

Letting God be God

Who runs the universe? We want to. We confuse our kingdoms with God's kingdom. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we mean, "My kingdom come." But bringing in God's kingdom, even helping God bring in his kingdom, is not our job.

"God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us." (Small Catechism, Lord's Prayer, second petition).

It doesn't matter how earnestly we try to be spiritual. We're never able to build his kingdom. It's all his doing. He brings in his kingdom. We can trust him. Let God be God.

"How is this done?"

God does it. "Whenever God breaks and hinders every evil scheme and will – as are present in the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh – that would not allow us to hallow his name and would prevent the coming of his kingdom, and instead whenever God strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his Word and in faith until the end of our lives.

This is his good and gracious will" (Small Catechism, Lord's Prayer, third petition).

The 11th Commandment

So why pray? Finally there's only one reason: Because we are commanded to. It's a work. We are to lay all our concerns before our heavenly Father. Prayer, it could be said, is the eleventh commandment (Large Catechism, Lord's Prayer, Introduction, 6).

... Without Ceasing?

When are we to pray? Morning and night? Five times a day? At church meetings? Before meals?

What does it mean: "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17)? Even while we sleep?

It's a famous puzzle. It means letting God be God. And letting God be God is what is meant by faith. Set times for prayer are O.K., as a reminder, but what is really going on is that the Lord is Lord for us.

What to pray

Anything and everything. Formal prayers and free prayers. The Psalms are a good example. So is the Lord's Prayer.

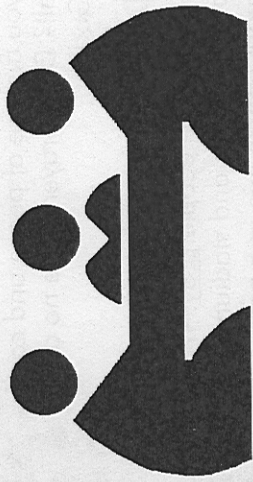
Two things matter. First, we have been given an address for all our concerns. The one who called God "my Father" has also invited us to pray to God as "our Father."

Second, we pray in the confidence that the Holy Spirit translates for us. He takes all our prayers and makes them right.

Therefore

We pray trusting that he – who did not spare his son but through his death on the cross solved the terrible problem of sin and death – hears our prayers and wills to give us all good things with him (Rom 8:32).

Why Pray?



Simple Answers from a
Lutheran Perspective