

“Our Father”

Lord’s Prayer

Luke 11:1-4

“Lord, teach us to pray. . .” *Luke 11:1*

A couple of months before Eliana was born, some friends gave me and Talitha some parenting practice. Some friends went out for a movie while Talitha and I babysat their two daughters. The oldest daughter was a little over two years and the youngest daughter was about ten months old.

Everything was going well until mom and dad left. At that point the oldest daughter parked herself in front of the front door and began crying. In fact, for almost the whole two and a half hours they were at our house the oldest daughter sat next to the front door waiting for mom and dad. The only time that she moved away from the front door was to eat a snack at the dining room table which is positioned in front of a window that overlooks our driveway.

While she was at the table mom and dad came back to pick up their girls. In between bites of her cheerios she caught a glimpse of her parents getting out of the car. She then pressed herself against our window and cried, “Mommy! Daddy!” When mom and dad came into the house she jumped down from the chair, ran over and hugged them both. Talitha will tell you that while the oldest daughter was in the arms of her dad she said out loud but kind of to herself, “So happy!” A wonderful picture of a dear child with her dear Father.

This particular image of a child in the arms of her father is one to which, I am sure, a lot of us can relate. It calls to mind feelings of love, trust, security, and safety.

This particular image of a child resting in the loving arms of her father also brings to mind the words of Luther’s meaning to the introduction of the Lord’s Prayer in the *Small Catechism*. “Our Father who art in heaven” is how we begin this prayer that Jesus has taught us. Luther then asks the question, “What does this mean?” He quickly answers his question in this profoundly simple, yet meaningful way: “With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask him as dear children ask their dear father.”

The Lord’s Prayer is recorded twice in the Holy Scriptures. St. Luke and St. Matthew both record this prayer of Jesus. We heard the version from St. Luke’s Gospel again this evening. Jesus was praying by himself. His disciples apparently were nearby and were aware that Jesus was praying. When he finished one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples” (Lk 11:1). Jesus’ response is the Lord’s Prayer. And the prayer he gives begins by calling upon God as “Father.” An image of children resting confidently in the loving arms of the Heavenly Father through prayer.

It is easy to imagine why Jesus would teach his disciples to call God, "Father." In the Old Testament God's people, Israel, were often referred to as his children. Some of the titles of Jesus are "Son of God," "Son of Man," and "The Firstborn Son." Jesus himself calls God, "Father." In using this title Jesus shows us what kind of relationship God desires to have with us. It is a familial relationship. We are his children and he is our Father. We are brought into a right relationship with our dear Father and live in the household of God by trusting and being baptized into Christ, our brother.

In prayer then we act out our trust in the Heavenly Father by calling upon him, giving him thanks, expressing praise to him, and asking him for everything that we need. We do not ask or call upon anyone else other than our Heavenly Father. He is our Father. We are his children. He knows our needs. He promises to provide for us. He promises to protect us. He promises to keep us safe. And so we can approach our Heavenly Father with boldness and confidence. We can rest in his loving arms through prayer. We can trust him and depend upon him.

It is not always easy though, to call upon God as our Father and trust him completely to meet our needs. For some it is difficult to trust in a father that they cannot see. For others a bad experience with an earthly father causes them to flinch at the idea of God as Father.

In response to the concern that it is difficult to believe in a Heavenly Father that we cannot see, we proclaim God, the Father, who, although being the immortal, invisible God, reveals himself in tangible ways. He reveals himself through the incarnate Son of God. He reveals his loving kindness through his written and proclaimed Word of forgiveness, life, and salvation. He reveals his protection through the waters of Holy Baptism where he adopts us as his very own children and seals us with his promised Holy Spirit—the very Spirit of Jesus, the faithful Son of God. He reveals his provision by giving us traveling food in his body and blood in the bread and wine to sustain us in body and soul and strengthen us in faith. He reveals himself in tangible, concrete ways as our dear loving father and we as his dear children.

In response to the concern that some flinch at the idea of God as Father because of a bad experience with an earthly father, we proclaim God, the Father, who lavishes us with his love, protection, and provision in a way that no earthly father truly can. For, he is the one who has made us. He is the one who has remade us and reclaimed us in Christ. He knows our every need of body and soul and meets it.

We consider this evening the Lord's Prayer as it is recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus gives his disciples the Lord's Prayer in response to their plea, "Lord, teach us to pray." Jesus begins the Lord's Prayer with the title for God as "Father." He calls us to boldly and confidently approach God and call upon him as Father because we are his dear children. We are his dear children because Christ paid the adoption price with his precious blood. And on that cross, paying that price, St. Luke records another prayer from the lips of Jesus in which Jesus calls upon God as "Father." He says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).

And so through Christ, our brother we can boldly pray together the prayer that he has taught us. Let us do so now: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen