

In Nomine Iesu

Good Friday 2026

Deliver us from the evil one – Luke 23:39-43

“One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, ‘Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!’ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.’”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who alone delivers us from the Evil One. Dear fellow redeemed:

Tonight, we have come to the last of the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer that we have been examining week by week for Lent. Tonight, we consider the full meaning of “Deliver us from evil.” It is certainly appropriate to consider the text before us from Luke’s Gospel in the light of this last petition. But before we do, let’s look a little more closely at the petition itself. We are used to hearing “deliver us from evil” and then understanding the words in terms of English – which, of course, is reasonable since we are native speakers of English. But the point is this, we hear the word ‘evil’ and automatically think of it as this impersonal force or power that is the opposite of good. To be sure, evil is the opposite of good, as the word of God teaches everywhere very clearly. Evil is also definitely a force or power. But here in the last petition of the Lord Prayer it comes down to not what the word ‘evil’ means – we’re all agreed on that! – but to what the word actually is. Let me explain. In Greek the word translated as ‘evil’ is not, as we English speakers naturally assume, a noun. No, it is an adjective. That doesn’t really **change** the meaning of the petition – evil is evil! - but it does change the focus. It makes the petition more personal, more focused.

Any of Jesus’ disciples would have heard Him say this petition and immediately have taken it in this more personal manner. They would have understood Him to have said, “deliver us from **the evil one**,” that is, from the devil, from the person whose name is Satan. And they would not have been wrong in their understanding. That is exactly what Jesus **both said and meant**.

But, you see, man has never liked to think this way. And in 21st century America, we especially don’t like to think in this way. We don’t like to think that there really is a malevolent evil being, who was thrown out of heaven as the leader of all the other angels who rebelled against their Creator God. We do not like to think about a real being who can change his appearance – as he did in Eve’s sight! – and speak in a sly, appealing, and deceptive manner so as to deceive us. We do not like to think about Jesus looking at Peter and saying, “Get behind Me, Satan.” We do not like to think about the devil speaking personally to Jesus during His forty days and nights in the wilderness. We don’t like to think about a being who can disguise himself as an angel of light, as the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians. (2 Corinthians 11:14) We don’t like to hear John describe the devil in the last book of the Bible, as an actual being, an evil angel, who is leading a vast conspiracy against God to keep people from hearing and knowing the truth. No, we would rather think of evil as just an impersonal force

instead of a living being wholly dedicated to our destruction.

But the Bible doesn't teach what we would prefer to believe. It teaches what is true. Consider what St. Luke tells us in the chapter right before the one in which we find our text: "Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, 'Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But **this is your hour, and the power of darkness.**'" What did He mean by this? He meant that roaming the garden that night, inspiring the chief priests, elders and temple guards to arrest and condemn the promised Savior, inciting the crowds the next morning to chant, "Crucify, crucify him," was the same one who deceived Eve, the same one who tempted Jesus in the wilderness, the same one who inspired the thief on Jesus' left to rail at Him, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

You see, it was the **prince** of darkness who inspired the one thief to try to draw the **King** of kings away from His mission to die for us sinners - to stop Him from giving His life a ransom for the many - just as he had tried to do through Peter when Peter tried to stop Jesus from going to Jerusalem, just as he had tried to stop the freshly baptized Christ directly in the wilderness after He had gone forty days and forty nights without food. It is always the goal of the evil one - here, listen carefully - to separate us **from the crucified Christ** and so accomplish our destruction, even when he has failed to stop Jesus before He would cry out, "It is finished."

This is why the devil will settle for our believing that Jesus Christ is our example, our solver of earthly troubles, our law-giver, our friend, our miracle worker, our leader, **if only he can separate us** from the Christ who was crucified for our sins and thereafter raised for our justification. This was the Apostle Paul's whole point in saying, "For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, **but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and wisdom of God.**" (1 Corinthians 1:21-24)

The thief on our Lord's right truly knew **who** Jesus was and **what** Jesus was, and so understood the nature of His kingship and His kingdom. He **knew** that to die with the Christ, trusting the crucified Christ, was to be saved from death, and so, in effect, he was saying to his fellow thief, "get behind me Satan," and then turned to Jesus and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

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In future, when you pray the Lord's Prayer, saying, "Deliver us from evil," remember in your mind and heart the thief on Jesus' right, who heard the **crucified** Savior King say to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." Let this be your comfort and your confidence. For the thief's prayer, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom," truly was, "Deliver me from the evil one into Your kingdom, where You hold all power and he none, forever and ever." Dear Father in heaven, we join him in petitioning You, "Deliver us from the evil one." Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria