

**Notes for Children's Talk & Sermon Outline for
Sunday, 2 August 2020**

Children's Talk: The Lord's Prayer Comes All the Way Down and Goes Back Up Again

- 2 weeks ago we talked about the Lord's Prayer and how we can focus on different things in it different times that we say it.
 - Different phrases will stick out to us.
 - Different things will seem important to us.
 - And we'll think of different ideas different times that we say the same phrases.
- Last week Mr. Glenn talked about how we could focus on seeing the Lord and us in the prayer.
 - And the beautiful way the Lord's Prayer shows our relationship with the Lord being intertwined together.
 - Today, I want to give you another way of thinking about the Lord's Prayer.
 - There are infinitely many more ways to think about and understand the Lord's Prayer; this is just one more.
- Think of the prayer as starting with the Lord up in heaven and then the Lord coming down, down, down and being present even in the lowest parts of our lives.
 - Because we can sometimes think of the Lord just being way up high, somewhere far away from us.
 - And we can sometimes want Him to stay far away from us.
 - Or think that when we do something bad, that He would be far away from us.
 - But, in the Lord's Prayer, we can see that the Lord wants to come down, all the way to the level of our lives where we mess up.
- You can talk to the Lord about your worst thoughts and feelings.
 - You can talk to Him about the worst things that you've felt and done.
 - He wants to help you, even at that lowest level.
 - You can invite Him to come to that level, every time you say the Lord's Prayer.
- It starts up high - "Our Father who art in the heavens..."
- Then it talks about His kingdom coming, like the Holy City New Jerusalem, descending from God out of heaven.
- And it says, "As in heaven so upon the earth."
 - And so we come from heaven, down to the level of earth.
- And then it talks about what we need in our daily lives - "Give us this day our daily bread".
- And it talks about our interactions with other people - "...as we forgive our debtors."
- And then it goes even a step lower to talk about the places where hell comes into our lives - "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."
 - We're praying for the Lord to rescue us from evil, selfishness, and hell in ourselves and in our lives.
- And then it says, "For Thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."
 - And you can picture this going back up to the Lord and His kingdom in heaven.
 - Or you can picture it looking around at the world around us and seeing God in it—seeing that all of it is the Lord's kingdom, all of it shows the Lord's power and is a place where the Lord has all power (including over hell), and all of it is a place where we can see the glory of God in His creation.
- *Amen.*

Revisiting the Lord's Prayer, Part 3: "And lead us not into temptation...."

A Sermon by Pastor Malcolm G. Smith
2 August 2020

Intro

- Have you ever gone back and revisited a place that you haven't been to in a really long time?
 - It's an interesting experience—especially if it's a place that you have particularly strong memories of—because, when you go back, you can almost feel your brain grappling to integrate your memories of the place with what the place actually looks like.
- I had this experience when I went back to visit the town that I was born in.
 - I was born in America and lived there till I was 9; then my family moved to South Africa for 7 years.
 - And then, when I was 16 we moved back to the States.
 - And sometime after we moved back we went to visit the town where I had been born.
 - I had strong memories of that place.
 - In particular I remembered this big, steep hill where we would ride bikes.
 - Even riding it from about halfway down to the bottom was terrifying and so exciting.
 - The big boys could ride it right from the top but I remember thinking that I would *never* be brave enough to do that.
 - Those were my memories from when I was eight or nine.
 - Then we revisited there when I was about 16 and I remember being excited to see that hill and it was so much smaller and shallower than I remembered.
 - It was about as steep and as long as when you go out of the church driveway here and go left and there's a little hill that goes down before you go up the steep hill up to the corner.
 - That was it.
- Revisiting that place really changed my understanding of what that place was like.
- We've been revisiting the Lord's Prayer for these past few Sundays and with each part we've focused on I had this feeling of surprise, "I thought I knew what that part of the prayer was about but it's different than I remember it."
 - Today, we're going to look at another verse of it and maybe again we'll see that it's a bit different than we remember it.
- Here's what we're going to focus on for today:
 - "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13)
- We'll go through it, bit by bit, but we're going to spend the most time on the first part, "And lead us not into temptation...." because there's a lot to unpack there.

"And lead us not into temptation,...."

- One thing that's really valuable about the Lord's Prayer is that it reminds us of spiritual realities that we should be paying attention to but often forget about.
 - Saying the prayer reminds us that we need daily bread—the daily spiritual sustenance from the Lord that Joel talked about last week.
 - Saying the prayer reminds us that have people who we think owe us a debt.

- Saying the prayer reminds us that we owe the Lord a *huge* debt.
- Saying “And lead us not into temptation,....” reminds us that we are being led somewhere and that somewhere might be good and it might be bad.
 - The teachings of the New Church say that certain people don’t think about sin at all, to the point of not knowing what they even are.
 - *Apocalypse Revealed* §457
 - Consequently the delight and gratification sins give them continually carry these people along in them and into them, the way a favourable wind and current carry a ship onto rocks when both captain and crew are asleep.
 - Praying, “And lead us not into temptation,....” can help us to wake up a bit to notice where we might be drifting.
 - Instead of drifting towards hell we want to be led by the Lord.
- But something that’s confusing about this phrase of the prayer is that it seems to imply that the Lord might be leading us into temptation and we have to convince Him to *not* lead us there.
- People have wrestled with the question of whether or not the Lord leads people into temptations for thousands of years.
- In the last few years the current Catholic Pope caused a stir when he changed the wording of this phrase in the official liturgy of the Catholic Church from “lead us not into temptation” to “do not let us fall into temptation”.
 - His argument was this:
 - “It is not a good translation because it speaks of a God who induces temptation. I am the one who falls. It’s not him pushing me into temptation to then see how I have fallen.
 - “A father doesn’t do that; a father helps you to get up immediately. It’s Satan who leads us into temptation – that’s his department.” (“Led not into temptation: pope approves change to Lord’s Prayer” *The Guardian*. 6 June 2019. <https://bit.ly/2DmGCuC>)
- I disagree with the pope that it’s not a good translation to say “...lead us not into temptation”—that’s exactly what it says in the literal sense.
 - It’s not an issue of translation; it’s an issue of how we understand the literal sense of the Word.
 - The teachings of the New Church would actually agree with the pope’s interpretation—the Lord does not lead anyone into temptation.
- But the literal sense does say that the Lord leads people into temptation in many places.
 - Think of the story of Abraham being tempted by God to see if he would sacrifice his son Isaac.
 - Or the story of Job.
 - And the literal sense of the Word even specifically says that Jesus was *led* into temptations by the Spirit.
 - “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1).
 - The literal sense of the Word also says that the Lord gets angry, takes revenge, likes to punish, *etc.* when nothing could be further from the truth.

- The teachings of the New Church say that the literal sense of the Word “is written according to appearances in the world, because it is for children and the simple-minded, who have no perception of anything contrary to appearances” (*Apocalypse Explained* §631).
 - They need to start with these appearances of truth and then they can gradually progress to understand the deeper reality within these ideas.
- As a child, you might have—very understandably—thought that the Lord leads you into temptations but, as you got older, you may have come to realise that that’s not actually the reality.
 - The Epistle of James explains the actual reality really well:
 - James 1:13-15 (NKJV)
 - 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.
 - That’s what’s *actually* going on when we enter into temptation—we’re drawing into it by our own desires, not led there by God.
- I was trying to think of an analogy for how this works and what came to mind was waterskiing.
 - This analogy only sort of works.
 - I remember going to try waterskiing at Midmar dam one time and I would try and wipe out and the boat would have to circle around again and line up to pull me and I would try again and I never managed to get up.
 - But one of the realities of waterskiing is that no skiing happens without the pulling or leading by the boat.
 - However, just because the boat is pulling in the right direction doesn’t mean that the skier will hold on and go in that direction.
 - And even if the skier does manage to stand up and be pulled by the boat, where they go is not entirely dictated by the boat.
 - The boat can be going straight ahead and the skier can choose to go skidding way out to the side—this way or that way.
 - The more rope that the skier puts between themselves and the boat, the more leeway they have to go sliding all over the place.
 - The part of this analogy that doesn’t work is that this is a big part of the fun of waterskiing.
 - If a waterskier is way behind the boat and choosing to go skidding off this way or that way and they crash into something, whose fault is that?
 - The boat or the skier?
 - Did the boat lead the skier into that situation or was the boat actually pulling the skier away from it but the skier controlled themselves into that crash?
- The point is that the Lord can be leading us and we can end up in temptation and that doesn’t actually mean that the Lord led us into temptation.

