

“Sharing God’s Purposes” [Matthew 6:10]

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Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. ... Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. (Matthew 6:10 – KJV)

Additional Scripture References: Galatians 3:1-9; 1 Peter 1:14-15; 2:1, 11, 16;
2 Peter 3:17-18; 1 John 1:7-10; 2:15-17

We are in the second week of the Advent and the reality that Christmas celebrations are upon us. So, this might be a good time to ask two fundamental questions. Why Christ? And, why Christmas? I believe it is because God intends believers to walk with Him in His care and purpose, escaping the evils of the temptations that confront our frail humanity.

God wants humanity to live first in His care and then in His nature. *THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.* God’s kingdom is primarily His personal care for us which we realize through faith in Him. In it He gives us security, provides for our daily needs, forgives our short comings, gives us His nature and Spirit and directs us by His will. In short, Christmas is all that the Lord’s Prayer is about.

It is not surprising that Jesus began this model prayer by praising God for His goodness and then asking that God’s kingdom be experienced here on earth. God’s purposes for us can be seen at three levels which should occur in order. First, we walk by faith in His care; then we love one another bearing the fruit of His Spirit, and then, we lead others to faith in His care and purpose.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION. This passage directs us as individuals and as a body of believers to admit that we can be tempted. We have two kinds of temptations that are mainly our challenge. 1) to turn from God’s grace to personal works. 2) to slip into loose sinful living. As Christians we must know that pride and passion remain at work in us because we all can be tempted.

A major temptation that confronted the early church was a concern in the Books of Galatians, Hebrews and 2nd Peter. It was a concern of turning from the pure Gospel of grace back to a religion of works and rituals. This took away the peace and security of depending upon God and replaced it with religious pride of having met a set of requirements. This produced scorn instead of compassion toward those who failed their religious duties. Modern day cults and worldly spiritual groups tempt Christians to accept their baptisms, their spiritual expressions and rituals which they claim make them secure by their interpretation and actions. We need to pray that we do not be tempted by these proud people to share in their arrogance of presumed superior insight and standing. Rather let us treasure God’s grace and confess our dependence. Grace is intended to set us free from sin, not to free us TO sin, or to indulge ourselves in greed and lust. Wrong doing and sin must not be taken lightly because it has a way of destroying the body and the spirit.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL. We are delivered by dependence. We must have God's help to avoid the great temptations and escape the evil havoc that will follow yielding to them.

DELIVER US is an expression of need and of faith. Realizing our needs we are to take them to God in faith. We need to talk regularly to God about our temptations. We also need the help of those in the faith who are around us.

Jesus' use of the word, *US*, suggests that confession was meant to be made together where people acknowledged their need of one another such as we do in public worship or you do as a family around your meal table. When someone shares the fact of a temptation and the difficulties resulting from it, we are all made more aware of how close trouble can be to us. A logical question to follow might be: *How are we to have sufficient faith to enjoy the Kingdom and avoid the evils of temptations that are all around us?* We can do this by growing in knowledge and faith in God. We can grow in the awareness of our daily needs and the temptations that are present around those needs. We can grow together in trustworthiness and gentleness, so we may share our needs together.

I believe this is the Gospel Jesus came to teach us as the Good News. This is why we come and celebrate Christmas. We celebrate the memory of the first event, and then we in our personal, family and corporate worship pray for a continued relationship with God. So in our worship today we can join together with unified hearts and voices when we pray, *OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BY THY NAME. THY KINGDOM COME.* Amen.