

“Our Father” | Luke 11:1-4 | The Lord’s Prayer
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This morning we begin a new sermon series on the Lord’s Prayer. This series is part of our on-going effort to take a look at each of the 6 chief parts of Luther’s Small Catechism. We began some months ago looking at the 10 Commandments where we read God’s instructions to His people in light of His covenant with Israel. I will be my God, and you will be my people. I have brought you out of Egypt and will give you the land promised to Abraham. Therefore, live in *this* way...live as my people called out into this world. Then we looked at the Apostles’ Creed. If the 10 Commandments show us what God wants from us, the Creed shows us what God has done for us as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

So now this morning we come to the Lord’s Prayer. In his Large catechism Luther says this:

So for the next four weeks we will be asking and hearing Jesus’ answer to the question which the disciples ask in our Gospel text this morning: Lord, teach us to pray! Teach us to pray. What should we say to God when we pray?

But this morning we’re going to ask another question. Who is this God that we are praying to? What is God like and how does that affect how we pray...not just the Lord’s Prayer in worship but the prayers that we pray day in and day out...or maybe the prayers that we pray once a week...or once a month. No matter how often or regularly we pray, the goal for this series is not just to help us understand the prayer that most of us just say from rote memory. The goal of this series is to help us to pray...pray more often...pray more fervently...pray so that we can continue to grow in our relationship with God...God who is...”Our Father...”

This is how Jesus instructs his followers to address God.

7 times in the OT

200+ times in the NT

→ Luke 2 (Jesus as a boy)

→ Luke 24 (Father, into your hands...)

Three characteristics of God our Father and how these things help us and spur us along in our lives of prayer

- 1) God is present with You
- 2) God can do something for you
- 3) God wants to connect with you

God is present with you.

If you’ve never been in a room with 22,000 of your closest friends age 14-18...you’re missing out. This past week we attended the LC-MS National Youth Gathering in

Minneapolis, MN. And it was an incredible sight to see 22,000 youth fill the stands of US Bank Stadium, the home of the Minnesota Vikings, singing together, praying together, having fun together and hearing the Word of God together. Next week the two youth who attended the Gathering along with Myriam and I will share some more about the Gathering so I don't want to spoil it for you now. But it will suffice for now that the theme, REAL. PRESENT. GOD., is appropriate for our time together this morning as we begin a brand new sermon series on the Lord's Prayer.

We might go through life, as many people have, wondering and asking, "Where is God?" We say and ask these questions most often in times of trial and difficulty. But not only do we ask these things in the dark valleys of our lives. But we might ask then in just the normal, mundane, day to day of our lives. As we go through life, going to work or school, spending time with family or friends, going to the grocery store and the mall, watching random videos on YouTube, it may occur to us from time to time, "God are you really there?" God, do you even care about this mundane stuff in my life? God what is the point of this?

Do you even care about the difficulty my friends or neighbors are going through right now?

Do you even care that I have to pick a college or a major or find a new job? Does any of this even matter to *You*?

Because here's the thing. When we call our God "Father" this may evoke memories or experiences of our own earthly fathers or those that we know of. And for some of you these memories and experiences aren't particularly positive. For some of you, the answer from your own earthly fathers was, "No, I don't care about the trouble you're facing. I don't care about your friends. I don't care where you go to college as long as you take all your stuff with you".

That's the reality, right? There was a sense of distance. There was this feeling that you were more of a burden than a joy. That your earthly father was just too busy to pay any attention to you. And so when Jesus calls God "Father" we may have to reckon with that a little bit.

But even if our experiences and our relationships with our fathers *were* positive and loving and caring and genuine, we still have to reckon with these questions about our Heavenly Father. This Heavenly Father who purports to be all powerful and all knowing and all loving but, man, life gets hard sometimes and we ask: Are you there? Do you care? Are you listening? Because if you're not, I'd rather not waste my breath.