- The Lord doesn't lead us into temptations but it is really important for us to experience them.
- Listen to more from the Epistle of James:
 - James 1:2-4 (NKJV)
 - 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
 - Various trials and things that test our faith are just other words for temptations.
 - And James says that we should "count it all joy" when we fall into these because of what it accomplishes.
- And the teachings of the New Church agree.
 - *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* §194
 - Temptations serve to win for good mastery over evil and for truth mastery over falsity. They also serve to strengthen truths, and to join them to good qualities, while at the same time dispelling evils and the falsities that confirm them. They also serve to open up the internal spiritual self, and to make the natural self subject to it; also, to break down self-love and the love of the world, and to tame the longings which arise from this. When all this has happened a person gains enlightenment and a perception of what truth and good are, and what falsity and evil are. Thus he acquires intelligence and wisdom which thereafter go on increasing day by day.
 - That seems like a pretty good list of outcomes; why would the Lord *not* lead us into temptation?
 - It even seems like there can still be good outcomes when we feel like we have failed a spiritual test.
 - Peter was tested to see if he would deny the Lord and he did deny the Lord—three times.
 - But, this is what the Lord said to him before he had done any of it.
 - Luke 22:31-32 (NKJV)
 - 31 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."
 - Peter failed in this temptation—He denied the Lord—but somehow, with the Lord's help, he emerged from this experience with a new strength with which he could strengthen his brothers.
- But we should not wish to experience temptations.
 - If we start to think that we could go through a temptation thanks to our own goodness or spirituality, then we are going to be in trouble.
 - The Lord said to His disciples, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).
 - When we're in church or in a spiritual state we can feel like, "Yeah, I could get through anything with the Lord's help!"
 - The spirit indeed is willing.
 - But our flesh is also weak.

- Just like Peter we can very quickly go from saying, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” (Matthew 26:35) to then flatly swearing that we know nothing about the Lord not that long afterward.
 - Our flesh is weak; we should not overestimate our ability to cope with temptations.
- So you might be thinking, “Ok, so when I pray the words ‘...lead us not into temptation,....’ what am I meant to be thinking about or asking for?”
- “Lord, help me to realise if I’m being led astray by hell or by my own selfishness.”
 - “If I find myself in a temptation or trial, help me to be formed into a better person in the process.”
 - “Lord, please help me to have the humility to realise that I’ll never be able to cope with any temptations without your help.”
- Even if the Lord doesn’t lead us into temptations, it seems like we’re eventually going to end up there.
- We can see this in the complete phrase, “And lead us not into temptation, *but* deliver us from evil.”
 - Let’s talk about that phrase now.

“...but deliver us from evil.”

- The word deliver is related to the word for “liberty”.
 - It means to rescue or to set free.
- When we pray these words we are asking the Lord to rescue us from hell and set us free from the control of selfishness.
- These words are also a reminder that the Lord *can* rescue us.
 - He can deliver you from evil.
 - And he can deliver other people from evil—even people that we might think are too far gone, He can deliver them from evil too, if they’ll let him.
- Some translations of this will render it “...but deliver us from the Evil One.”
 - There are various arguments in favour of this way of reading it and various arguments against it.
 - Many people would read “the Evil One” as another name for Satan.
 - The New Church would say that when the Bible talks about “the Devil” or “Satan” it’s not actually referring to a supreme evil spirit it’s just using a single name for all of the evil spirits in hell together.
 - And so, whether we say “...deliver us from the Evil One” or “...deliver us from evil”, the point is the same—we’re asking the Lord to rescue us from the influence of hell.
 - That’s one way of describing the Lord’s goal in coming on Earth and His goal for the human race in general—to rescue us from hell and lead us to heaven.
 - “Deliver us from evil....” is the flip side of the same coin with “Thy kingdom come....”
- What evil do we need to be delivered from?
 - Here I would recommend that you try to steer away from thinking of evil in a generalised sort of way and focus instead on the particular evils that you struggle with in yourself.
 - “A man’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Matthew 10:36; Micah 7:6).

- I heard one person suggest that “the evil one” that we need to be delivered from is our own lower self, the evil version of ourselves that would exist if we were to give in to all our worst impulses.
 - Lord, deliver us from becoming that evil one!
- And as you pray for the Lord to deliver you from the particular evils that you struggle with, also pray for the willingness to do your part of the work.
- Prayer is a crucial step in the process of repentance.
 - One passage from a chapter on repentance says that prayer
 - “...is to be a request that [the Lord] have mercy on us, give us the power to resist the evils that we have repented of, and provide us an inclination and desire to do what is good, since “without him we cannot do anything” (John 15:5). (*True Christianity* §539)
- We’re praying for the power to repent but that step of prayer is only worth anything if we then take the power from the Lord and do our best to actually repent and begin a new life.
 - That is what it means to pray that part of the prayer with sincerity—to do everything in our power to co-operate with the Lord’s efforts to deliver us from evil.
 - And the reason why the Lord is able to help us and deliver us is because His is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever.

“Thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever.”

