

SERMON

Matthew 6:9

Our Father in Heaven. Believe God is your Father and pray with Confidence

Nunawading and Waverley, 22-8-21

Dear friends in Christ,

We watched “Two is a Family”, a French film starring Omar Sy about a playboy who quite suddenly has a baby thrust on him supposedly from one of his wild escapades. It is a funny movie, well-acted and with a lovely message. The father becomes a great dad though is a little wild. Our Lord Jesus took an earthly relationship as a name for God: **our Father**, or just **Father**. No religion has this feature of a God who is intimate, close, fatherly, and totally for us.

I am beginning a series, which might stop and start, to explore prayer by focusing on the Lord’s Prayer and Luther’s Small Catechism.

Here God encourages us to believe that he is truly our Father and we are his children. We therefore are to pray to him with complete confidence just as children speak to their loving father [or mother].

What a tremendous message we have to tell others, that each day we can confidently stroll into God’s presence anytime we want and tell him what is on our minds.

What we grapple with in prayer is the distance of God for he is **in heaven** while we are on earth, it seems. What if that is completely wrong? And it is! Luther said that the moment we are baptised we are in heaven. Heaven is the Father’s rule over all things and now because of Christ, his rule of salvation, grace and love is over our hearts. Because of Jesus Christ, there is no gap between heaven and earth.

How did that happen? Simply because our Lord Jesus has transferred his relationship to his Father to each of us.

Let's skim through how Jesus' spoke of his relationship with the Father.

10:32 I will acknowledge him before my Father – he spoke of God as his Father.

11:25 I praise you Father – he prayed to him and called him Father

16:17 This was not revealed to you buy flesh and blood but by my Father in heaven.

16:27 The Son shall come in the glory of his Father

26:29 When I drink it new...in my Father's kingdom

26:42 Father, let this cup pass from me

Let's look at what Jesus said about us.

5:45 Love your enemies that you may be children of your Father

6:6 Pray to your Father in secret

6:32 Your heavenly Father knows you need [food and clothing]

10:29 not one [sparrow] will fall outside of your Father's care

13:43 the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father

18:14 It is not your Father's will that any of these little ones perish

The references just cited mostly speak of the gospel, how you are valued above sparrows, how the Father listens to your prayers, that he knows the details of your lives and cares for your material needs. The Father grants you life in his kingdom, forgives your sins and will honour you in heaven. Shouldn't this give us confidence in our prayers?

Since we have a Father, let us practice nearness to your Father. Jesus promised that the Father and the Son in the Spirit would **make their home in us**. The Father is there within and all we need to do is rest in his word and be close to him. So, when you pray, focus your attention on just a few words or even one. Let's say the word is **Father, our** or **in**

heaven. (You can do this with just a few words of Scripture). Bring your mind back to it and repeat it several times. Tell your Father what this means for you. Recite the word a number of times then memorise it. The Father's grace in his word must fill the mind so that your inner spirit is lifted up to the Father. I am doing this with something a friend brought to my attention: **be joyful in hope.** I have memorised it and I have returned to it over and over again since Wednesday. Practice the nearness of the Father so that he dwells in you and makes you confident from within as you pray.

Finally, speak all your mind to him, without hiding anything, as children do once mum or dad kneel and look at them eye to eye and ask for the truth. Admit to him your problems, bad thoughts, what excites you, what you are thankful for, what is tempting you. Tell him everything and bring all your wants to him. Then, ask him what he thinks. Understand his will and desires. Ask the Father if there is something you need to learn. There can be no confidence in prayer until you give your life over to your Father.

Believe in the Father and be confident by practicing nearness, dwelling in a few words of his each day and expose yourself completely to him.