

“But Deliver Us From Evil”

Tonight, we remember that dark day when the Savior of the world poured out His blood so that He may deliver us from evil.

During the Lenten Season, and especially as I mentioned last night, we see how Christ prepared for His suffering and death. He spent hours with His Father in prayer. Throughout this Lenten Season, we have been focusing our attention on the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. Tonight we pray, but deliver us from evil.

We see Christ on the cross – the final Lamb of sacrifice for your sins, my sins, the sins of the whole world. He delivers us from evil. He delivers us from death. He takes the suffering we deserve; He carries the guilt of us all and pays for it with His own blood.

When we pray “but deliver us from evil,” we are not just asking that God protects us from the bad things of this world. But rather, we are asking that God frees us from the evil of the world itself. In Luther’s explanation of this petition from the Small Catechism, he says, “we pray...that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul possessions and reputation, and when

our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.”

As we have seen these past weeks, in all the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, except for when we ask for our daily bread, everything for which we pray has to do with spiritual or eternal blessings. When we pray that God delivers us from evil, we are focusing on the eternal aspects of what that means. We are focusing on the necessary preparation for the day we die, for the day we leave this valley of sorrow and enter into God’s heavenly kingdom.

Our entire journey on earth is a time of God preparing us for that one day when He calls us out of this life. We are like Simeon who had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would see the Christ, the Savior of the world, before he died.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to be dedicated at the Temple, Simeon held the child in his arms and said, “Lord, now let your servant go in peace, your word has been fulfilled. For mine eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people.”

Simeon knew that once he had seen the Christ with his own eyes, and had held the Christ in his own hands, that his days on this earth were drawing to a close. But he did not bemoan the coming of that day.

He welcomed it. He praised God saying, "Lord, now let your servant go in peace." He welcomed that day, because he knew that he was now truly going to be delivered from the evil of this world.

We look at God's promises of deliverance throughout Holy Scripture. If we interpret them according to earthly terms, deliverance from earthly problems, we will be gravely disappointed with God's dealings in our lives.

We read in Proverbs that if we trust in the Lord, fear the Lord, shun evil, and honor the Lord with the firstfruits of our labor and money, God will bring health to our body, nourishment to our bones, our barns will be filled to overflowing. We will go on our way in safety, and our feet will not stumble. If we do this, there will be no fear of sudden disaster or ruin.

Many people despair, because they do not see God blessing them in that way. Will any of us live our entire lives in perfect health? No one on this earth will remain healthy forever. Unless Christ returns in our lifetime, eventually we will all die. The wages of sin is death.

How many of us have barns or bank accounts filled to overflowing? The blessings that God has promised are not found in any temporary possession. What a disappointment that would be if that were true. The blessings that God has promised to us are found in the eternal glory and perfection of God's kingdom. The resurrection of the body and life

everlasting is where our deliverance from evil takes us.

As Christ said, “we should not store up for ourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, but rather we should store up for ourselves treasure in heaven.” Christ also said, “Do not fear the one who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear the One who can kill both soul and body in Hell.”

God says to us that we should not worry about the things of this world. In fact, James the brother of our Lord writes that we should rejoice in our difficulties, because through them God is strengthening our faith, and preparing us for that final day, that final hour of our earthly life.

We pray: “deliver us from evil.” We see tonight that God has answered that prayer. When He sent His Son to suffer and die on the cross, He delivered us from evil. When we were called to faith and washed clean in the waters of Holy Baptism, He delivered us from evil. When we partake of Christ’s Body and Blood at the altar, we are delivered from evil.

As we remember Christ’s death when He delivered us from evil, we continue to prepare ourselves for our last hour when God answers our prayer and gives us a blessed end and graciously takes us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven. Amen.