

Title: Our Father  
Text: Matthew 6.9  
Theme: God, our Father  
Series: Matthew #28  
Prop Stmt: You need to know whom you are talking to. Knowing who God is drives us to long for him.

Read Text:

When Jesus says, “Pray then *like this*” is he saying to repeat these words, or is he giving us a model by which to pray? The answer can be both. Saying these same words can be helpful, if you do so deliberately and reflectively. But repeating these words verbatim is not the big idea. When Jesus said, “like this” he was saying, here is a model, or a pattern to follow. Luke records another time when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray and he answers (11.2-4) by giving them this model, but there is some slight variation of the words. So, obviously Jesus was not telling his disciples to say these exact words over and over. However, by the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Christians were commanded by “church rules” to pray this prayer 3x a day and were told that the more they repeated it, the greater their spirituality. Some of you grew up in a religious tradition, where saying this prayer (known as the “our Father”) was a means to earn forgiveness. The worse your offense, the more times you had to repeat it. Ironically, that is what Jesus said NOT to do (v.7). If you grew up saying it in church, it is easy to believe that repeating this as part of the liturgy is a sign of truly spiritual church, and that is not the case at all. Other churches have reacted to that, and never repeat these words. I believe that you can say these words without it being mechanical. This prayer can be helpful, if you say it with intentional thought, but the emphasis is on the manner of praying and not so much on the content.

But, in order for us to really understand what is going on, let’s step back from this text for a second. The Bible begins with God living with and enjoying his people and his people living with and enjoying him. The Bible ends with God living with and enjoying his people and his people living with and enjoying him. But, very close to the beginning of the Bible, this relationship between God and his people of harmony, joy, love, delight and complete satisfaction is lost. It is lost in Genesis 3 and from that time on, the story of the Bible is the story of God’s plan to restore it. Everything from Genesis 3 to Malachi 4 is the story of God preparing the world for the coming of Christ, the God-man. Matthew tells us about the birth of Christ. God has come into the world. God is living with people, again. This is huge! But this is not the kind of relationship that God ultimately has in mind. The people are in darkness. The people do not really know who God is. If you do not know God, then you do not know who you are. If you do not know where you came from, then you will never figure out where you are going. Christ comes to the earth in order to make God known. The Creator has come to his own creation. Therefore, the ministry of Christ is really two-fold. He has come to make God known and he has come to make a way to have a relationship with God.

The people, however, think they know who God is. They don't. They think they know how to relate to God. They don't. Christ is attempting to correct their erroneous views of

God. Over and over he keeps pointing people to His Father and he tells us about his Father. At the same time he reveals the fact that He also is God. Later on, he makes it clear that there is a third person in the Godhead, called the Spirit. There is one God who is in a tri-unity (Trinitarian) relationship. The head of the Godhead, is the Father.

My aim this morning is to help you understand a little bit more about God because deep thoughts of God will produce great affection for God and great dependence upon God and soul-satisfying joy in God. My aim in this sermon is consistent with the aim of Jesus in his ministry. He wants you to know God and be in relationship with God so that you have great affection for God, great dependence on God and great joy in God. He wants you to know the Father, like he knows the Father. And what is amazing is that the Father wants you to know Jesus, like he knows Jesus. Jesus has a perfect relationship with his Father and Jesus came to this earth in order make a way possible for us to enter into that relationship. Christ also wants you to know that the Father is in heaven, that is, he rules. And finally Christ wants you to know that God is holy. There is no God like our God.

Since God is not like, how we naturally think, then the way that we often see people praying is not right. God is not impressed with ritual, ceremony and liturgy, for the sake of liturgy. Jesus says, you do not pray to impress others and you do not pray long prayers, saying the same thing over and over and over because you think that God is impressed with that. He isn't! But, this is how you pray.