- As we talked about 2 weeks ago, when we discussed the phrase, “Thy kingdom come”, by the Lord’s kingdom is meant where people live according to His truth—where the Lord’s commandments are the laws people follow.
 - I read an old booklet on the Lord’s prayer by a New Church minister and he expands on this idea of laws.
 - The truth is simple. The kingdom and the power and the glory are the Lord’s. Just as physical and mechanical power is made available to [people] only so far as they take advantage of the pre-existent natural laws which they have discovered and formulated, so spiritual power is given to [people] and angels only so far as they follow the Divine laws of love and charity, of faith and use, which are impressed from creation upon every human soul.... (*The Lord’s Prayer*. Hugo Lj. Odhner)
- This whole reality we live in—natural and spiritual—is the Lord’s kingdom.
 - And in that kingdom all of the power comes from one source: the Lord.
 - His power is built into the natural laws of physics and the spiritual laws of physics that provide the constraints and context for everything we do.
 - Somehow connecting that power to the laws of the physical world and the spiritual world, helps me to get the immensity of his power in a different way.
 - Everything is His kingdom and in that kingdom all the power is His, particularly He has the power to deliver us from evil, if we work with Him (see *Secrets of Heaven* §10019:3).
- What about all the glory being the Lord’s—what does that mean?
 - A little excerpt from the Christmas story is really helpful here.
 - When the angel appears to the shepherds it says,

- “And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and *the glory of the Lord shone* around them, and they were greatly afraid” (Luke 2:9)
- Then a bit later it says,
 - “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘*Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!*’” (Luke 2:13-14)
 - And after the shepherds see the Babe lying in the manger it says,
 - “Then the shepherds returned, *glorifying* and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them” (Luke 2:20).
- The Lord’s glory, most literally, means the bright shining light of His truth.
 - Think of the beginning of the Gospel of John:
 - “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld *His glory*, the *glory* as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and *truth*” (John 1:14).
 - Picture warm sunlight flowing out from Him, reaching out to every part of His creation and infusing it all with beauty—like the glory in the clouds of a beautiful sunset.
 - Glory also has to do with the credit for doing something.
 - This is why the shepherds (and many other characters in the Bible) are said to “glorify” God: they’re giving God the credit for all the beautiful and amazing things that they’ve seen Him do.
- Everything is and always will be His kingdom.
- All power anywhere—in heaven and on earth—is His.
- And all the credit for all of the beauty and light in all of creation has always been and will always be His.
- “Thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever.”

“Amen.”

- Then the prayer ends with the word “Amen”.
- You probably know that this word means, “It is true.”
- The Lord actually says this word a lot when He’s teaching.
 - It gets a bit hidden by many translations.
 - But when He says, “Assuredly I say to you...” He’s saying, “Amen, I say to you.”
 - And when He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you...” He’s saying, “Amen, amen, I say to you....”
- To say, “Amen.” is to affirm that something we’ve said or are about to say is true.
 - It’s like putting your hand on the Bible in court before making a statement.
 - People also use it to affirm the truth of something that somebody else has said—“Amen, brother! Preach it!”
- And so, by teaching us to say, “Amen.” at the end of the prayer, the Lord is inviting us to reflect on the truth and sincerity of the words we’ve just said.
 - Do we stand by what we’ve said?
 - Did we mean the words that we said?
 - Do we affirm the truth that His will should be done (and not our own); that we need to forgive other people’s debts; that we need to be delivered from evil; and that all the kingdom, power, and glory belong to the Lord.
 - Do we say “Amen!” to all of that?
 - Do we want all of that to be true?

- Speaking for myself, sometimes I can say amen to all of that and sometimes I shouldn't.
 - That same old booklet on prayer talks about how a person can very easily be not praying for the right things.
 - "The kingdom for which he prays is not always the Lord's. He asks forgiveness while hatred and envy still smoulder in his breast. With his lips he prays to be excused from temptation although his wandering gaze is still seeking it out. He cries, "Deliver us from evil," yet is blind to his own faults.
 - "Nevertheless, whenever man stumbles, the Lord seeks to raise him up...."
- If you're paying attention, you may sometimes find that when you get to saying amen in the prayer, you can't actually say it in good faith.
 - Your head hasn't been in it or your heart hasn't been in it.
- Try taking a minute and then saying the prayer again.
 - This is only possible in certain circumstances but try it when you can.
 - Part of the point of the prayer is to be teaching us to align our priorities with the Lord's priorities.
 - When you catch yourself being out of alignment with them, take the time to try to get realigned.
 - I do find that if my head or heart haven't been in it, I can eventually get to the point where my head and heart are in it, if I do the work.
 - "It would actually be better if the Lord's will is done in this situation."
 - "I certainly do need to be fed by the Lord—I am empty!"
 - "I am being pulled towards many temptations, Lord, do please deliver me from evil."
 - "And thank goodness that the kingdom, power, and glory are Yours!"
 - "That's so much better than me being in charge!"
- We can think it all through, revisit the Lord's Prayer, and get our head and our heart in the right place.
- Then we can say the words of the prayer again, meaning them this time.
 - And when we come to the end of it we will be able to truthfully say, "Amen."
- *Amen.*