise all along.

Now we are turning to prayer-as-petition: making requests to God. **Petition is saying "Please" to God**. The shift from praise to petition brings with it a certain openness, a loosening of restraints. That is not to say the creed is oppressive, for it points to the source of true freedom. But the creed is concerned with ortho-doxy: right praise. We try our best to line up our words of praise to God with the story of God. Such "lining up" is a sign of faithfulness. Accordingly, praise is consumed with its object: God.

When we turn to petition, however, the door is flung wide open for our own subjective needs and desires. Petitionary prayer is open and free. It is far less concerned with rightness and faithfulness. It is far more concerned with honesty and forthrightness. In petitionary prayer, we express to God our hopes and dreams.

However, this does not mean we don't need guidance. For hope too is consumed with its object, though in a different way than faith. Genuine hope in God includes not only the desire for God to meet our needs but also the desire for God to achieve his own ends. By placing our hopes in God we make God our hope, thereby opening ourselves up to his hopes for us. How can we ensure that our petitionary prayer opens us up to God? There are no guarantees, but there is guidance. The Bible not only tells us the story of God, but also tells us how to pray. The Bible is full of stories, poems and teachings related to petitionary prayer. Although we can and should draw on all these, there is no better place to start our search for guidance than with Jesus' teaching on petitionary prayer. The central character in the story of God with us took the time to teach us how to pray. What better place to start than with the Lord's Prayer?

In the Lord's Prayer, we find Jesus' most concise yet comprehensive instructions on prayer. It is therefore worthy of our sustained attention, both to help us understand better what we mean when we recite it and to draw on its guidance as we craft our own words of prayer. The Lord's Prayer appears in both Matthew 6 and Luke 11. In our reflections, we will follow the traditional

liturgical form that synthesizes the phrasing of each, though we will attend to matters of difference as needed. The traditional form is structured as follows: an invocation, six petitions, and a doxology. The six petitions can be easily divided into two halves: the first three concerning God ("your"), the second three concerning us ("our"). We will reflect on the invocation and the first three petitions this week, leaving the remaining petitions and the doxology for next week.

Our Father, who art in Heaven

Jesus teaches his disciples to address God as Father. We have already discussed the fatherhood of God HYPERLINK, both as an analogy for describing God's character and an identification of the first person of the trinity. Although by the end of the creed we had learned to address our praise to the Father and the Son together with the Holy Spirit, in the Lord's Prayer we are taught to address the Father. This fact ought not be dismissed as sub-trinitarian. For, although we may prayerfully address each and all of the persons of the trinity, we address God primarily as Father. Why? Because the Father is the source of divinity, the one *from whom* the Son generates and Spirit proceeds, and thus the one *from whom* we ask for all that we need. Because the incarnate Son is the risen Lord Jesus who as a human being addresses his Father in prayer and invites us to join our voices with his. Because the Spirit is the love who eternally unites Father and Son in their giving and requesting and so in him we are freed to make our requests to God. So, in addressing God as Father, we are caught up in the fellowship of the Triune God. In the Lord's Prayer, we address the God who is in heaven.

Hallowed be Your Name

The Lord's Prayer begins its petitions with the holiness of God. Because we address the true God, the God who is in heaven, we are humbled by his holiness: his otherness, his superiority over us and his difference from us. We are like Isaiah before the throne of the Holy One of Israel. We must be cleansed of our unclean lips so that we may hear and perhaps join the angels as they cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy." But the Lord's Prayer does not merely ask us to praise God for his holiness. It also calls us to petition the Lord to hallow his name, to keep and make his name holy. We are asking God to sanctify: to set apart himself as the creator and to set apart his creatures to worship him and him alone as creator. We are asking, "God, please keep being holy and ensure that your world treats you as holy."

Specifically, we are asking God to sanctify his *name*: the divine name revealed to Moses through the burning bush, the name that the Israelites were commanded not to take in vain, the name that took up residence in the Temple at Jerusalem, the name that God sought to protect through his prophets. God's name is his very own self as he relates to his people. It is God's mode of introduction, by which initiates a relationship with his people, through whom he spreads his reputation to the ends of the earth. So the first petition is not concerned with God's holiness as an abstract attribute, but rather with God's holiness as he enters into relations with his less-than-holy creatures. When we pray "Hallowed by your name," we are asking, "God, please protect your reputation." In so praying, we adopt God's own zeal for his name as our own driving passion. Negatively, that means we submit ourselves to discipline for the ways in which we have undermined his reputation. Positively, that means we begin share God's desire for the world: that it would know and hallow his name.

