

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Have you ever heard a little one babble? Little ones can—and do—make the cutest noises, from giggles almost wanting to say “That was funny, Grampa!” or cries of “What’s that, Mama?!” Anna and my niece, Daisy, is right in that time of her life. She’s almost always the center of attention as everyone tries their hand at guessing what she might be saying through her babbles. The babbles of children are cute, but they still don’t get the point across. Mom and Dad or Grandpa or Grandma still have to try to figure out what little one wants or needs because little one still can’t articulate it yet. Thanks be to God that grammar is on its way!



*What is he saying? What are we saying?*



Luther continues where we left off in June teaching us about prayer. He wrote: “It (that is, prayer) has been prescribed for this reason also, that we should reflect on our need, which ought to drive and compel us to pray without ceasing. A person who wants to make a request must present a petition, naming and describing something that he or she desires; otherwise it cannot be called a prayer (BoC, p.443).”

Little ones like our niece Daisy cannot help but cry out for help when they become aware of their needs. So it is with prayer. When we become aware of our needs—and realize by faith that God is the only one who can provide for those needs—we present our petitions to Him. Most certainly this includes praying for “daily bread,” which means more than solely bread, but includes everything for which we need physically, and protection for those who deliver it from farm to store to home. But we also pray for forgiveness, and the ability to forgive others. We pray that our sinful ways be drowned and killed—even three times in the Lord’s Prayer! As we become increasingly aware of our sinfulness, the new creation in us desires for it to be drowned daily. And it is drowned as we remember our baptisms, where God called each of us by name and said “You are mine.” Yet each of these petitions—and every other petition for what we need—we utter through words.

“Therefore,” Luther wrote, “we rightly rejected the prayers of monks and priests, who howl and growl frightfully day and night, but not one of them thinks of asking for the least little thing. If we gathered all the churches together, with all their clergy, they would have to confess that they have never prayed wholeheartedly for so much as a drop of wine. For none of them has ever undertaken to pray out of obedience to God and faith

in his promise, or out of consideration for their own needs. They only thought, at best, of doing a good work as a payment to God, not willing to receive anything from him, but only to give him something (BoC, pp.443-444).”

What about your prayers? Are they just howls and growls, too? Or are they filled with petitions and requests of God? Truly, prayer should have more than just our requests—including such things as praise and thanksgivings. But do you take God at His Word that He will hear you and that He will answer you?

“But where there is to be true prayer, there must be utter earnestness. We must feel our need, the distress that drives and impels us to cry out. Then prayer will come spontaneously, as it should, and no one will need to be taught how to prepare for it or how to create the proper devotion. This need, however, that ought to concern us—ours and everyone else’s—is something you will find richly enough in the Lord’s Prayer. Therefore it may serve to remind us and impress upon our hearts that we not neglect to pray. For we are all lacking plenty of things: all that is missing is that we do not feel or see them. God therefore wants you to lament and express your needs and concerns, not because he is unaware of them, but in order that you may kindle your heart to stronger and greater desires and open and spread your apron wide to receive many things (BoC, p.444).”

How much more will God answer these petitions since He has already responded to our greatest need—our need for forgiveness? God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to die for our sins and give us life everlasting, and so He has. Now we can go to God as our Heavenly Father and ask for whatever we need without fear or doubt. That is the joy and privilege we have as ones who have been redeemed by Jesus’ blood. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh