

Matthew 6:9  
God Our Father

Pray

Have you ever had a burning desire to meet someone? I remember as a boy desiring to meet a few people. I still have a letter that I wrote to Billy Graham requesting to meet him. I got a personalized letter denying my request. I wrote to Charles Stanley desiring to meet him, and I never heard back from him. Funny how things work out. Oh well. What about you? Is there anyone that you would like to meet? What is it within us that drives us to want to shake hands, say hello, and establish relationships?

Take your Bibles and turn with me to Matthew 6. Today we look at the first line of the prayer the Lord gives us. Let's read it together. *Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name.*

There is someone far greater for us to have fellowship with than anyone we could ever imagine – the eternal, holy, majestic, all powerful, uncontainable, indescribable, amazing God who is *Our Father*. And He bids us to come away and be with him. There is nothing sweeter, nothing more satisfying than to look up into the heavens, to look out at a storm, to look into troubled times, to enjoy happy moments and say, God is *my* Father.

What does it mean to call God “Father”? By calling God Father, you and I understand him as the eternal antecedent. That is, he is first, we humble ourselves before him. God is greater, higher, more to be desired than anything we could even imagine. Do you believe this? Is this the way that you live? I like how Andrew Murray, the Scottish missionary to S. Africa in the 1800's, puts it:

There is something here that strikes us at once. While we ordinarily first bring our own needs to God in prayer, and then think of what belongs to God and his interests, the Master reverses the order. First *Thy* name, *Thy* kingdom, *Thy* will; then give *us*, lead *us*, deliver *us*. The lesson is of more importance than we think. In true worship the Father must be first, must be all. The sooner I learn to forget myself in the desire that he may be glorified, the richer will the blessing be that prayer will bring to myself. No one ever loses by what he sacrifices to the Father.”<sup>1</sup>

We know how self-centered people can be because we ourselves are so self-centered. This self-centeredness has come as a result of something in the Bible we call the Fall, where we chose to disregard God's good and instead pursue what we declared as good. What if we pray for things that take us farther from desiring God? What if in asking God for him to act in our lives we are really pursuing our purposes instead of his purposes? Our whole lives are to be spent destroying the distinction between our purposes and his purposes until every beat of our heart is in step with his will.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Murray, *School of Prayer* in Boice, 172.

Look where the prayer from our Lord starts. *Our Father* is not simply the place where we start but the goal for which we strive. Do you feel the weight of calling God Father? Some today think that calling God Father is disrespectful. They suggest, “You mean to tell me that this God whom you describe as holy, majestic, and all these things, can be called in an intimate term like Father?” To which we reply, “I know, it’s really unbelievable. We wouldn’t dare do it unless Jesus, the eternal Son from the Father had taught us this way.”

There are three truths that I want us to explore from this passage all about this call to start our praying with *Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*

Calling God *Our Father* is

1. Established by His Grace

This prayer is an exclusive prayer. God isn’t God *the* Father, he is *our* Father. Everyone is not a son of God. Everyone is created by God, God is generous to everyone, but only those who are in the Son are sons of God. The Bible tells us that there are two families in this world – the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Everyone is born into one family but the only way to get into the family of God is by being born again. Everyone was born into darkness, but the twice-born have been transferred from darkness to light. All were born dead in trespasses and sins, but those who believe are alive in Christ. All were born disobedient and subject to wrath, but those who have been born again are now the objects of God’s love, affection, and now walk by faith in obedience. Only those whom he calls as his own can call him as their own and we call him *Our Father.*

The first time we see God referred to as Father is in Exodus. Exodus is the archetype salvation story of the Old Testament. The people of God, who were promised an inheritance, were slaves. So, God sent a savior to them. Sound familiar? When God calls Moses to go to Pharaoh he tells him to say, *‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.”* (Exodus 4:22-23) By Jesus inviting us to call God *Father* he is letting us who were slaves to sin know that a new exodus is coming whereby we will now be sons.

There are two other echoes in Scripture that I want to call our attention to this morning. Both tell the same story. The first is 2 Samuel 7:14. 2 Samuel 7 is one of those passages that if you like to write in your Bible, should have a good amount of ink. In 2 Samuel 7 God makes a covenant with David and says this to him, listen close:

*When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’” (2 Samuel 7:12-16, ESV)*

This covenant is very influential for the direction of the whole Bible. We know we are looking for a Savior. It wasn't Moses, it wasn't David, it will be a son of David who will be the Son of God. This Son will enable many to become sons of God. This hope is the hope that fills the pages of Scripture. Listen to how God elaborates this point through Isaiah:

*“Come, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and he who has no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.  
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.  
Incline your ear, and come to me;  
hear, that your soul may live;  
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David. (Isaiah 55:1-3, ESV)*

That steadfast love is expressed another way, with another word, a five-letter word, starts with a G. Do you know what it is? Grace. This is why we can't so easily say God is the Father of all. Only those adopted into the family get to call God *Abba*, Daddy.

Number two. Calling God *Our Father* is:

## 2. Secured By the Everlasting Ministry of the Son

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the eternal Son of the Father. How did Jesus come to us? Without ceasing to be what he was, he became what he was not. Why did he come? To make us as he is. Who is Jesus? The Son of the Father. We are in Christ, we are sons and daughters of God. Paul said us becoming sons and daughters is the reason for God sending his Son. Galatians 4:4-7:

*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So, you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (ESV)*

What does this mean? We get to call him Daddy. We are now his family. Not that we become gods, that is heresy, but we are God's – we belong to him, he belongs to us. Look at the prayer closely, at once we are meant to feel overwhelmed by his majestic transcendence and the warmth of his nearness. Do you know what I mean by transcendence? By saying that God is transcendent we are referring to the heights of his majesty, he is high and lifted up and greatly to be praised. His transcendence is so great it will never be fully overcome, meaning there has been and always will be a distinction between he and us – he is God, most wonderful Creator, we are human, his

creatures. God made us with the capacity to have fellowship with him. This is the mind-blowing portion and the good news of the gospel. Our story is one of redemption, we forfeited fellowship with God for something else. (If you see at all the absolute stupidity of forfeiting fellowship with God, you get it!) Not even our own sinfulness could thwart the purpose of God, so he sent the Son to save.

Imagine in your mind a blank white page. On the left side write G-O-D. We know the name of God is not just a combination of letters but stands for his person, his character, all that he is. Then on the farthest opposite side of the page, in smaller letters, you write U-S. So, on the left we have God and on the right, we have Us. Between is a large gap of white. That gap of white is what separates us from God. It is called an ontological separation. Meaning when we think about us and God we are not even dealing with the same terms. We aren't comparing apples and oranges, we are comparing comparable to incomparable. We were created to have fellowship with God, how can this be? How can finite have fellowship with infinite? How can imperfect have fellowship with imperfection? We can't get to where he is, we are incapable. He has to condescend to us. He has to break through the separation, and he has done in the sending of the Son. This is what Paul says in Philippians 2:6-8. *[Jesus], existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.* (CSB) Why? So that he could make us become partakers of the divine nature, so that in partaking of the divine nature we could have eternal fellowship with him. (2 Peter 1:4)

Here is the good news of the gospel, the breathtaking, awe-inspiring, wow of the gospel. Don't miss this. God doesn't want us to give him our lives. Our lives are wrecked and ruined. God wants to give us his life and he does so through the ministry of the Son and the Spirit who has been poured into our hearts by which we cry *Abba Father* (Romans 8:15)

Do you see how he overcame what separated us from him? We couldn't go to where he was so he came to us. And here is the part that gives me goosebumps. Once he decided to take on flesh, it was a decision to never lay that flesh down again. And as long as he has flesh our salvation is secure. His ministry is a ministry that will continue forever. Speaking of this ongoing ministry, Hebrews says, *The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.* (7:23-25, ESV) As long as he is incarnated so shall we be saved. The Incarnation is forever, we are saved forever. No one has said this more beautifully than Charitie Bancroft. Listen to the way she put it.

Before the throne of God above  
I have a strong, a perfect plea;  
a great High Priest, whose name is Love,  
who ever lives and pleads for me.  
My name is graven on his hands,  
my name is written on his heart;

I know that while in heaven he stands  
no tongue can bid me thence depart,  
no tongue can bid me thence depart.

One with himself, I cannot die,  
my soul is purchased by his blood;  
my life is hid with Christ on high,  
with Christ my Savior and my God,  
with Christ my Savior and my God.

Thirdly, and we must hurry, calling God *Our Father* is, Established by grace, Secured by the ministry of the Son, and:

### 3. Advanced by the Spirit's Power

*Hallowed be thy name.* What does that mean? That's a word that has fallen out of our vocabulary which may be a sermon all in and of itself, but we will save it for another day. The CSB translates this well, *your name be honored as holy.* When we pray for the hallowing of God's name we are not praying as if God's name is not holy, we are praying that we will learn in all that we do to honor his name as holy. This is the highest attainable reality that the whole universe can realize and delight in – the hallowing of God's name.

These are fighting words that we carry with us onto this field filled with sin, injustice, danger, despair, death and we cry out with our lives as we live holy and we cry out as we see sin and injustice, despair, death in our world – *Hallowed be Thy name.* The hallowing of God's name is not safe, it is costly. But unless we are dedicated to the hallowing of God's name there is no reason for the rest of the prayer. The hallowing of God's name is the what will remain because there is no one higher, no one greater, no one like our God, *Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*

Do you see what Jesus has done? He has let us know that we now have something to believe in, someone to love, and a cause to serve. Can you say this prayer and mean it?