The answer that Jesus gives us is a resounding yes! All throughout the Gospels scripture is just littered with illustrations of God's presence in our lives. There's a section of the Gospel of Matthew, Mt. 5 - 7, called the Sermon on the Mount, and there, in Mt. 6, Jesus says this: [read text]

Then in Luke's Gospel, Luke 18, Jesus tells this parable about the Persistent Widow. Luke tells us right off the bat that it's a parable about being persistent in prayer. But the parable itself is, I think, quite humorous. [read parable]

Is God present? Is God caring? Is God listening? Yes, yes, and yes. God is all of those things. And we know this because of Jesus. Not just because of what he teaches us but because of who he is. God actually made flesh. God incarnate with and for his people. Is God present? Yes! In Jesus God *is* with us.

God can do something for you.

But there's more to it than that. You see, it's comforting to know that God has entered into the mess of this world with his. It's comforting to know that Christ was born to be one of us, that He feels our pain. But in times of struggle...times of crisis...we want to know that God can do something.

I think all children may think their fathers are more competent fixers and repairmen than they actually are. The joke that all dads fix things with duct tape is well known for a reason. It's mostly true. My sister likes to tell a story of my dad fixing many things with duct tape for her. I'm not sure how true all those stories are or to what extent the number is exaggerated.

But the truth is that dads can't fix everything. Even though they may long to fix the hurt and pain that comes with life. Even though they may want to help correct mistakes and missteps, they can't always do that.

But what the Scriptures tell us is that our heavenly father *has* done something about all of this. Our heavenly father *has* done something about the brokenness and sin of our world. Jesus didn't come just to be one of us. Jesus didn't come just so that he can say, "I feel your pain". No, Jesus came to actually do something about it.

His death takes on all of our sin. It takes on all the sin of the world. It takes every hurt, it takes every broken relationship, it takes every disease, it takes every death, and it crucifies it. All of the world's hurts...past, present, and future, are nailed to the cross with Jesus. And because Jesus is raised again to new life, we see, in him, our future too. New Life. Resurrected life. A brand-new creation, made new, made perfect once again by our heavenly father who created this world, and is making all things new through his son Jesus.

God is present with us in all the hurts and pains of life. In all the ups and downs of this world. But more than that, God has done something about it. God has fixed it. Not a temporary duct tape-like fix. But with a permanent rising from the dead type fix. So when we pray, "our Father" we're praying to our God who is both present with us in this life and who actually has the power to do something about the sin and death that has so infected his good creation.

God wants to connect with you.

But there's one more aspect of God that we want to talk about this morning and I think that if we don't get this then we probably don't really get the Lord's prayer and prayer in general. In fact, if we don't get this then we probably kind of miss the purpose of the whole thing.

God wants to connect with you.

God isn't just present in the way that a hall monitor is present. God isn't just present in the way that a security camera is present. God isn't present in order to catch you doing something wrong. No, that's not the point at all. God is present because he wants to connect with his children. God has done something about the sin in this world so that we might have an intimate relationship with him...like a child ought to have with her father.

You see, all people have been wondrously made by God. And in that sense, every human being on planet earth is a child of God. But think of it this way. Every person on earth was made by their parents. But not all of them are connected to their parents in the child/parent relationship that humans are created to have. Right now, there are half a million children in the foster care system in the United States. Most children in the foster system spend between 2-6 years in the system before being adopted. All of these children were made in the exact same way. But not all have the privilege of remaining connected to their parents.

But God, wants to connect with you. God wants that relationship with you that you were created to have. And one of the tools he has given us to build that relationship is prayer. God has promised to be present...and he is...he is present in His word and he is present in the sacrament which we will partake in in just a little bit. And he then invites us, responding to his word, to pray to him. To pour out our hearts to him. To express our needs to him. To lament to him, to complain to him, to cry out to him in our pain and anguish. To ask him questions. To wonder aloud. To thank him. To praise him. To give thanks to him for all that he has done for us and given to us and blessed us with.

And we can begin by simply saying, "Father..." Father, I'm hurting right now. Father, I'm struggling right now. Father, thank you for your mercy. Father, thank you for sending your son Jesus. Father, show my friend, my aunt, my son, my daughter, that you are present and that you are working in their lives.

Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come
Give us each day our daily bread
And forgive our sins
For we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation. Amen.