

A few thoughts on what Jesus wanted to tell us in the „Lord’s Prayer“....

„Our Father, who art in heaven“

It is difficult to comprehend that Almighty God, despite His inconceivable greatness, wants to be Father to every single human being. He loves us, each and every one, with an inconceivable love. He can see how our lives can flourish and he wants to help us achieve this. But he does not impose this help on us, because he has given us freedom, which he respects. Similarly, even though we love our own children, they sometimes take advantage of the freedom we have given them to distance themselves from us and to go their own way. This also applies to our relationship with God, who wants to be a father to us, but to whom we often turn our backs. God allows us to go our own way, but his ways are better because they lead us into his love and security.

Where God is, there is heaven. Heaven is not a geographical description. Rather, it refers to a state of being. When we are allowed to be with God, we are with God in a loving security that cannot be described. God as our Father wants to give us this security. But this gift is only conceivable within the framework of our freedom: we can only receive it if we approach God. Since God is pure love, only the path of love leads to God. Within the framework of our freedom, we must want to walk this path.

„Hallowed be Thy Name“

We should become aware that there is nothing higher than God. This fact should make us reverent, in thought and in speech. If I acknowledge God in His greatness, I can and will never speak His name pejoratively. Thinking influences speaking and speaking influences thinking. Jesus made this clear to us with this phrase.

„Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done“

this statement seems strange at first glance, but at second glance it shows the incredible consistency with which God respects our human freedom.

Viewed in isolation, it is absurd to pray and ask that the Almighty’s kingdom come and his will be done. If he is the creator of the entire universe, then all of creation must be his kingdom anyway. As the Almighty God, he can also enforce his will whenever, however and wherever he wants. Why does God need our prayer for the enforcement of his will? It must have a deep meaning when Jesus calls us to it.

God’s kingdom, as Jesus told us, is a kingdom of peace, mercy and justice. But our world as we know it is still far from that. Alongside beautiful examples of mercy, there are also dreadful examples of sin, suffering, injustice and destruction. This is the reality of our world as it emerged from the freedom of creation and the freedom of humanity. When God, the perfect one, creates something out of his perfection, it cannot contain elements of evil and destruction. These are the consequences of the freedom that God in his love has granted to us and to his creation.

But God, as the Loving and Merciful One, wants to lead this world created in freedom to-

wards perfection in His love. He can help us in this, but does not impose his will and help on us. Rather, because of the freedom granted to us, God waits for us to ask for his help, just as Jesus taught us. It is our request that gives God the opportunity to help us. Because of the freedom given to us, he needs our consent so that his will and providence can finally come to pass. This is true for each person individually, but it is even more true for humanity in great things, e.g. concerning peace among nations.

When we pray „your kingdom come and your will be done“, we are asking to let go of our human ideas of how we want to exercise power and control. Over thousands of years, insisting on our will has only ever led to destruction, suffering and hatred. We are to seek God’s help, so that through our cooperation and with His help, peace, mercy and justice may succeed. Finally, we should learn not to impose our (egoistic) will, but to become open to what corresponds to God’s will in everyday life and even in politics and world events. If this becomes our sincere concern, then God will let us know his will surprisingly clearly in response to our prayers. If we then ask him to help us to implement his will, we will be amazed again and again to experience God’s work in our lives.

„On earth as it is in heaven...“

This is once again the confirmation of our freedom before God: He has made it possible for us to live in freedom. Without his help we are - as history teaches - unable to prevent the negative consequences of this freedom. If we now earnestly ask God that His will should apply not only in heaven but also on earth within the framework of our freedom, it means that we are now prepared to give His will priority over our own will in our personal lives as well. If we make a sincere effort to give God the place He deserves in our daily lives, we will be amazed to see how things suddenly happen in our lives over which we have no influence at all, but which are in God’s providence. We can only describe these experiences as being the „blessing of God“.

„Give us this day our daily bread“

This request does not only refer to „bread“, but it refers to all that we urgently need for our spiritual and physical survival. We may, indeed we should, ask God, our Father, to give us all that we (really) urgently need in everyday life.

However, we should keep two aspects in mind: God is ready to intervene in our lives and help us, and he does it again and again. On the one hand, these are wonderful experiences for us, but on the other hand, they are sometimes contrasted by apparently opposite experiences. For God does not automatically help us of his own accord. He expects from us both a deep trust in his help and our willingness to make an effort to do his will in return. Jesus emphasised this many times. Thus he invited us again and again to trustingly turn to our Father in heaven with our requests, even though our heavenly Father already knows exactly what that we humans need to live (and to be happy). However, he has given us clear guidance in this regard. He said quite clearly: „But you must first be concerned about his kingdom and his righteousness; then everything else will be given to you in addition“. This also applies to our request for all that we need on a daily basis.

The second aspect concerns all of us who strive to know his will and live according to it. If we human beings have learned to live with one another in mercy and justice, we will do all that God expects of us: we will therefore not deprive needy brothers and sisters of what

they need to survive. This is then our contribution to the Kingdom of God. If, on the other hand, people, disregarding the will of God, intervene negatively in our lives, we must understand that God also accepts the free will of these people. He will not interfere with their freedom, even if it has severe negative consequences. God is faithful: he did not break his promise of freedom for people even when they crucified his Son. This is the price of the freedom God has given us. Nevertheless, God is close to us even in such difficult situations and will stand by us in his own way.

„Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us“

With this formulation one suspects that it is a linguistic transcription error. God is pure love. In his love he will help us to do everything that can bring us human beings closer to him. God is not an insidious „tempter“. Rather, it is Satan who is constantly trying to take us away from God. It is inconceivable that God should take on the role of Satan in order to lead us away from the path of love. Reality shows us that we are constantly at the mercy of Satan's temptation. God will not contribute to this existing problem of temptation, that cannot be reconciled with his love. In addition to this, Jesus constantly warned us about Satan, the great deceiver. It is therefore obvious in this prayer that Jesus asked us to ask the Father not only to protect us from the temptation of the evil one, but to deliver us entirely from evil. According to this meaning, the last petition in the „Our Father“ should therefore be: „help us not to be led into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one“. Amen.

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