

**SI:** We’re studying the Lord’s Prayer this summer.

The Lord’s Prayer is mentioned twice in the New Testament—

here in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount and also in Luke 11.

In Luke, the setting is different. The disciples have been watching Jesus.

They’ve heard him pray, seen him go away and pray—sometimes all night.

They must have noticed the peace and confidence he had in prayer.

So they said: Lord, teach us to pray. Jesus said, When you pray, pray like this:

And he gave them the Lord’s Prayer.

The Lord’s Prayer is a model prayer.

It’s a guide, not just for our words, but for our minds and hearts,  
as we pray to the living God.

**INTRO:** The Barna Group is an organization that studies religion in America. Several years ago Barna did a study to determine the percentage of American adults that pray at least once a week. What do you think that number was? What percentage of American adults pray at least once a week? Write down your answer and if you get it right then show Holly and you get go first in line at the picnic today!

According to Barna it's 84%.

84% of American adults pray at least once a week.

I'm sure that if they had asked do you ever pray?

Have you ever prayed? It would have been in the high 90s.

That's because prayer is a universal practice.

Virtually everyone prays at one time or another, no matter what their religion or philosophy.

Muslims pray. Hindus pray. Animists pray. Buddhists pray or meditate.

All the great world religions have prayers of various kinds.

And you know the old saying that there are no atheists in foxholes.

Even many people who claim there is no God will often cry out in desperation—  
God, help me.

I once read a book about major airline crashes and each account included transcripts from the cockpit voice recorders.

What do you think were the last words of many pilots?

“O God.”

They might have normally used that phrase flippantly—  
but in that moment of death, it became a prayer.

Almost everybody prays at one time or another.

So what sets Christian prayer apart from other kinds of prayer?

Here's the answer: Christians are those who pray “Our Father in heaven.”

That's the dividing line. That's what separates Christian prayer from the prayers of all other religions and philosophies. Our Father in heaven.

That's what makes Christian prayer real, true, and effective prayer.

We've seen for the past two Sundays that before Jesus gets to the prayer itself he gives two warnings, two bad examples.

Don't pray like hypocrites and don't pray like pagans.

Don't pray like hypocrites, instead . . .

go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.

Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Don't pray like pagans, for . .

your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

He contrasts hypocritical prayer and pagan prayer with prayer that recognizes God as your Father.

Jesus says it three times before he even gets to the Lord's Prayer itself:  
your Father, your Father, your Father.

Then he begins: This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven . . .

There are so many different ways we could study this,

but I want us to look at it this morning under two points.

1. Three ways the Bible describes God's fatherly relationship with you
2. How knowing God is your Father in heaven changes your prayers

## **MP#1 Three ways the Bible describes God's fatherly relationship with you**

These are the three ways: adoption, sonship, the spirit by which we cry Abba

They are all found in Galatians 4:4-7 which we read earlier in the service.

Let's look at each.

### **Adoption**

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.

Salvation is multifaceted. It's like a diamond.

You can turn it and it sparkles in different ways.

Justification is one facet of salvation, sanctification is another facet, glorification is another facet. Each of these saves us in a particular way.

What about adoption? What does it tell us about salvation?

A couple big things come to mind.

First, adoption is not a result of the child's effort.

Children do not adopt parents. They are adopted.

If the child is very young, he doesn't even know it's happening. Happens to him. So adoptions shows salvation is by God's sovereign grace and sovereign choice.

Second, adoption is a change of status. This is the main point.

When parents adopt, they hope this child will grow up and take on the values and characteristics of the family.

But they know the act of adoption doesn't change the child's nature or behavior.

That's going to take time and lots of factors will come into play.

What does adoption immediately change?

As I said, it changes their status.

An adopted child is given a family name and a place in the family and immediately has a right to all the privileges that belong to natural children.

In adoption the father says: I have legally bound myself to regard you with all the commitment, love, and acceptance that I would give my natural child.

An adopted son is a son and an adopted daughter is a daughter whether they are good or bad, whether they please their parents or make them sad, they are still sons and daughters.

Their status cannot change.

John 1:12 says:

Yet to all who received him (Christ), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

So if you trust Christ, God is your Father by adoption and your status as his child

cannot be cannot no matter what you do.  
You're God's son or you're God's daughter no matter what.

## **Sonship**

The second way the Bible describes God's fatherly relationship with you is sonship.

So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Some modern English translations of the Bible change this verse to say:

You are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child of God then an heir.

So they change son to child.

Those same translations sometimes add the words "and daughters" where the passage originally just says sons, so it becomes in English sons and daughters.

They do that to be gender inclusive.

