

## Monday Morning Rewind – March 29, 2010

Good morning! Have you exercised your privileges as sons or daughters of God today by calling Him “Father”?

As we returned to our study on the Lord’s prayer last Sabbath, we learned that **in the Kingdom of Heaven, relationships come first!** Prayer is a relational experience, and the relationship that is most important is our relationship with God. And that’s why the opening of the Lord’s prayer—the model prayer for citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven—is such a joyful surprise and scandal.

After showing the disciples how *not* to pray, He says, “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father...’” Those two words define both the power of prayer and the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven—the Fatherhood of God! **The power of prayer is not in words or technique, it is in the relationship between God and the pray-er.**

The disciples had to be blown away. >From the time they were old enough to talk, they were taught not even to say the name of God. It was too holy. And yet now here Jesus was telling them to address God as “Father.” Jesus was letting them know something critical about His kingdom: **The first key in possessing the fullness of the Kingdom of God, is being related to the King.** A King has many subjects but only a few share His bloodline, making them also royalty. The king’s children don’t just live in the kingdom, they occupy the palace. They live with and have direct access to the King himself. And by teaching us to address God as “Our Father,” Jesus is implying we are related to the King.

This goes way beyond “Having a personal relationship with God.” The word “relationship” is defined as “The condition or fact of being related; connection or association.” Well, that’s great. But I’ve got lots of personal relationships. I’ve got Facebook friends. But God wants something deeper than an occasional poke or to be “tagged” every now and then in Scripture.

The definition continues: “Connection by blood or marriage; kinship (generally denotes common descent and implies a more intimate connection than relationship).” Ah hah! Jesus is letting us know that **just having a personal relationship with God is not enough. In the Kingdom of heaven, God desires kinship.** And maybe that’s why we struggle in prayer and have trouble walking in kingdom power. **We’re approaching God as King but not as Kin.**

But consider the implications of kinship with God: **If God is our Father, Jesus is our brother!** In teaching His disciples to address God the same way He did—“Father”—*Jesus puts us on equal standing with Himself.* As Jesus is one with the Father, so are we to be one with Him. This is the plan of redemption—to bring the once separated and estranged sons and daughters of God back into oneness with the Father.

**If God is our Father, we don’t have to babble and beg, all we have to do is ask.** “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Mt. 7:7). Why, because you belong to the royal family. Your key opens every door in the Palace.

We don’t have to babble and beg like the pagans, as if repetition gets God’s attention. Because “your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Mt. 6:8). You can commune with God and present your requests simply, clearly, and succinctly. Why? *Because you already have His attention.* You are family.

Rewind to 1 Kings 18:22-39 and compare Elijah’s prayer with those offered by the priests of Baal. There’s something we can learn from this story about modern forms of worship today: *If you have to shout, dance, draw blood, and go into ecstatic utterance to get the attention of God, maybe you don’t know Him.* Elijah’s prayer was simple, direct, and filled with confidence because He knew God. He was family. **Kingdom prayer happens when you go to your knees knowing that the God you’re talking to loves you and is always there for you.**

**If God is our Father, we should look like Him.** What God is looking for is the family resemblance. Families have genetic characteristics. A prominent nose may be a family feature. Ears that stick out, or a gap in the teeth. God’s sons and daughters have distinguishing features as well, chief among them is love. This love that identifies us as family members, is seen in forgiveness of others, dependency on God for our daily bread, and total trust in His protection and provision.

But what about “bad” fathers? For many, because of absent fathers, abusive fathers, etc., they can’t relate to God as “Father.” For them, the word “father” conjures up only heartache, emptiness and pain, not trust, protection, and care.

In one phrase Jesus brings God near to our human experience and then quickly sets Him above and beyond that same experience by adding two more words: “...**In heaven.**”

The fact that our Father is “in heaven” shows that He is transcendent to fathers on earth. Earthly fathers are imperfect. They can abandon, abuse, hurt and destroy, belittle, and intimidate. But our Father *in heaven* is not subject to these frailties. He is not a deadbeat dad; He is not just a sperm donor; He is not the “supervised visit” dad; or any of those earthly fathers. He is The Father **in heaven**. He is everything you ever wished for in a dad, everything you ever lost, missed, had stolen, or never had in a dad. He is intrinsically, eternally, “other.” And He loves with an everlasting love. “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.” (Isa. 49:15, 16) That’s the love of the Father for you!

D.L. Moody quoted Mark Guy Pearce as saying: “There is one thing most pitiable, almost worse than even cold, black, miserable atheism: to kneel down and say, ‘Our Father,’ and then get up and live an orphaned life.”

The opening line of the prayer proves that we are not orphans. We belong. We’ve been adopted. And the Lord’s prayer is a prayer for family. Only those in the family can pray it. Jesus did not give this prayer to the “world.” He gave it to His disciples. **Not until Christ becomes our Brother can God truly be called “Our Father.”** The Son of God became the Son of man that “we might receive the adoption of sons;” and with “the Spirit of His Son” in our hearts we have the right to say, “Abba, Father.” (See Gal. 4:4-6.)

Only genuine Christians have the right to call God “Father.” It is the **privilege of sons**. How do you join the family? Rewind to John 1:12 and 3:3. You must “receive” Jesus as your “kinsman-redeemer” and be born again. It’s the only way to sever ties with Adam’s line, and join Jesus’ line.

Have you agreed to the adoption of sons today? If you haven’t, “Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, and you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9) This is the way to sign the “adoption papers” in the Kingdom of heaven. And if you are already enjoying the privilege of sons (and daughters), let me encourage you to spend time today calling on, trusting in, and walking with “Our Father.” –Pastor Randy

p.s. This Sabbath we will take a break from our series on the Lord’s prayer in order to celebrate the Lord’s Supper in the communion service. Prepare your hearts spiritually for this family gathering in which we will commemorate the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord.

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2 Chron. 7:14

*"The need is great. The key is prayer. The time is now."*