### **Come to God as your Father.** (9a)

#### **He is the Father.**

Whenever Christ teaches about God, he often refers to God as “my father.” “Father” is part of his divine name because it describes his very nature. Christ is saying that I belong to him and he belongs to me. Christ is so overjoyed by his Father, that he cannot wait to introduce him to you. That is my summary of the final lesson that Jesus taught his disciples in the Upper Room before his arrest in the garden. The Upper Room discourse is gloriously littered with references by Christ to the Father and to my Father. Jesus is calls him that. In fact, in every prayer that Jesus prayed, he calls God “Father” expect on the cross, when he cried out “My God, My God...” Now, at this point in the ministry of Christ, Christ has not fully disclosed the fact that he too is God. At this point, Christ is helping us see the very nature of the 1<sup>st</sup> Person of the Trinity as he is. He is the Father. That is a term of affection and of devotion.

#### 1) It speaks of intimacy.

Jesus spoke in Aramaic. I believe that the word that Jesus used for Father is the personal term, Abba. In Mark 14.36, Mark quotes Jesus as saying “Abba.” So, while the concept of God as a father is found in the OT, the idea of a personal and therefore accessible relationship to God was not understood. God was hidden behind the curtain in the Temple. God was on Mt. Sinai and the people could not come near. God was separate. All of this was true. But now Christ is revealing that he is more than that. He is Father.

This means that God wants you to think of him in terms of being closely related to him. He is your source. He is your provider. He cares deeply about you. It is who he is. (John 20.17)

## 2) It speaks of identity

I've watched the movie "42" at least 3 maybe 4 times now. It is the story of Jackie Robinson, the first man to break one of the race barriers in Major League Baseball. I wanted my kids to see it, because I did not want them to take for granted the fact that Austin Jackson and Tori Hunter play on the same team as Justin Verlander and Andy Dirks. After the birth of his firstborn son, Jackie is in the hospital, looking into the nursery at his boy and he says, "You will know me." He makes a promise to be involved in his life. It is a promise that he makes good on. He knows the challenge of trying to grow up without knowing his dad. The influence of a father in a family, the influence of families upon a city, and the influence of the cities upon a nation are not matters of debate. They are matters of fact. Yet, I am convinced that the majority of Christians do not know their Father as they should. Not because the Father has abandoned them or ignored them, but because we have basically ignored him. We are too busy with life, here and now. We are so distracted by lesser things that we really do not contemplate the reality and the weight of God. Let me give you an example of what I mean by that.

I have mentioned before that when a family member dies that it is easy to become so busy with the details of the funeral that we fail to actually grieve. I think that it is possible that some of the demands and perceived "expectations" of a funeral end up being distractions that do not help us grieve but in many ways keep us from it. Many of you have said to me, looking back on the death of someone, that it was all "just a blur."

Some of you parent that way. You have your kids involved in so many things (because that is what good, indulgent parents do, right?) that quality time is the van ride to practice and games. Of course, they have their music pumping through their ear buds while texting their friends, and doing their homework, so it is a bit of a stretch to actually call it quality time. They graduate, go off to school, and text you now and then when they want some money, and you look back on their growing up and say, "It was all just a blur." We are so easily distracted by lesser things that we miss the opportunity that is before us.

Beloved, I do not want that to happen to your entire life. We can be so easily distracted by lesser things that we fail to really contemplate God. We bemoan the fact that God has been kicked out of our schools and from public discourse, but the truth is, we tend to live as if God is irrelevant. When the reality and therefore, the weightiness of God is lost on us, then his law evokes no concern, his love generates no real gratitude, and his grace (?), his grace does not appear to be all that amazing. We look at Nathan, trying to get us stirred up and wonder, what's your deal? You look like you are trying just a little too hard. But did you ever consider the possibility that he may be convinced of something that you are not thinking about? Or that he is contemplating something very important that you are ignoring? We have this idea that a church service should only last an hour.

