

**Lenten Service
March 27, 2019**

**“Give us this day our daily bread”
by Pastor Chuck Paulson
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We're talking about the Lord's Prayer and how wonderful it is, but I want to share with you why sometimes it's not so meaningful in some situations. Did you ever get tired of praying the Lord's Prayer? Probably not. I have. I haven't prayed the Lord's Prayer yet today. I thought I was going to pray it this afternoon, but Pastor Lowell threw a curve ball. Usually after our staff meeting we pray the Lord's Prayer, but today he asked me to pray, and I didn't have us pray the Lord's Prayer. We do that at worship, every worship service, and we're going to do it at the close of our Holden Village service tonight. In our regular worship service, we finish our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray. You remember that Jesus was asked by his disciples, "Teach us to pray, Lord." Jesus responded to them, "Pray like this." He didn't say, "Pray this." He said, "Pray like this". But we do pray it, all the time. And we feel that if it was good enough for Jesus, it's gotta be good enough for us. It's that common prayer that, those of us who are Pastors and others who have gone to visit people with Alzheimer's or dementia, and we finish our visit with them and pray the Lord's Prayer, it perks them up, because even though they can't remember so much in life, they remember the Lord's Prayer.

At our memorial services, and we have a lot of those, 24 deaths in this congregation this year already. But in our memorial service bulletin, we don't have to print the Lord's Prayer, because it's known by most. At my son's memorial a few weeks ago in California, I had the Lord's Prayer printed in our bulletin to wrap up that memorial service for him. Some of those hard-nosed rugby players who were there probably didn't even know the Lord's Prayer. So we closed with that. But not everyone knows the Lord's Prayer. My wife Anita told me that when she was going to the University of Arizona many, many years ago, she went to worship with a guy and he sat next to her, and, as they came to praying the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven" and he said, "Halloween be thy name." There are some misconceptions about the Lord's Prayer. Some people who pray the Lord's Prayer think God's name is Art. Our Father who "art" in heaven. Or, "herald be thy name" instead of "hallowed be thy name."

I said there were times I didn't feel much like praying the Lord's Prayer. I mentioned that we often finish our meetings with the prayer. The last parish I served in California many years ago, where I had several boards, and the chair of each board was a member of our church council, and I liked to touch base with all our boards and so I had them all meet the same night, so I didn't have to go several nights in the course of the week. And so I'd have some start at 7 and some at 7:30, and I always started off with the deacons in my office as we talked about our worship and music. And then we finished the deacons' meeting, the chair would say, "Let us pray the Lord's Prayer", and we'd pray the Lord's prayer. Then I went to the Trustees' meeting to talk about our property and management. We'd talk about that, and the chair would say, "Let us pray the Lord's Prayer", and we did. Then I'd go to parish ed, and the same thing would happen – finish the meeting, "Let's pray the Lord's Prayer." School board, same thing, pray the Lord's prayer. I got to the point I said, "Ditto, Lord. Ditto." In reality, it's so good to have such a common prayer. We can go into different churches, and even though some use "debts" and others "trespasses," you go into a Roman Catholic Church, you won't hear the end, "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory," but the Lord's prayer is universal.

It reminds me of an event in World War II. Some of you have maybe heard this story, because it's been going on for decades. A group of U.S. soldiers had been separated from their unit after they'd crashed into France, and they were separated from their main unit. So they had to be careful so they were not seen by anybody. There were lots of Nazi troops where these soldiers were looking for U.S. troops. And this small group was hiding in a basement of an abandoned house. Basements had those little windows – if you lived in the Midwest, you know the basement had those small windows that you could see out of, just aboveground. And this group knelt and prayed the Lord's Prayer. And a Nazi soldier looking for them, he would come up by the house and look through that window and saw this group. And he heard them start praying the Lord's Prayer. He probably knew a little bit of English. As they prayed in that basement, this Nazi soldier knelt outside that basement window and prayed, "Vater unser im Himmel, geheiligt werde dein Name." I know that prayer in German as well. That soldier got up from his knees, and he walked away. And the U.S. soldiers saw him go, and I think they realized it was the Lord's Prayer that had saved them.

I never use the Lord's Prayer in my own personal devotions. It is not an "I" prayer. It's not a "me" prayer. It's not a "my" prayer. It's an "our" prayer. It's an "us" prayer. "Our" is used twice, "us" 5 times. Like that prayer in the basement in France, it is inclusive. The theme of my message tonight is just 1 petition, "Give us this day our daily bread". Give us this day - not give me, but us and our. It's certainly a petition to be thankful for what we have, that we have the sustenance so we are not a starving people. So what does a hungry, starving person do - know the Lord's prayer but have no food. Where is that God we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread?" When I got back from California, and I'd gone also to my wife's brother's memorial service there, and in that community church, they had a different version of the Lord's Prayer, and the petition that we look at tonight, "Give us this day our daily bread," they read it this way: "Give us this day the bread we need and give it to those who have none." "Give us this day the bread we need and give it to those who have none." Our and us includes those who have and those who do not have. How do the don't-haves get their daily bread - through those of us who have. We have those opportunities with our bringing in food into the narthex in our church. We can give to the food banks locally, Bread for the World, ELCA Hunger Appeal, and others. So I say to us tonight, us, if we pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' if we pray that and we're serious about that, then we'd better be willing to share with those who need food or more.