

## Our Father Who Art In Heaven

Matthew 6:1-15

Trinity Lutheran – Kearney, Missouri

February 17, 2010 – Ash Wednesday



In the name of the Father, and of † the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. What is it that keeps you from praying? Why is it that there are times when you won't pray? Could it be a guilty conscience? After all, a guilty conscience distorts one's view of God, causes you to believe God is out to get you, shut you out, destroy you and damn you – and all because you're not who you ought to be, or who you want to be. You're a sinner, and so your guilty conscience tells you that you're not worthy. And even worse, it tells you that because of your sin God can't be trusted to do what He says. No wonder there are times you don't dare pray.

Or perhaps you do pray – like the hypocrites, putting on a show for all to see – revealing to all the world how great you are, and how super-spiritual your prayers are. If you pray that way you're only praying to and relying on yourself and your own abilities. But may I be so bold as to remind you that God is your Father, that you are His child, and that God the Father dearly loves His children? He loves them so much, in fact, that He gives Himself entirely and completely to them with all He is and has. As Father, He gives and gives and gives.

He gave His Son Jesus Christ into death for you and your salvation. All the enormity of your sin He answered for in Christ's bloody, Good Friday death! Is there any sin of yours Jesus didn't die for? Is there any sin in your life He left out of His it-is-finished-work? No, not a single one. The whole enchilada of your sin was atoned for when the Father made Jesus, who knew no sin, to be sin – and to satisfy all sin as the sinless Lamb of God. His blood cleanses you and washes you clean – body, soul and conscience. And so, dear Child of God, you have nothing to fear. God is not out to get you. Indeed, for Christ's sake He's positively delighted with you! Now your life can be one of total reliance on God through prayer.

“When you pray,” Jesus teaches, you should “pray this way: our Father who art in heaven.” With these words God extends to you a gracious, tender invitation to audaciously trust in Him as your Father – and to daringly believe that you are His child. Who else, other than God's children, would be so bold or presumptuous to address Him, saying: “Our Father?” But you are His children! For Christ's sake, and led by the Holy Spirit given to you in Baptism, God has given you permission to speak to Him thus – to dare to call upon Him as Father because Jesus earned that right for you when He hung on the cross for us all – because He Baptized you, me, and all believers into His death and resurrection!

When you pray: “Our Father who art in heaven,” that's so unlike the praying of unbelievers who pile up word upon word upon word – and who babble incoherently for hours. As Jesus reminds us, they receive their reward: the praise of men. But Jesus gives you the very words with which God wants you to pray. With these few, brief words our Lord Christ invites you to come before our Father in prayer with all boldness and confidence as dear children ask their dear father. With the words: “Our Father who art in heaven” God reminds you of all the promises He made to you in His Son, Jesus Christ, who died for you. He promised to forgive you for Jesus' sake. He promised to love You for Jesus' sake. He promised to accept you for Jesus' sake. He promised to embrace you and hold you close to Himself for Jesus' sake. In fact, in Christ, He is Your dear Father – and you are His beloved child. And because you are God's child, He wants you to know that you can always boldly ask Him as Jesus has taught you, saying: “Our Father.” And He will give you everything you need to sustain you, body and soul, unto eternal life. You can count on it – in the Name of Jesus. Amen.