

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Which part is missing?

***Answer:** Address: "Almighty and everlasting God." Petition: "mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty." Purpose: "to heal and defend us." Ending: "through Jesus Christ..." The reason is missing.*

2. The collect asks for "the hand of Your majesty," the hand of the King of all. How does the Gospel make that picture literal?

***Answer:** Jesus, the King, stretches out His own hand and touches the leper (v. 3). God's majesty does not keep its distance; it heals.*

3. The collect asks God to "heal and defend" us. What does each word cover?

***Answer:** "Heal" covers the infirmities we already have, of body and soul. "Defend" covers the dangers still ahead. Christ does both, for the leper and for the servant.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Matthew 8:1-13

1 When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. **2** And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." **3** And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. **4** And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

5 When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, **6** "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." **7** And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." **8** But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. **9** For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." **10** When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. **11** I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, **12** while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." **13** And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

1. The leper said, "If you will, you can make me clean" (v. 2). What does that show about his faith?

Answer: He did not doubt Jesus' power, and he left the outcome to Jesus' will. It is a model for prayer.

2. Why did Jesus tell him to show himself to the priest (v. 4)?

Answer: The Law required it (Leviticus 14). It restored him to the community and to worship, and it gave public testimony to what God had done.

3. The centurion was a Gentile soldier. Why did he say, "I am not worthy to have you come under my roof" (v. 8)?

Answer: He knew his own unworthiness, and he knew that Jews avoided entering Gentile homes. He trusted Jesus' word alone to heal.

4. What did Jesus mean when He said many will come "from east and west" (v. 11)?

Answer: Gentiles from every nation will share the feast of God's kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: "Stretch forth the hand of Your majesty" matches "Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him" (v. 3). "Look upon our infirmities" matches the leper and the paralyzed servant (vv. 2, 6). "Heal and defend us" matches the servant healed "at that very moment" (v. 13). Any two, well explained, are enough.

2. In 2 Kings 5, Naaman, a Gentile army commander, is healed of leprosy by God's word through the prophet Elisha. How does that story mirror both healings in Matthew 8?

Answer: A leper is cleansed, and a Gentile officer trusts God's word. Both healings in Matthew 8 echo Naaman's story, now fulfilled in Jesus.

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The Third Petition. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. **What does this mean?** The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also. **How is God's will done?** God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.

Cross-reference. "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." (Luke 22:42)

1. Luther says God's "good and gracious will" is done "even without our prayer." How does the leper's prayer fit that?

Answer: He asked, trusting that God's will is good. Jesus' will was to heal him.

2. Is it wrong to say "if it is Your will" when we pray for healing?

Answer: No. Jesus prayed that way (Luke 22:42), and so did the leper. We ask boldly and trust God to answer in the best way.

3. Luther says God's will is done when He "strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith." How did the centurion show firm faith in Jesus' Word?

Answer: He said, "Only say the word," trusting that Jesus' word alone could heal.

Parent note: the question they may ask. "Can I be sure God wants to help me?" Yes. Jesus said "I will" to the leper, and God's will toward us in Christ is good (Romans 8:28, 32). He may not answer the way we expect, but His will toward His children is always gracious, and the cross proves it.

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: *Answers will vary. Example: "Almighty God, Your Son stretched out His hand and made the leper clean. Look on our weakness and reach out to help us, that we may trust Your good and gracious will; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."*

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you when you are weak or sick?

Answer: *He reaches out to help me. He hears my prayers, His will for me is always good, and He makes me clean from my sins.*