The thought behind those translations is that saying child instead of son or adding "and daughters" instead of just sticking to the literal translation which just says sons, will make the Bible more accessible to modern readers.

And you could make the argument that of course sons are children and daughters are implied when the Bible calls believers sons of God.

Furthermore, there some verses where the original text of the Bible does use the language of sons and daughters referring to believers.

But very often, like in this passage in Galatians, the writers of the New Testament very deliberately call all believers sons, both male and female.

Why? It's not sexism. It's not denying the importance of daughters.

In fact, it's the exact opposite of sexism.

In both Greco-Roman culture and Jewish culture in the first century, only sons could be heirs. Daughters could not inherit their father's estate.

The Gospel turned that on its head.

God is the Father of all believers through Christ.

As Father he has equal regard for all his children so he makes them all his heirs.

He gives them all an inheritance.

The way the New Testament expressed that was in this very counter-cultural way, by calling all God's children sons.

If you are a man or woman, boy or girl, who follows Jesus, you're a son of God, which is another way of saying that you have an inheritance.

Your Father in heaven is planning things for you.

He's getting you ready to step into your inheritance.

The third way the Bible describes God's fatherly relationship with you is:

**The spirit by which we cry "Abba" Father.**

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

I’m sure you’ve probably heard that Abba is the Aramaic word for father or daddy. When Jesus was a boy, he called Joseph Abba.

One of the first words little children learn in an English-speaking home is da da da. Well, in an Aramaic-speaking home it was abba abba abba.

I was once in a store when I suddenly felt some little arms wrap around my legs. I looked down and there was this toddler holding on to me.

Then he looked up and saw this strange face and you can imagine his reaction. His head whipped around and he cried out: Da-da!

What made the moment perfect was that his father was standing there watching this happen and he did what you would expect a dad to do.

He roared with laughter and then when his son fled to him, from this strange imposter, he scooped him up in a big hug and all was right with the world.

Adoption as God’s child speaks of your status.

Sonship speaks of God’s inheritance he’s preparing for you.

The spirit by which you cry Abba speaks of your experience of God’s love and care

I could put it this way. You have to believe you are adopted and an heir of God.

It takes faith. And often times that faith has to go against the evidence.

If bad things are happening in your life, it might not look like you have divine status and an inheritance in the new heavens and new earth. You have to believe.

But the spirit by which we cry Abba is God’s love brought home to your heart.

It’s when you inwardly sense God is your Father and you turn to him instinctively in times of trouble, distress, sorrow, anger, joy, and happiness.

It’s an internal witness of the Holy Spirit that you are a child of God.

When we talk about experience, we have to understand that everybody is different. Even in a family, different children relate to their father differently.

Some are closer than others, some more emotionally connected than others, some freer in their speech than others. It’s the same with God.

I remember once overhearing my sister tell our father about a testimony she had heard, a man who had been dramatically converted from drug addiction.

And it bothered her that she didn’t feel God the same way this man obviously did.

Dad said to her: You don’t feel the same way because you grew up knowing God.

From the time you were little, you sang Jesus loves me.

And God protected you from the things this man suffered.

So, of course, your relationship with God is different, but it's just as real.

Adoption, sonship, the spirit by which we cry Abba.

Let's apply this to prayer.

## **MP#2 How knowing God is your Father in heaven changes your prayers**

I want to approach this by thinking about two different people living in someone's house—a renter and a child.

If you are a renter, the owner is your landlord.

It's a business relationship. It's an exchange of goods and services.

You're on good terms as long as you pay rent, landlord keeps up his end of lease.

I was talking to someone about his experience as a landlord with rental property.

He said what's hard is when the tenant starts to tell you about life and problems.

When that happens, it's much harder to pressure for rent or evict.

He said, If you're going to be a successful landlord financially speaking,

must keep the relationship strictly business.

Strictly a matter of performance. Strictly goods and services.

That's one way you can live in a house—as a renter.

Or you can live a child with your parents.

And in that home there are still expectations, there are still rules to keep.

You are still expected to respect the property—but what's the difference?

Your relationship is not based on your performance, it's based on your status.

So when Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, he doesn't say:

Pray this way: Our King in heaven. Even though he is our King.

Or, Our Creator. Even though he is that too.

He doesn't even say: Pray, Our Friend.

Because friendship, as good as it is, is based in part on performance and mutual benefits. Friendships can be lost. They can be broken.

He says: Pray, Our Father. Because that expresses a relationship

and an approach to God that is based not on what I do, but who I am.

One way you can tell if you are really praying to God as your Father is to examine your response to unanswered prayer.

If you have a business relationship with God, you'll be indignant or anxious.

You'll say: God, I've been paying the rent here and I deserve this from you.

