



What does that mean?

This is a question that came up in Confirmation class when we were going through the Lord's Prayer. It actually came up a few times.

The first word that got puzzled looks was "art," as in, "Our Father who ART in heaven..." This wasn't surprising. I've heard stories about younger kids who, after hearing this prayer in church, thought that God's name was Art.

Of course, I explained that "'Art' is the 500-year-old Shakespearian English word for 'is.' So, today we would say, 'Our Father who IS in heaven.'" Naturally, the next question was, "Why don't we just say 'is' then?" Great question! It's not as though the Bible was written in Shakespearian English or that anyone talks that way anymore. If we were actually going to be true to the language the New Testament was written in, we would be saying the prayer in Greek.

The questions kept coming as we went on to "hallowed be Thy name." I told them that "hallowed" was, again, the old Shakespearian way of saying "holy." (I would venture a guess that most people have only a vague idea of what "holy" really means too.)

Here again, I'd heard a cute tale of a youngster who told his friend that he was going to church to see Howard. The friend had no idea who Howard was, so the little boy said, "God, of course! You know, 'Our Father who art in heaven, Howard be your name.'"

Then there were the questions about "Thy" and "Thine." (Your and Yours).

Maybe you have the same idea that I came away with, "Why do we keep praying the Lord's Prayer using these old words that no one uses any longer, words that many people - not just young people - don't understand?" (Our hymnal does include a modernized option that leaves out "art," "Thy" and "Thine." But still has "hallowed.")

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net