

Second Sunday After Pentecost

A Study of the Lord's Prayer: The Address

Matthew 6:9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven,”

My brothers and my sisters in Christ Jesus, today we begin our journey on a series of sermons on another section of Scripture that is expanded upon in Luther's Catechism. Last Summer we spent studying the ten commandments and this summer we embark on a study of the Lord's Prayer, delving into each of the seven petitions.

It's a worthwhile study, especially since we pray this prayer every Sunday, and for a good reason. It came about when Jesus' own disciples asked him: “How should we pray.” The Lord's Prayer answers the questions of what it is that we should pray for and how we should pray. But before we even get into those petitions, we are going to spend our first sermon looking at the address of the Lord's Prayer, which interestingly enough doesn't really answer the question of what we should pray for, but why it is that we pray in the first place. We'll do so by examining two main ideas: 1. What a Father is 2. What a relationship with a Father means

When you think of a Father, most likely a number of things come to mind. When you are a child, especially when you are very young, your Father is an otherworldly man who seems so far beyond compare; he's someone who is strong and wise, he can catch you as you jump into the pool and he knows how to peel an avocado. He's tough and is up and doing things before you would wake up and still is up when you go to bed. He makes sure that you are safe, keeping you from getting hurt on your bicycle. He can solve your problems with solutions that you never would have even thought could be possible. Which is why it was always particularly scary when you had been disobedient for when Dad came home. This strong, powerful, wise, man, was now there as a judge.

And when you think of God the Father, several things come to mind as well. He is mighty, able to create the world with a few words of his mouth, creating life itself with his breath. He is wise beyond compare, knowing how to turn the globe and move the stars in perfect harmony, knowing the events of the future. He is holy, emanating pure light causing angels to bow, the earth to quake, and mankind to shudder.

And you look at yourself and compare yourself to this amazing powerful, holy, righteous, wise, eternal, and all-knowing God. And you think of all the rebellious things that we have done. You think of all the times that you have known what it is that he wants from us and we have deliberately gone astray. All of the sins of my heart, the faults of my hands, and the evil thoughts of my mind. All the times that we have treated God as our landlord, or a stranger. Seeing him as someone who just gets in the way, or an inconvenience. Or even worse as someone who doesn't really matter. It would seem

impossible to be in his sight, let alone to come and to speak to him with our requests. It's terrifying to think of a Father of that magnitude coming for our discipline.

Even though your father might have been all these things, you still had no trouble going to the strongest guy you knew and could be intimidating to another child, he was there to carry you when your little legs got tired because you were his daughter. Even though your Father was busy and made sure that you had food to eat, he still was there to help you cut the food that you were struggling with, because you were his son. Even though your Father, was busy and had other things to take care of himself, he was there to tie your shoes when you needed him, for no other reason than that you were his child.

Jesus in the Lord's Prayer establishes the basis of why we pray, and how it is that we pray. Jesus in the address of the Lord's prayer doesn't tell us not to go to God, because you are dirty and filthy sinners who have not obeyed what God has commanded for you to do, because he is the perfect lawgiver eternal and the Creator of the universe. Even though we are and even though he is. He doesn't instruct us to pray to the King, even though he is, only if you have completed the necessary eloquent words in order that he might hear you. No, he says: **"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen."**

And that is the case for no other reason than this fact: God calls you his child. You have been adopted into his family through the Holy Spirit so we are able to cry out "Father!". We were adopted as his children through the redemption in the blood of Jesus Christ, washed clean of every stain that our Heavenly Father sees us as his perfect child. God saw you as a rebellious, straying, far away hopeless individual, and he removed all the barriers that were there to bring you into his fold as his child. God took it upon himself to justify you, to sanctify you, to make you as white as snow, robed in the pure white robe of Jesus' blood. We were washed and brought into his house as a Son and as a daughter, in the waters of your Baptism. God is not the recipient of your formal requests as your King, but the one you come to as your Father.

This relationship of a Father and child is so important as we talk about prayer. When we talk about prayer, we understand that prayer is us as humans going to God in our 'side' so to speak of the conversation. God speaks to us in his Word, his Holy, inspired, the inerrant, unchangeable word he speaks everything we need to know to us. We, in turn, go to God, to speak with him, we exchange with him, in our prayer. And whether we know it or not, every exchange that we make in this world is based on the relationship that you have with them. We approach different people with different words and requests, based on what our relationship to them is.

For example, if you meet a stranger on the street, there is a very limited amount of things that you can ask for. You can ask them for directions if you are lost, you could ask them for the time, or maybe in an emergency you could ask them to use their cell phone to make a call. But that's just about it. You don't walk up to your landlord and say: "Hey, my

car is in the shop right now and I have an appointment I need to get to, could I borrow your keys for the next couple of hours”. You don’t go to your gas station clerk at 3 am and say: “I just had the worst nightmare, could you bring me a glass of water and maybe just sit and watch a movie with me until I calm down.”

Contrast that with your family. When you are a family, it is based on an entirely different set of assumptions. Your acceptance is not based on anything like other relationships, it’s not based on what you can offer if you are holding up your end of the bargain, or what your worth is. Your acceptance, your value, and your worth are purely based on who you are to them. Despite all the things going on, they are still my mother, they are still my sister, they are still my son.

Jesus says: **“If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”** Who can go to the King of the Universe for a drink of water in the middle of the night for a drink of water? His children can. Who can ask the one who knows the future for some comfort about a scary present? His son can. Who can go to the Father of all nations for daily bread? His daughter can. Who can ask the Holy perfect God for the forgiveness of our trespasses? Who can ask the almighty to deliver us from evil? Who can praise the gracious lord? Who can pray for his kingdom to come? God hears your prayers because you are his child. He encourages you to go to him because he is your Father. His unconditional love is sure, and your prayers are always heard.

As we start our study of the Lord’s Prayer, there is really no better place to start than the address: “Our Father in heaven” In the address for the Lord’s Prayer we really understand the basis for our prayers. We understand why it is that we pray. We know that we don’t come to God in heaven as a stranger but as a child. It’s not an exchange based on what you can offer, but it is love freely given and shown to his sons and daughters. As we continue our study of the Lord’s Prayer in the coming weeks, and as you continue to pray. Never forget the basis of your prayers when you pray: “Our Father in heaven.” Amen.