

“Our Father”

September 10, 2017

Our Savior’s Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Justin Kumfer

Two weeks ago I lost our son Zeke in Target. I was with him and the three other boys and we were looking at the summer clearance stuff. I called for him and expected him to come to where I was because that’s what had happened before. So, we kept looking around and then I realized after a few minutes that he wasn’t coming. I loaded the other three boys onto the cart and went looking. Well, he wasn’t in the area we were in and I figured he had run back to the toys. So we head to the toys. We look around and the other boys are helping me look down the aisles. We get to the end of the toys and still no Zeke. We head back to the summer section and look again but he’s not there.

By this time panic is setting in. I’m praying this whole time that God would help me find him and that he’s ok. Finally, I meet a guy who’s on his radio and I tell him that I can’t find my son. He looks at me kinda crazy-like because I’ve already got three sons in my cart. But as I’m telling him this, he radios, “we’ve got another code whatever.”

In the minutes that follow, he tells me to wait at the front while I’m worried about my son. I can hear what I think is Zeke crying in the middle of the store. I tell the guy I’m going to go meet him. Well, I move to the front of the section where I think I hear Ezekiel. I look down the aisle and see him and his little blue shark shirt all the way at the other end of the store. I hurriedly walk towards him. He

finally sees me. He runs away from the Target people who are keeping an eye on him and we hug once we finally meet in the middle. I can't tell you how relieved I was to find him safe and sound. My prayers had been answered.

Prayer is a funny thing. It's supposed to be a conversation with God, but it seems like we do all the talking. We use it most often when we have great need. We pray when someone's sick. We call upon God when we're in trouble. It's more like an emergency hotline or something than a direct line of communication with God. We also tend to pray out of habit, like when we pray before bed, or before meals, or even when we pray the Lord's Prayer in worship.

We're continuing our series on Luther's Small Catechism. You've probably guessed that we'll be talking about prayer. More specifically, about the Lord's prayer. This is one of those prayers that we pray out of habit, but also because we're told to. After all, isn't this how Jesus told us to pray? In the Gospel reading from Matthew, He even says, "Pray then like this." It brings up the question, is this the way we should always pray, with these exact words, or is it something more?

I'd like to show you a video. It's a little longer than you're used to, but it gives us a very good perspective to keep in mind with the Lord's Prayer.

The stage that is our focus today is worship. The whole prayer begins with four seemingly simple words, "Our Father, in heaven." Jesus begins by revealing how we should address God.

Sometimes the Lord's Prayer is called the Our Father. This is a fitting title because that is exactly who and what we are addressing. The Father who watches over and protects us all. Like a good Father, there are certain things we can count on.

Think back to my story about my son. Now, I like to think of myself as a good father, and yet I'm not perfect. I get distracted and busy and frustrated at times. Those times can cause me to lose my cool or overreact to situations. I punish too harshly, I neglect them when I need a break, and sometimes I just don't know what I'm supposed to be doing as their father. Maybe you've felt this too as parents or friends or within your own family. I think I'm a pretty good example of the regular father. They try, but make mistakes.

Now, let's contrast that to God the Father. Jesus tells us to address God directly as father. Not as His father, but as our own father! One of the distinctions I like that a commentator made concerning this portion is that this address is both personal and corporate. It allows us to address God who is my own father but also the Father of all who believe in Him. It's not only about me but it's about me in my community of faith. It allows us to connect back to the whole of Israel as God's people.

Back to our comparison, God is not imperfect like the fathers that live on this earth. Fathers in our world fail and struggle, but are still important in the lives of their children. And the media is no help in lifting up the importance of a father. But when we see God as Father, we see the best example of everything that being a father means. So when we pray to Him, we don't need to heap words or praises on top of one another or say the same thing over and over in the hopes that He will hear us. Verse 8 of Matthew 6 says that "God the father knows what you need even before you ask."

In the next chapter of Matthew, Jesus assures us how amazing it is that we can ask God for anything. When we ask our birth parents, they know how to give good gifts even though they are sinful, but when we ask God, Jesus reminds us, "how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

This relationship in prayer isn't just one of asking and receiving. Our video reminded us that there is more to prayer, and the Lord's Prayer, than just asking God to bless us or help us. God isn't always going to give us what we want or ask for. What God wants is a relationship with us that draws us closer to Him so that we desire what He wants for us. This prayer and the template reveals to us that we have the opportunity to speak directly with the God who created everything and still resides in heaven watching over everything, but who also watches over and cares for His people.

1 John reminds us, "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." In the Lord's prayer we abide in Him. Jesus teaches us how to abide in God the Father because it was out of God's great love for us that Jesus came to live, to teach, and to die, so that we might be saved. Let's pray now to our God and Father.