Your Kingdom Come

The second petition moves from God's name to God's kingdom. We ask, "Your kingdom come."

Since it hits on some crucial themes, let's linger here a bit and ask three questions corresponding to the three terms in this petition.

First, *whose* kingdom are we asking to come? It's God's kingdom! Not the world's kingdom. Not our kingdom. Not some truncated divine kingdom of our imagination. Your kingdom come. It is because of our continuing desire to seek our own kingdoms that we must be taught by Jesus how to pray for *God's* kingdom. As you ask God for his kingdom to come, ask yourself: "In what ways do I try to seek my own kingdom? In what ways do I co-opt God's kingdom for my own purposes?" These are good diagnostic questions, both to root out distractions and to keep in mind that it God's kingdom, not ours or anyone else's, that we seek.

Secondly, *what* kind of kingdom are we asking to come? What is the kingdom? The text does not give us much here. We could treat the next line as parallel and thus an indicator of the meaning: God's kingdom is wherever God's will is done. Although not false, such a move too quickly conflates the petitions together, and doesn't yield all too much anyway. Thankfully, the kingdom of God is a big theme in the New Testament, so we are not left to our devices. It is the content of Jesus' preaching, his parables express what it is like, it is present in his person and work, and it is the driving expectation of his apostles and evangelists. We have already addressed the kingdom initially within the context of the eschatological portions of the creed. Here we need only to think through its significance for the life of prayer.

As we survey the Biblical material on the kingdom, certain themes emerge which ought to shape our prayer. Specifically, the kingdom consistently means God vindicating his people and taking the side of the oppressed. God's kingdom turns everything up-side-down. Yet even this consistent vindication of the underdogs of history is consistently full of surprises. How God's justice is achieved and the form it will take is hard to predict and impossible to control. The implication for praying the second petition is that we should consistently cry out to God on behalf of the needy of this world. That means making ourselves aware of who the underdogs are, and taking their side in prayer and therefore also in society. Yet at the same time we must remain open to the surprising means by which God might answer our prayer.

Lastly, we must ask *when* does the kingdom come? On the one hand, the idea of God's kingdom is spatial. It is the domain or reach of God's reign, where a fallen world operates in conformity with God's character and purpose. On the other hand, the idea of God's kingdom is temporal: it is something future, something which is to come. Thy kingdom come. We wait for it. We look for it. We anticipate it. It comes like a thief in the night, an unannounced apocalyptic event. Yet the timing of the kingdom is not only future. It is also spoken of as a present reality. The kingdom of God is among you. It is advancing. It is here. So the kingdom is both already here and not yet here.

We have already addressed this temporal tension before in relation to eschatology. All we need to do here is think through this already-but-not-yet dynamic of the kingdom from the perspective of prayer. On the one hand, we must not dismiss the kingdom as if it were a distant future reality that has no relevance for today. The kingdom is not just some big divine intervention that we should "leave to God" while we do our own thing now. If so, then we would not be instructed by Jesus to pray for it. We should be passionately looking for signs of the kingdom and waiting on the in-breaking the kingdom. In other words, we should earnestly pray that God's kingdom would come.

On the other hand, we must not try to control the kingdom as if it were already completely here

in some manageable form. The kingdom is not the church, the world, the state, the family or another other member of creation as is. The kingdom is new creation, something beyond and above our creaturely control. So we must pray for it. We should be zealously looking through the present signs of the kingdom for the radical transformation to which they point. In other words, we should earnestly pray that God's kingdom would come.

Your Will Be Done

In the third petition, we pray for God's will. Now this is a place where we need guidance even more than with the previous petitions. Just as with God's kingdom, we are told by Jesus to prayer for *God's* will. Many of us may not struggle with the pretension of making God's kingdom into ours, but certainly all of us struggle with the temptation to bend God's will in service of our own.

But here a difficulty immediately emerges: Are we not also to petition God for our will? Are we not to make our needs and desires known to God? Does not God care about our will too?

In order to address this theological problem head on, let's employ a different interpretive strategy. With the second petition, we follow our common method of meditating on each word in order unpack its significance. With the third petition, let's use a comparative method: bringing in some related texts to see how they bear on the topic. Let's take two texts from the Gospels, each of which point in seemingly opposite directions:

In the all three synoptic gospels, Jesus prays in the garden before his arrest: "Not my will, but yours be done" (Mt 26:39; Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42). In the Gospel of John, Jesus instructions he disciples in his farewell discourse: "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it" and "the Father will give it to you" (John 14:14; 16:23). Here we have set alongside each other two trajectories, both of which appear near the climax of Jesus' mission. On the one hand, we have the resignation of human will to God's will, based on a contrast between divine and human willing. On the other hand, we have the response of God's will to human will, based on a promise of the divine willing to satisfy human willing. How might we reconcile these two trajectories that flow out of the simple prayer for God's will to be done?

Now both of these aspects must be retained within Christian prayer for God's will. On the one hand, the resignation trajectory rightly identifies the element of struggle in prayer. There is a distinct tradition in Scripture of wrestling with God. In fact, this is where the lament and complaint find their place in Christian prayer. Genuine prayer is a struggle. On the other hand, the response trajectory rightly points to the element of blessing in prayer. God really does love us and wishes to shower us with blessings. There is a distinct tradition in Scripture of God giving unmerited rewards to those who ask, seek and knock. Both struggle and blessing are a part of Christian prayer, and to ignore either is a mistake.

However, either trajectory followed exclusively and to the extreme results in a distortion of prayer. The resignation trajectory places God and humanity in a false conflict, portraying God as a capricious God who would never want to give his children what they want. The response trajectory places God at the service of humanity, portraying God as a great Santa Clause in the sky to whom we send our wish-list prayers. Both fail as an exclusive picture of prayer to the extent that both conceive of divine and human willing in competitive terms. Either God or humanity get there way.

The clue to how these trajectories come together in the third petition of the Lord's Prayer is the rhythmic little phrase Jesus adds: "on earth as it is in heaven." How is God's will done in heaven?

Simply put, with joyful obedience. The saints in glory do the will of God both out of resignation to his desires and because they want to. Prayer in heaven is neither a demoralizing conflict nor as a presumptive demand, but a free partnership with God. Jesus teaches us to pray like that now! He calls us to pray like God's children. He calls us to pray like saints, for that is who we truly are. To be a saint, to be sanctified, is to not only do the will of God but to want to do the will of God. It is the alignment of our will with God's will. It is this kind of alignment that forms the context in which both the resignation trajectory and the response trajectory must be interpreted. Only a will that submits to God fully can say, not my will but yours be done. Only a will that shares God's desires can pray "in Jesus' name" with integrity. We are called to pray that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Let us joyfully and obediently pray that joyful obedience would be found on God's earth.

PART ONE QUESTIONS:

Any thoughts?

- Did you follow the transition from faith as expressed in the Apostles' Creed to hope as expressed in the Lord's Prayer? Or were the connections made the beginning of this lecture obscure to you?

- How do you balance praise and petition in your own prayer life? Is "balance" even a value here? What other types of prayer are there, and how do they relate to these two basic types?

- What is the best use of Scriptural guidance for prayer? Should we pray the very words of Scripture? Do they only provide principles for prayer? How do you draw on Scripture in your prayer life?

- Are you more inclined towards prepared prayers or extemporaneous prayer? Can arguments be made for one or the other? Or is it just a matter of preference?

- Do you consider it appropriate to locate the Lord's Prayer within a trinitarian context as I have done? What benefits does this bring? What drawbacks does it have?

- What does it look like to hallow God's name?

- Does our prayer hasten this kingdom's coming? Can we *do* anything for the kingdom? Do we just ask and wait? Do we even need to ask? What role do we play in the coming of the kingdom?

- How do you balance praying for your own will and wrestling with God over his? Do find yourself leaning one way or the other? What steps can blessing-seekers take to become God-wrestlers, and vice-versa? In what ways can we learn to pray both joyfully and obediently?