God, you're not coming through on your end of the bargain. Indignant.

Or you'll be anxious and guilty. No wonder God didn't answer my prayer.

I haven't paid my rent. I haven't held up my end of the bargain.

In either case, you're acting like a renter not a child.  
And your approach to God in prayer is business not family.  
It's based on your performance and his performance.

When Jesus says, Pray, Our Father in heaven—  
It's not a throwaway line. It's not just religious talk. It's intensely practical.  
You have to saturate yourself with the fact that you've been adopted,  
not by your action but by God's action.  
He is as committed to you as he is to his only begotten Son.  
And he's preparing your inheritance and preparing you for it.  
And he delights in hearing from you as a young father loves to hear da da.

Every time you pray you have to get these doctrines out and preach to yourself.  
That's what enables you to see the throne of the universe as the throne of grace.  
That's the source of your confidence  
When you get a hold of that, it changes the way you pray.

As we work our way through the Lord's Prayer, you will see that each  
line of the Lord's Prayer is actually a different kind of prayer.  
"Hallowed be your name" What kind of prayer is that? It's praise.  
"Give us this day our daily bread" That's petition.  
"Forgive us our debts" That's confession.  
"Thy will be done" That's submission.

We'll spend time in coming weeks looking at each one in more detail.  
But what you need to see today is that knowing God is your Father is what enables  
you to pray these different kinds of prayers rightly.  
We'll start with praise. Hallowed be your name.  
When you know that God is your Father that fills you with gratitude that  
enables you to praise.

1 John 3:1 is one of those verses that sounds best in the King James Version.  
In the Apostle John's first letter, chapter 3, verse 1 he says:  
Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us that we should be called the sons of God  
As a Christian you can look at yourself and say: Behold! How great!  
This is amazing. I'm in the family of God. God is my Father. He chose me!  
When that sinks in, everything God gives you, big and small, is amazing  
and reason to praise him because it comes to you so undeserved.  
But if you're a renter, praise is unnatural.  
You can go to God with a list and spend time telling him your wants and needs.

But you won't be able to spend time praising and adoring him.  
When a performance-oriented person gets an answer to prayer he says, of course.  
I'm a moral person. I'm a good person.  
He may be thankful that things have worked out, but there's no wonder.

There's no praise. No Behold! Because this is simply how things ought to be.  
But a Christian is amazed. He looks at his life and at what God has done.  
He looks at both the big things and the little things and at God himself  
and says, this is incredible. I didn't deserve any of this.  
Because a Christian not only knows he's a sinner,  
He know that even his righteousness, his best performance is flawed,  
so everything he has from God is a gift.

Let's consider one more, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
This a prayer we pray when things aren't changing. It's a prayer of submission.  
This is what Jesus prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane when  
he didn't want to suffer the agony of the cross but knew it was Father's will.  
You can't pray this if you're a renter.  
You don't pay your rent for the landlord to then refuse to fix the leaky faucet.

For a renter it's a matter of leases and contracts. Everything is above board.  
A landlord can't say: I've heard your complaints, I'm not telling you when or how,  
but I'm going to take care of it some day. Just trust me.  
A parent can say that to a child. You don't understand. You can't understand.  
But I love you and will take care of you. Trust me.  
The child might get angry, but deep down they know they are loved.

Furthermore, ff you're a son then you know your Father is preparing an inheritance.  
And it's such a big inheritance, he wants you to be ready for it and mature enough  
for it. So that might mean being a little hard on you now, making you go without  
some things, so you become a better person, more disciplined and content—  
Then you're going to step into that inheritance prepared.  
Your Father has great things planned, so you can trust him and pray:  
Thy will be done.

**CONC:** Do you pray like a renter or a child?

Do you pray on the basis of business and performance or on basis of your sonship?  
It's often been pointed out that in every prayer Jesus prayed, every prayer of his  
recorded in the New Testament, he addressed God as Father.

Every prayer but one. Do you know which prayer that was?

It was his prayer from the cross:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Jesus lived the life we should have lived,  
and he died the death we should have died.

That’s how we deserve to die. We deserve to be crucified for our sins.  
We justly deserve to be forsaken by God for our shameless ingratitude,  
for our hard hearts, for loving things and comfort more than God or neighbor.

But if you trust Christ, if you commit yourself to him,  
then that death you deserve has already happened,  
and you can be assured, that you will never be forsaken  
because Jesus was forsaken in your place.

And because of that, you can come to God with confidence in prayer—  
you can come with your praises and thanksgiving,  
you can come with your petitions and requests,  
you can even come when the way is blocked and the answer is no—  
and trust him and submit.

Because you know that you have a Father in heaven,  
and that you are his beloved child.