

Proper 12C – God is our Father through Jesus our brother!

1. I want you to think for a moment about the profound idea that we call God, “Father.”
 - a. For two thousand years of Christian history that has been commonplace, you may not have ever given it a second thought
 - i. In fact, you might wonder, “What’s the big deal, of course God would be known as Father!” But would He?
 - ii. The term “Father” conveys the sense of a familial relationship, a personal relationship more than just heredity.
 - iii. Think of it this way – just because someone created you doesn’t imply all that we think of when we use the term “father”
 - iv. How many of you know of someone who was raised by adoptive parents, rather than biological, and refer to their adoptive parent as father and mother not their biological parents?
 - b. It’s the same in religion, the concept of the almighty, eternal, creator or heaven and earth being intimately concerned with our welfare as a father is unique to Christianity
 - i. The other two religions in the world that are most closely related to Christianity by virtue of claiming Abraham as their founder, Judaism and Islam, do NOT call God their father
 - ii. There are all manner of other titles and names for God, but God as personal Father is not one of them in either religion.
 - iii. Throughout world religions “gods” are portrayed as ambivalent at best toward humanity if not downright opposed to them
 - iv. Think of the history of many pagan religions that commonly demanded human sacrifice to appease angry and vindictive gods – nothing loving or paternal about that.
 - c. However, the first Jewish rabbi to call God "Father" was Jesus.
 - i. It was a radical departure from tradition, in all but one prayer recorded from Jesus, He calls God "Father."
 - ii. That was one of the main reasons that His enemies sought to kill Him; He declared that He had an intimate, personal relationship with the sovereign God of heaven and the creator of all things, and He dared to call his Father.
 - iii. Remember the reaction of the Jewish crowds in the Gospel of John after Jesus healed the blind man, **“I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”** (Joh 10:32-33).

- iv. The notion that we are so familiar, so intimate with God, that we call Him our Father is radical in the history of the world and it's only because of Jesus that we can call God our Father, too!
2. As we turn to our Gospel, we've been reading Luke sequentially for the past several weeks ever since Jesus turned his face to go to Jerusalem on His way to the cross in chapter 9 – many people consider that the primary division in Luke's Gospel between Jesus' early and late ministry.
 - a. Since then, we've heard some of the best-known accounts from any of the Gospels
 - i. In the parable of the Good Samaritan we see an example of the compassion God shows us through Jesus who rescued us when we were left for dead in our sin.
 - ii. Last week we heard about Jesus at the table of Mary and Martha where He shows that God first serves us with his mercy, and then his faithful people respond to his gift with praise and service as Martha sat at Jesus' feet.
 - iii. This is the dynamic of worship - worship begins by receiving the gift of grace from above and responding in service and praise.
 - b. We find the same dynamic in today's reading as our Lord teaches about prayer.
 - i. In today's Gospel, the Giver of all good gifts provides his blessings, and his people offer up petitions that flow from faith in the goodness of this Giver.
 - ii. By instructing his disciples to address God as Father, Jesus teaches them to confess that in his kingdom, his disciples on earth are united with the Father in heaven.
 - iii. Of course, Jesus is able to address God as Father because of his eternal relationship as the Son.
3. But by teaching the disciples to call God their Father, Jesus is placing them in that same relationship. Because of Jesus God is now our Father, too!
 - a. We call God Father because Jesus has reconciled us to Him by His death on the cross.
 - i. That's why the Old Testament saints—even the prophets—would seldom call upon God as Father before the veil of separation was removed by Jesus' death.
 - ii. Listen to Paul in Galatians, **“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”** (Gal 3:26-28)

- iii. Before Christ we served God as faithful believers but had not been made part of His family because of our sin which God could not overlook, it destroyed the relationship we were created to have.
 - b. But in Christ that relationship has been restored, our sin has been covered
 - i. As Paul says in Eph, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ...In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace...”** (Eph 1:3-7)
 - ii. We have been bought back, redeemed, by the blood of Christ adopted by God as His beloved sons and daughters
 - iii. Now we have the privilege of addressing Him as Father
 - c. And because God is our Father, He not only invites us to pray to Him, but He wants to hear from us – our problems, our praises, our conversations...
 - i. Jesus encourages us to keep asking...keep seeking...keep knocking!
 - ii. Why? Because God is not hard to rouse or reluctant to give. He is eager to give.
 - iii. If even human fathers, who are sinful, know how to give their children good things and not bad; how much more will the heavenly Father, who is good, give us!
 - iv. Look at our example from the OT lesson with Abraham who boldly negotiates with God for the sake of Sodom and Gomorrah saying, **“Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”** (Gen 18:23) appealing to God’s goodness and righteousness.
 - d. Jesus encourages us to pray because God is good and will give good things to us when we ask because He has already given us more than we could ever need in Christ.
 - i. As Paul tells us in Rom 8, **“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”** (Rom 8:32)
 - ii. Included in “all things” is the gift of the Holy Spirit, the One who keeps us in the faith, who delivers God’s gifts to us through His Word.
 - iii. By the way, the explanation of this parable about prayer is Jesus’ first promise that the Holy Spirit will be given to those who believe in Him.
 - iv. As Luther teaches us in the catechism about the Lord’s Prayer when we pray, **“Our Father...God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.”** Praise God that because of Jesus God is now our Father, too!