

Our Father

Sermon May 2, 2021

SCRIPTURES: Luke 15:11-24

GOLDEN VERSE: *“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.’”* Matthew 6:9

Last Sunday, we began studying The Lord’s Prayer. Today we are focusing on the first sentence: “Our Father in heaven.” When we address our prayer to OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, we express our beautiful and profound confession of what we believe, who God is for us. We see God as a living person who hears us and answers our prayers.

As we start the Lord’s Prayer, we confess that 1. God acts as a FATHER or Parent, 2. God is OUR Father, and 3. He is our Father IN HEAVEN.

Jesus consistently addressed all His prayers to God as to His Father. Even on the cross, He cried out to God: *“Father, into Thy hands I commend my soul.”* (Luke 23:46) *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* (Luke 23:34)

The Lord Jesus is encouraging us to call God OUR FATHER.

However, some people could have mixed feelings about this because, these days, many people have had negative experiences of their fathers. There are people who do not even know their fathers. Many were separated from their fathers since their childhood. Some rarely meet their fathers, or they don’t ever want to see their fathers. Even if they live together in the same household, their intimate conversations with the fathers are so rare.

It is so sad that, these days, many fathers don’t care about their children. They think that to raise a child is only the mother’s responsibility and duty. But, thank God, there are fathers who take their fatherhood and their responsibility seriously and practice what the Bible describes as the father’s duty.

Thank God, there are awesome fathers who teach their children the great deeds of God, they pray with their children regularly, and they teach them to obey God.

There are some other family issues, where the parents are Christians in name only: they attend services and they say they obey God, but the children’s sharp eyes can see hypocrisy. They can see that there is a big gap between what parents say and what they do.

Sadly, there are children who are afraid of their father. I knew children, who disclosed that after 4:00 PM, the whole family was in stress knowing that their father was coming home soon. Because of the stress, sometimes they were trembling, shaking from inside or even crying because they never knew in what condition or mood the father would come home. They didn't know if he would be drunk, or abusive, or rude. I met people who already buried their father decades ago, but even these days they often have nightmares about their father abusing them physically and mentally.

Therefore, it is important to emphasize that, when Jesus speaks about God as Father, He talks about the very best, the most kind and most loving Father, we can ever imagine.

Dear fathers, we all must learn as much as possible from God's fatherhood so that we can fulfill our vocation as good fathers.

What characterizes God as Father, according to Jesus?

We read that OUR FATHER knows what our needs are before we might ask Him. Our God, as a Father, surrounds us with tender love and omnipotent power. He takes great care of you and me, because He loves us tenderly. He knows well what we need. He is able to give us everything because He is our almighty FATHER, but He only wants to give what is for our good.

Please always remember: when you are praying the Lord's Prayer, you are coming to your heavenly FATHER who knows very well what you need. You are important to Him and, for this, you can trust Him. You can tell Him everything that hurts you, what you are missing, what makes you happy, even what you don't understand. You can talk to Him about your doubts, about your torments, about what you want or if something disappoints you, and you can wait for His response.

Here arises a very important and often raised question: is every person a child of God?

The Bible says that every human being is a **CREATURE** of God and God surrounds every person with His loving care.

Once, the Pharisees claimed to Jesus that they also were children of God. Jesus said to them, *"If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to **your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father's desires."* (John 8:42-44a)

Of course, the Pharisees were offended, as many might be offended today if someone would dare to say to them that they are not **CHILDREN** of God, but only **CREATURES OF GOD**.

We need to see clearly that God has only ONE child, a son, who is the same from eternity, and that is Jesus Christ. However, all those who love Jesus, who believe in Him, who live this life with Jesus, and accept Him, are children of God **THROUGH** Jesus. In John 1:12, we are informed that: *“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”*

We all were conceived by the will and desire of a human couple, our parents, and this is why we were born. We all are created by God. It takes another birth to become **a child of God**, and this is what Jesus calls **re-birth** or to be born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus that it is necessary for you to be born again, because otherwise you could not enter the kingdom of God.

- *“Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.’”* (John 3:3)
- *“Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.’”* (John 3:5-6)

Rebirth happens when someone accepts Jesus into his or her life.

I still remember the first time I could call a strange man “Dad”. And now I am talking about my father-in-law. I fell in love with his daughter and I married her. After a while my father-in-law said: “You don’t have to call me Mr. Ernest. You can call me like my daughter is calling me if you want, because after my daughter married you, I take you as my son.” From that moment, I could call a stranger: “Dad”. Because with regard to his daughter, I was adopted as his son. I loved his daughter, and that’s why he said, “Look, I love you as a father and you are my son.” And this is how he always addressed me: “my son”.

This is exactly the case in our relationship with God. Those who love Jesus are accepted as the child of God. From that moment, the person can call God “**FATHER**”.

The Catechism of Heidelberg also articulates this biblical truth clearly in Q & A 33. Question. Why is he called God’s “only begotten Son” when we also are God’s children? Answer: Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God. We, however, are adopted children of God-adopted by grace through Christ”.

Let me ask you so personally: Do you have this joyful belief that YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD??? Are you truly rejoicing when you pray: OUR FATHER?

In the Bible (Luke 15:11-24), we read about a prodigal son, who knew that he was his father's son, but he decided to walk away from him and he spent all he inherited. Then his life was ruined. At one point, he woke up from his dreams and he realized where he was and who he became, and he decided to come back as a servant to his father's farm. He decided to repent and to return home. He left the pigs, he went home, and when he met his father, he said: "My father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am not worthy to be regarded as your son, but if you can, I want to stay around you as your servant and I want to obey you. I have sinned ... I am not worthy ... I don't deserve anything good from you ... I want to obey you unconditionally."

Let's hear what the father said: "You are not a hired man, but you are my son." Then the father proved in five different ways that he had taken him back as his son: the father gave him a beautiful robe, a ring, new sandals, held a banquet for him and declared "this is my son".

The son's new life started with the basic recognition, which nobody can spare: I have sinned; I am not worthy; I am ready to obey in everything.

However, many prodigal sons want their fathers' support, while they are still far away, sitting in a mess, messaging their fathers to send them more goods which they could waste. And they consider this to be a prayer.

Let's consider your position now. Are you far away from the Father, are you close to Him, are you outside of His house or are you already INSIDE in Your Father's house?

Wherever you are, the Father is calling you home, waiting for you with Love, because the heavenly Father wants you to be with Him and to enjoy everything. He wants to provide for you day by day.

Call Him with love and joy: "my dear Heavenly Father". Amen