I Believe… The Lord’s Prayer (Part 2)

With the fourth petition we turn to the second half of the Lord's Prayer. The shift in focus is signaled by the pronouns: after three petitions using the second person singular ("your") referring to God, we encounter a series of petitions using the first person plural ("our" and "us") referring to us. Although we must learn to start our prayer with God purposes, Jesus also invites us to bring our own needs to God in prayer. The first of these needs is the most basic: our daily bread.

Bread is a basic human need. It may not be an exciting food, but it is the dietary staple of many societies, and certainly the near eastern agrarian society in which Jesus taught. The fact that we put things on it or put it with other things just shows how basic it is. Bread goes with everything. Bread is life.

Now we shouldn't obsess too much about bread in particular. It is not as though those who live in agricultural systems without bread as its basic component are left out of this prayer. For, as we all assume without thinking much about it, "bread" is used her to figuratively refer to all sustenance. Bread is a synecdoche for food. Jesus teaches us to ask God for food. Without food, we cannot live. We are asking God for our most fundament concern: that we would live. We not only thank God for every breath we take, but ask God to keep giving us breath by providing us with the sustenance of survival. To petition for bread is to petition for life. To ask for bread is to ask for freedom from death.

It is therefore not inconsequential that Jesus begins with bread. When it comes to our needs, the most fundamental need is life. All the remaining requests presuppose that we are alive. As we turn to the remaining requests, we move on up Maslov's hierarchy of needs. If we don't get our life-bread, the rest doesn't really apply. Dead people don't ask for forgiveness. Dead people don't ask for deliverance. Surely God can forgive and deliver the dead. But they are not in a position to ask him. So life is humanity's bottom line, and so bread is our first petition.

Before turning to those remaining petitions, we should comment on the adjective "daily" that is attached to the bread for which we ask. Now the Greek word in the original is notoriously difficult to translate. It appears to have been coined by early Christian preachers, perhaps to translate into Greek an Aramaic phrase that went back to Jesus and the early Christian community in Palestine. "Daily" is an appropriate translation, but it obscures the sense of sufficiency implied by the term. We are taught to ask for *enough* bread: not too little so as to starve, but not too much so as to spoil. It could even be translated "tomorrow," as in "give us today enough bread for tomorrow," which is of course exactly how the daily labor cycle in an agrarian society works. That's the full sense of *daily* bread.

This theme of just-enough-bread not only reinforces the "means of survival" meaning of the fourth petition sketched above, but also implies an allusion to the manna given in the desert to the people Israel. A strange bread-like substance fell on the wanderers each day, but they were told to only take enough for one day or it would spoil. In other words, they were taught to take only their daily bread. Whether this connection was intended by Jesus, the early Christian preachers, and/or the Gospel-writers is difficult to decide. But there is a long Christian tradition of allegorical interpretation that seeks to make these sorts of connections in Scripture. Contrary to what some suggest, allegory is not just a license to interpret however one desires, though there were certainly abuses in this direction. The point of allegory is to show for the deep unity of Scripture and especially the unity of the Old and New Testaments. The search for allegorical connections does not replace the literal sense, but draws on it to highlight pervasive themes in

Scripture.

In the case of the fourth petition, the literal (*ad litteratum* means "to the letter") sense of bread is food. The allegorical sense is the bread of heaven, a theme which ties together the manna of the Old Testament and Jesus as the bread of life. The fathers of late antiquity added two further "spiritual" senses: the tropological and the anagogical. The tropological sense is the moral sense, the personal virtues called forth from the reader by the text. The tropological sense of bread is the word of God, for man does not live by bread alone. The anagogical sense is the eschatological sense, the ultimate future hope revealed by the text. The tropological sense of bread is the great marriage feast of the Lamb, of which a sign and foretaste comes in the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper.

And so with the bread of the fourth petition we can see exemplified the practice of the "fourfold sense" of Scripture. Now you may or may not be in to this sort of interpretive endeavor. However, an initiation into the Christian tradition without it would pass over a deeply influential practice of the church. This is not to say there are not good reasons to question its value. In the case of the fourth petition, such spiritualizing can easily forget the crucial literal sense of praying for our basic needs and so ignore the many hungry stomachs of this world on whose behalf we must pray. We are taught to pray for our daily bread, not just my daily bread. Perhaps the spiritual senses of Scripture bring a text like this to life for you, but that does mitigate the fact that there are many for whom the literal sense of this petition is a life-or-death request. So even as we explore the rich world of allegorical interpretation, we must never forget the basic needs of ourselves and our near and far neighbors.

Forgive us our Debts

After addressing the most pressing need for today, the Lord's Prayer turns one of the more complex needs of daily life: debt. In today's borrowing and lending economy, we know a lot about debt. And when things goes wrong, we know how oppressive the chains of debt can be. However, most modern societies no longer have debtor's prisons and indentured servitude. So, even though we understand difficulties of debt, it is not nearly a big of a threat as it has been historically. This is important to remember, because Jesus is teaching his disciples to pray for the very concrete complexities of debt. Is there a spiritual sense to this petition? Absolutely. Our debt to God is the one absolute debt we owe. But that does not rule out our shared concern over the relative debts we owe one another. As can be seen from Jesus’ numerous teachings on money, debt concerned him. It got to him. And so he taught his disciples to take up that concern and make it theirs.

Of course, all this talk of debts may be throwing some of you off a bit. Isn't it trespasses? Well, that is the language of the traditional Anglican prayer book, and so has become familiar to many English-speaking Christians. But it does not have strong support in the original Lord's Prayer texts, so it is probably better to go with debts. The advantage of debt-language is its wider meaning. The fifth petition is not concerned narrowly with the moral category of trespasses, but includes the concern for financial woes. Furthermore, as we expand to the spiritual sense of debts, we are being taught to ask for forgiveness not only for how we have wronged God and one another but also for what we owe God and one another. Debt-language has a much wider application and so is relevant to all of us, all the time.

What do we owe God? Everything. God the Father Almighty is the creator of heaven and earth. That means everything. So we have God to thank for everything we have, including our own

selves. And we have God to ask for everything that we will have. In other words, we owe God everything. In the fifth petition, we come before our heavenly Father and ask, "Please, don't make me pay back so great a debt. I don't have the resources. Let this one slide. Tear up the I.O.U. Forgive us our debts."

Although debt language is wider than the moral category of trespasses, it does not exclude but includes issues of morality. The New Testament and the Christian tradition mix financial and moral metaphors all the time. Just think of phrases like "debt of sin" or concepts such as "imputed righteousness." So in the fifth petition, Jesus teaches us to ask God to cancel the debt of sin we owe to him and one another. And Jesus himself has answered this prayer in his life and death, and as the risen Lord speaks the word of forgiveness to us through his Spirit. In light of this good news, the Christian prays that simply prayer, "Lord, have mercy on me, a poor sinner" and joins the church in praying, "Forgive us our debts."

Yet the fifth petition does not end there. It adds a subordinate clause signaled by the little word "as." Father, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debts. This as-clause adds a caveat to the request for forgiveness. The meaning of the word "as" is ambiguous here. Is it a condition: forgive us *if* we forgive others? Or is it a consequence: forgive us *so that* we can forgive others? Although one can debate the grammar of the text, I do not think we are forced to choose between the two theologically. The point is the correspondence between God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others. The two actions go together. Clearly an ontological priority must be given to the former: God's forgiveness is initiated eternally by his grace and executed in Christ while we were still sinners. But the chronological relation in our own experience is not predictable. Some of us may need to learn to forgive others in order to accept that we too are forgiven by God, while others of us may need to be assured of God's forgiveness before we can be freed to forgive others. The point in either case is that the heart of Christian ethics is that we forgive us others as God forgave us (Col 3:13; Eph 4:23). As the parable of the unmerciful servant illustrates, God's forgiveness is a great unmerited gift to us, which both permits and demands that we forgive the debts of others (Matt 28:21-35). The bumper sticker gets it half-right: "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven." It's just missing the as-clause: "as we forgive others." Yes, Christians aren't perfect: they might cut you off. But Christians are called to live a life worthy of the gospel: when you cut them off, they must not hold it against you. Christians are not just forgiven, but also forgiving, for they are the ones who pray "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Deliver us from the Evil One

Whereas the fifth petition asks for freedom from past obligations of debt, the sixth and final petition asks for freedom from future encounters with the devil. Here the hope-character of the Lord's Prayer returns in full force -- not in the cosmic terms of the coming kingdom of God, but in the personal terms of temptation and deliverance. Jesus teaches us to ask God to please keep us from temptation and deliver us from the tempter.

