

Jesu Juva

“Lord, Help Us Realize This”

Text: Deuteronomy 8:1-10; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Luke 17:11-19

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer asks: *Give us this day our daily bread.*

The catechims then asks us: *What does this mean?*

*God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us **to realize this** and to receive our daily bread **with thanksgiving.***

To realize this. To open our eyes and ears and hearts to all that our Lord is doing. That He is giving us and all people more gifts than we can even imagine. On a good day, like Thanksgiving Day, we might remember to give thanks for all the gifts and blessings we realize and can think of, but in truth, that doesn’t even begin to scratch the surface. There is so much more God is doing that we don’t even realize. Like an iceberg in the ocean, with only the topmost five or ten percent visible, when you realize a gift from God, you can be sure there’s ninety percent more behind it than you even know.

So in the Lord’s Prayer we pray: Lord, help us to realize this. Open our eyes and ears and hearts to believe.

And to help us with this, Luther then asks: *What is meant by daily bread?* What are some of these gifts for which to give thanks that God is giving to all people? And though the list here is long, it again doesn’t even begin to scratch the surface. *Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, good, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.*

I suppose when you don’t have those things, or when you had them but lose them, you realize what gifts they are and how much you need them. Help us realize this too, dear Father in heaven. All Your gifts, so richly and abundantly given.

But still there’s more. Moses also told the people of Israel: ***Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you.*** This too is a gift from God, His discipline. When we try to “count our blessings,” we usually try to think of those things we think are good - but God’s gifts are not limited to what we enjoy. He sends good in ways that are sometimes tough and difficult, that involve struggle and

perhaps even suffering. Lord, help us to realize this too, and receive this daily bread with thanksgiving as well.

And Moses then gives us some insight concerning this, why God gives gifts in this way too, saying that it is that *he might make you know that may does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord*. It is so easy to focus on the gift and not the Giver. Look at the nine lepers who did just that as an example. But all the gifts of this world and life will one day go away - all those things Luther listed in the catechism. But this one will not: the word of the Lord. This is the gift not only behind every gift and that speaks every gift, but the gift that is superior to every gift. The word of the Lord, and that Word made flesh.

And this is the gift that has not only been given to you, but just as with all His other gifts, God desires to give to all people, for He *desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*. The truth that just as the people of Israel were on a pilgrimage to the Promised Land, so are we. And that as good as the Promised Land might be for them, and as good as the gifts we might receive here are, there is more. The gift of life with our Father in heaven, through the death and resurrection of the Son, by the working of the Holy Spirit.

And to give this gift, how much is our God doing! Beginning with the promise made to Adam and Eve, down through time to the Incarnation, and now to the gifts given here, to you. These gifts that give THE gift. The gift of the Son, His Word, His forgiveness, and His life. And these gifts not just given once, but continually, to bless you and keep you, to feed you and sustain you in this life, for if it were up to us, if we were on our own, how quickly and easily we would lose it all. Lord, help us realize this, too. And give thanks.

So we've gathered here this night to do so. Not *only* this night, but *especially* this night. To give thanks not only for what we know God has given us, but for what we do not know. To give thanks not only for what we think is good and enjoy, but those things through which God is working a good of which we are not aware. And to give thanks not only for ourselves, but for those who are not here tonight, and for those who do not even believe. For all God's gifts deserve thanks and praise, and it is good to give thanks to the Lord (Ps 92:1). Good for us.

That, as Luther once said, we may realize and believe that our God is *an eternal fountain that gushes forth abundantly nothing but what is good* (Large Catechism, First Commandment). And in return, we may gush forth abundantly a constant thanksgiving for all these gifts. Thanksgiving *everyday*, in word and deed.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.