

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

THE LORD'S PRAYER – THE SIXTH PETITION

Next comes the world, which offends us in word and deed. It drives us to anger and impatience. In short, there is nothing but hatred and envy, hostility, violence and wrong, unfaithfulness, vengeance, cursing, railing, slander, pride and haughtiness, with useless finery, honor, fame, and power. No one is willing to be the least. Everyone desires to sit at the head of the group and to be seen before all [Luke 14:7–11].

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Over and above all this, another great reason that should move us more to obey this commandment is that God attaches to it a temporal promise: “That your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you” [Exodus 20:12].

From this you can see for yourself how serious God is about this commandment. He not only declares that it is well pleasing to Him and that He has joy and delight in it, but He also declares that it shall prosper us and promote our highest good, so that we may have a pleasant and agreeable life, furnished with every good thing. Therefore, St. Paul also greatly emphasizes the same promise and rejoices in it when he says that this is the first commandment with a promise, “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land” (Ephesians 6:2–3). Although the rest of the commandments have promises in them, none is so plainly and clearly stated.

Here, then, you have learned the fruit and the reward, that whoever keeps this commandment shall have happy days, fortune, and prosperity. On the other hand, you also have learned the punishment, that whoever is disobedient shall perish sooner and never enjoy life. For to have long life in the sense of the Scriptures is not only to become old, but to have everything that belongs to long life: health, wife, children, livelihood, peace, good government, and so on. Without these things this life can neither be enjoyed in cheerfulness nor long endure. If, therefore, you will not obey father and mother and submit to their discipline, then obey the hangman. If you will not obey him, then submit to the skeleton man (i.e., death). For God will insist on this in sum: if you obey Him, offering love and service, He will reward you abundantly with all good. If you offend Him, He will send upon you both death and the hangman.

... But those who keep God's will and commandment in sight have this promise: everything they give to temporal and spiritual fathers, and whatever they do to honor them, shall be richly repaid to them. They will not have bread, clothing, and money for a year or two, but will have long life, support, and peace. They shall be etern-

ally rich and blessed. So just do what is your duty. Let God manage how He will support you and provide enough for you. Since He has promised it and has never lied yet, He will not be found lying to you [Titus 1:2].

This ought to encourage us and give us hearts that would melt in pleasure and love for those to whom we owe honor. We ought to raise our hands [1 Timothy 2:8] and joyfully thank God, who has given us such promises. For such promises we ought to run to the ends of the world, to the remotest parts of India. For although the whole world should work together, it could not add an hour to our life [Matthew 6:27] or give us a single grain from the earth. But God wishes to give you everything exceedingly and abundantly according to your heart's desire [Psalm 37:4]. He who despises and casts this promise to the winds is not worthy ever to hear a word about God. More than enough has now been stated for all who belong under this commandment.

THE LORD'S PRAYER – THE SECOND PETITION

All this is the fault of shameful unbelief that does not even look to God for enough decent food to satisfy the stomach. How much less does such unbelief expect to receive eternal treasures from God without doubt? Therefore, we must strengthen ourselves against such doubt and let this be our first prayer. Then, indeed, we shall have everything else in abundance, as Christ teaches, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" [Matthew 6:33]. For how could He allow us to suffer lack and to be desperate for temporal things when He promises to give us what is eternal and never perishes [1 Peter 1:4]?

THE LORD'S PRAYER – THE FOURTH PETITION

Let this be a very brief explanation and sketch, showing how far this petition extends through all conditions on earth. On this topic anyone might indeed make a long prayer. With many words one could list all the things that are included, like when we ask God to give us food and drink, clothing, house and home, and health of body. Or when we ask that He cause the grain and fruit of the field to

grow and mature well. Furthermore, we ask that He help us at home with good housekeeping and that He give and preserve for us a godly wife, children, and servants. We ask that He cause our work, trade, or whatever we are engaged in to prosper and succeed, favor us with faithful neighbors and good friends, and other such things. Likewise, we ask that He give wisdom, strength, and success to emperors, kings, and all estates, and especially to the rulers of our country and to all counselors, magistrates, and officers. Then they may govern well and vanquish the Turks and all enemies. We ask that He give to subjects and the common people obedience, peace, and harmony in their life with one another. On the other hand, we ask that He would preserve us from all sorts of disaster to body and livelihood, like lightning, hail, fire, flood, poison, plague, cattle disease, war and bloodshed, famine, destructive beasts, wicked men, and so forth. It is well to impress all this upon the common people [Deuteronomy 6:7]: these things come from God and must be prayed for by us.

... You see, in this way, God wishes to show us how He cares for us in all our need and faithfully provides also for our earthly support. He abundantly grants and preserves these things, even for the wicked and rogues [Matthew 5:45]. Yet, He wishes that we pray for these goods in order that we may recognize that we receive them from His hand and may feel His fatherly goodness toward us in them [Psalm 104:28; 145:16]. For when He withdraws His hand, nothing can prosper or be maintained in the end. Indeed, we daily see this and experience it. How much trouble there is now in the world only on account of bad coins, daily oppression, raising of prices in common trade, and bargaining and labor by those who greedily oppress the poor and deprive them of their daily bread! This we must suffer indeed. But let such people take care so that they do not lose the benefits of common intercession. Let them beware lest this petition in the Lord's Prayer speak against them.