Now there are a couple of things to notice here. First of all, I have chosen to treat the last two clauses as one petition and not two. Although I am not alone in this, there is no consensus in the catechetical tradition on this matter. Most famously, Luther distinguished these two petitions, so that all tolled there are seven petitions in his exposition of the Lord's Prayer. The reason of have chosen to combine them is not to de-emphasize them or just to have an even number. Rather, it is because the two go so naturally together as contrasting aspects of one request for salvation,

signaled by the conjunction "but." The first aspect is preventative: we ask our heavenly father to prevent temptation. Lord, do not lead us into temptation. The second aspect is interventionist: we ask our heavenly father to intervene on our behalf when we do face temptation. Lord, do deliver us from the evil one. Do not lead; but rather, deliver. The two together form one prayer: "Lord, save us!"

The second thing to notice is that from which we are delivered: not evil, but the evil one. The traditional liturgical form of the Lord's Prayer speaks in the abstract terms of "evil." Although a possible translation, the original Matthean text speaks of evil in personal terms: the evil one. The reason to go with the more personal language is to counter the tendency in our time to speak too abstractly and therefore vaguely of evil. Now there are good reasons to not speak in personal terms about evil. Evil is not personal in the same way you and I are, and certainly not in the way that God is personal. Evil is the anti-thesis of true personhood. The evil one is a parody of God's triune personhood, seeking power in a self-aggrandizing rather than self-giving way. The evil one's "personality" is self-enclosed and destructive and therefore falls short of the true personhood of God and the human personhood to which we are called. Evil is the privation of good -- its absence or twisting. And so the evil one is the privation of personhood.

But it is precisely as a parody of the triune God that we can and must speak of evil in personal terms. Evil is not only the sum total of moral wrongness nor even the powerful forces behind all evils, but at bottom is the accuser, the biblical sah-tan, the one who makes the case against us, the one who laughs at us in our misfortune and failure, the one over whom God has triumphed in Jesus Christ. Despite the potential embarrassment and abuse of such "mythological" language, Christians speak of evil in personal terms. When we cry out to God for deliverance, we ask to be delivered from the evil one -- the devil, satan, beelzebub and his demons. Christians take the evil one seriously, precisely because God has taken him seriously -- so seriously that he has faced him off in person and defeated him on his own turf. In light of the death-blow already struck against the evil one in the death and resurrection of Jesus, we pray with confidence and hope to God the Father: deliver us from the evil one!

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Having asked God to feed us, forgive us, and deliver us, the Lord's Prayer turns its attention back on God. The pronouns shift back from "our" to "your," yet not to make one last petition on God's behalf but to speak a word of praise, a doxology. Now it is worth noting that this doxology is not in the original versions of the Lord's Prayer found in the gospels. It did, however, make its way into the church's liturgical use of the prayer very early, as evidenced by its inclusion in the Didache's version of the Lord's Prayer. Although it is not original, it is an unobtrusive addition that employs typical early Christian doxological language and fits the themes of the prayer quite well. It therefore serves as a reminder of where our focus ought to be: on God. By praising God for his kingdom we remind ourselves whose kingdom it is we seek. By acknowledging God's power we remind ourselves to submit to his will. By giving God the glory we remind ourselves to hallow his name. So the emphasis here is not on the three terms but on the pronoun. Next time you pray the Lord's Prayer whether in public or private, try placing the accent on "thine" or "your," just as a reminder of who it is to whom we prayer and in whom we place our hopes. "For *thine* is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

Any thoughts?

- What would happen if we not only thanked God for our meals but also asked God for our meals? Would it change the way we look at food?

- What are the benefits of allegorical interpretation? What are the costs?

- What sorts of things can be included under the umbrella of "debt?" Is it helpful to use this wider category? Is something lost by abandoning the more strictly moral category of "trespasses?"

- Do you agree that the last two lines of the Lord's Prayer are really one petition? Can you make a case why or why not? What difference does it make for the interpretation of that portion of the prayer?

- Ought we to speak of evil in personal terms? What are the advantages? What are the disadvantages?

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