When you tell people that our service goes about an hour and a half, sometimes longer, they look at you as if you are a martyr, or crazy. And we all know that everyone has to have time to get home to see the Lions game, right? Try explaining this to believers who gathered in an underground church in China, and who are so hungry to know about God, that they will sit for 5-6 hours at a time just to listen and then engage in conversations. Try telling them that we cannot go too long because we have soccer practice and baseball games and they will rightfully wonder if we are really talking about allegiance and surrender to the same God. In our Americanized version of Christianity it is not that we do not believe in the existence of God, but what we believe about him has so little weight to it, that He has so little bearing upon our lives. I aim to change that. What is your identity? It is not your kid's soccer skills. It is not the Lions. God, the Father establishes our identity. He determines who we are. He is our Father. He is our second birth Father. He is the one who adopted us into his family. We have his name. We bear his image. Our true identity, our core personhood is determined by him.

God is, not as we often want him to be, nor imagine him to be, since he cannot be created in our image. God is, as he has revealed himself to be. Do not miss this now. God has made us in his image, which means that the highest goal of man, the most supreme delight of our soul, the greatest privilege, joy and satisfaction is to know God. There is absolutely nothing that is more glorious, more urgent or more consequential.

If your life is a blur of distractions from pursuing the "good life", then when someone, perhaps a child says, "*I think God wants me to serve him as a missionary in a Muslim country,*" your instinctive response would be, "*why on earth would you ever do that?*" But if you have a taste of the supremacy of God and you know him as your Father. And as your Father you know that his love, promises, faithfulness, grace, goodness and compassion are pure and infinite joy to your soul, and you know that there is plenty of God's grace to share with others, and you know that God's glory is set on display when people from every tribe, language and nation come to him as Father and trust in his Son as Savior, then your instinctive response would be, "*of course, why wouldn't you go to a Muslim country to make God known?*" God is not only "Father"...

### **God is our Father.**

Did you realize that you have a relationship with God in order to be part of a relationship with God's children? God does not treat you as if you are more important than any of his other children, because you are not. God is incredibly kind and gracious to you. But you are not in a league all of your own. We are in this together. He is "our" Father. But here is the amazing thing. This Father can be in two places at the same time. In fact, he is everywhere at the same time. When God gives you his attention, he is not taking it away from any other child. God will always do what his best for his children, always. It may not be what you think is best for your life, but your individual life is not the whole story. Your life is part of the life of his children. You and I have a part that we are called to play faithfully. We can play our part with confidence that God, the Father is doing what is best for his family. He will always do that. By the way, I think Jesus included himself in this.

## **We are his children.**

A young father was telling me this week that his daughter (early elementary age) was getting lippy. She was talking back to him. This dad correctly understood that what she was doing was satanic. I am serious. That is what rebellion is. It began with Satan who refused to accept his place. In the case of this dad, he did not condone what his girl was doing, he did not overlook it, he did not pretend that it was a phase, and he did not excuse it. He identified it for what it is. Expecting, demanding, cultivating, teaching respect and obedience to parents is not an ego trip that we are on. We know if that if we allow our kids to think that it is okay to talk back to us and defy us, that they will think that it is okay to talk back to and defy God and that has eternal consequences. As our Father, we do not tell him what to do. He is our Father and we are his children. We pray to him, not as an equal, but as his children. Yet, as his children, he loves to hear from his kids. He absolutely delights in his children.

Today is my birthday. What do I want for my birthday? I just hope my kids call. That's it. I love my kids, but I do not love them perfectly. I have tried to be a good dad to my kids, but I made mistakes along the line. But, in spite of all of my imperfections, I will drop just about anything that I am doing when they call. You, however, have a perfect Father. His love for you is absolutely infinite and pure. There is not a hint of imperfection in his love. How much greater is his delight when he hears you/us say, "Father"?

But, what about the person who says, "I can't relate to God as Father because my own dad was so abusive and so dark and evil."? Our hearts should be very tender to people who have grown up with such angry dads. But God is not called Father because he is a photo-copy of earthly fathers. Oh no! He was Father first. It is fatal to transfer the failures of an earthly father to our heavenly Father. That is backwards. Human fathers are called to reflect our heavenly Father. Dads, we will give an account of this. Some fathers reflect God more faithfully than others. If your dad reflects God, be grateful. But, your dad may reflect Satan. Be grateful, then that your eternal Father, is the ultimate Father.

## **Come to God as your Father who rules everything. (9a)**

But, our Father is not just our Father and is special because we have this relationship with him, which we do. Our Father is in heaven. Whoa! The one who is my Father, who knows my name, who formed me, who chose me, who predestined me, who justified me, who sealed me, who adopted me, who is sanctifying me, who is owns me is in heaven and rules over all. He is not just over me because he happens to be my Father; he is also over me because he is over all. He is in heaven. That is he rules. He is supreme. What Jesus is telling us to do is to call upon God as the One who loves us as his children and at the same time is the One who rules from heaven.

Now, here is our challenge. We need to hold onto the one without letting go of the other. God is our Father. This is how Jesus teaches his children to address him. And our Father is in heaven. As our Father, God is personal. God is as personal as you are personal. God

is a person. God has personhood, even more so in one sense, than you do. He is the perfect Father who is in heaven. He is not only perfectly good; he is infinitely great. Being in heaven does not mean that he is far away. Being in heaven means that he is in charge. Your Father loves you, and his power enables him to act upon that love. Your Father is both loving and ruler. He never has to choose one over the other. In fact, there is nothing that can stop him from acting upon his love. Everything that he is doing is for your benefit, regardless of how you see it at this moment. Our Father is In Heaven.

**Come to God as your Father who is holy.** (9b)

There are six petitions in this prayer. This is the first one. "Hallowed be your name." The first thing that Jesus says that we are to pray for is for the honor of God. This phrase, "hallowed by your name" is a desire and a request. We are to pray/desire that God will make his holiness known and we are to pray that God will help us honor his holiness. Jesus teaches us to worship! Worship is from the word, worth-ship. We are attributing to another worth. Here is the highest statement of worth-ship. We are saying to our Father in heaven, "You are holy!" When Jesus says "Hallowed be your **name**" he is not saying that the letters G-O-D are utterly unique, it is that the One whom we call God is completely unique. Holy means set apart. God is set apart from us. God is Creator, we are creation. God is infinite, we are finite. God is eternal, and had no beginning. God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and immutable. That means that he is unstoppable, irrefutable, irresistible and unchangeable. You can't out rank him, out last him, out think him, our out run him. Wherever you go, he is there. Whatever you think, he's already thought. Whatever you can do, he can do better. His love is unlike our love. His compassion is unlike our compassion. His mercy, his justice, his faithfulness is unlike us. As your Father, come to him. As the one in heaven, come with submission.

But, how do you come to God as your Father who is in heaven and who is holy in righteousness? Here is a tension that at this point in his ministry, Jesus has not yet resolved. How can God, who is completely holy, be our Father, when we hardly look a thing like God? Why would Jesus teach us to pray like this?

There are two reasons why Christ came to the earth. 1) To make God known and 2) To make a way for us to God. God is Father, and he is Son and he is Spirit. He is light, he is glory, he is life, he is love, he is joy, he is satisfaction, he is rest, he is shelter, he is comfort, and he is righteous. How can a perfectly righteous God live with people who are completely unrighteous? He cannot! In order for us to live with God and experience all that he is, we have to be changed. God will not compromise his holiness, so we have to compromise our sin. We have to do something about our sin. That is what Jesus did. He took upon himself the credit of the guilt of all of your sin and then he died bearing your sin as his curse, so that the righteous justice of God would be satisfied. Instead of God judging you, God judged Jesus in your place. And instead of treating Jesus as his child, he treated him as a sinner so that he could treat you as his child.

Jesus trusted his Father, even though it cost him his life, because in trusting his Father, he made it possible for you to know God as your Father. But God can only be your Father, if Jesus is your Savior. They go together, and it is really amazing.