

Today I Pray, 1: Our Father...

Reconnect – February 28, 2010

Text: Matthew 6:9; Romans 8:26-27

Key Thought: God, in all of His greatness, still welcomes our prayers because of His great love for us.

[Jesus said,] "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.'"

Pre-Intro: Lost S06E05 part 1

Intro: Feeling the distance

- "I'm just trying to have a conversation with you" – distance between dads and kids
- "Parents just don't understand" – Kenn's book "Stupid parents" (talk about why it's needed, cultural distances, going your own way, struggle for independence, generational differences, etc.)
- Take a look at what a "teen expert" has to say about the distance between a parent and a child

"No matter what they say, your teenagers don't hate you. They love you. They don't want 'nothing to do with you'; they want you in their lives... They know that no matter how badly they behave or disengage, you will always have to love them, and that is a safe, wonderful place to be. So take heart – deep down they really do need and want you, no matter how they are expressing it right now. And the truth of the matter is that this too shall pass... Soon they will be out on their own, and you will slowly become more a trusted confidant and companion than a stupid parent." Not-So-Stupid Parents (Hayley DiMarco) (16-17)

- But then of course, we grow up and realize that they DO understand

Q: Is our idea of God like that? That He just doesn't "get it"?

What do you think of when you think of the word "God"?

- Creator, almighty, distant, judge, etc.
- People in Jesus' day thought of all those things and more – but Jesus brought another understanding, another dimension of God to the table – because He called God "Father" – intentionally, with all of the nuances and ideas associated with that word, good and bad – that's the one He chooses to represent the cosmic Being that He is there to be the ambassador for
- So when he teaches the disciples to pray, he says this:

So when you pray, pray like this: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name"

Our Father

- our own failings/limitations as fathers, combined with those of our own fathers before us
- Like when we lose our patience, temper, make a bad move
- But God is a perfect father – all the gaps are filled, all the rough edges are smoothed out

Q: What do you think of when you think of your dad? Or the word father?

Q: Talk about what you love about your dad – how could it carry over? (is this too risky?)

Eugene Peterson, Tell It Slant: “Jan and I were waiting in the airline terminal in Frankfurt for our El Al flight to Israel. Passengers from an arriving El Al flight were entering the reception area. A little boy near us, maybe four or five years old, jumped up and ran across the large room shouting, “Abba! Abba! Abba!...” and was swept up into the receiving arms of his father. It was the first time I had ever heard “Abba” in living speech. I had read the word in the Bible. I knew that in Jesus’ mother tongue, Aramaic, it was the affectionate word for father, which would be common in family settings.... I had heard the word used in sermons by pastors and explained in classrooms by professors. I had heard the word all my life, but always in a “religion” setting. And now I was hearing it in this depersonalized, technology-dominated airline terminal in Germany, spoken by a child I didn’t know to address a man I didn’t know. The word didn’t tell me anything about the child or the father – but it told me everything I needed to know about their relationship –its immediacy, its intimacy, its joy.” (170)

- God welcomes our prayers – He isn’t bothered by them, we’re not bugging Him – He’s glad to be with us, it brings Him great joy – and at the same time, it’s a privilege for us to have Him in our lives
- **Our Father**, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name

Who art in heaven

- a heavenly Father – in a place of perfection, perfect because He is there – far away, and yet you are communicating with Him even as you say that – paradox – he’s a perfect Father in heaven, as opposed to any that you could have here on earth
- When we reach out to Him, it goes far beyond the problems that we see, the struggles we encounter – He is involved in our lives but He’s not lost in them like we are
- He has this incredible perspective – outside of time, outside of sin and fallenness and evil and all of its horrible effects – outside our feelings and failings – and He can bring all of His goodness and perfection to bear in order to help us
- Our Father, **who art in heaven**, hallowed be Thy name

Hallowed be Thy name

- What does hallowed mean (go into it) – **holy** – other, different, better - your name – your reputation, your fame, the idea of you that people have – a mix of “let your name be honoured, and I’m doing it right now”
- The idea of **respect** – they say that respect these days has to earned, not just demanded or given
- **Worship** is a merge of respect and love – because those two ideas can be mutually exclusive – you can love someone without respecting them (like the family ne’er-do-well) or respect someone without loving them (like your boss) – but when you put those together, you’re getting close to the idea of worship – you are putting that person up higher than yourself, with love and devotion
- But has that respect been earned? In God’s case, it was earned before you ever heard of Him – much like perhaps if you had a new neighbour move in down the street – you don’t know them, but then you start to find out things about them – you find out that they are a _____ (firefighter?), that they have a family, that they raise money for charity, that they have been awarded commendations for heroism – and the more you find out about them, the more you respect them
- They didn’t earn your respect by their interactions with you – but it was based on what they had done before they ever met you
- With God, it’s twofold – God has done incredible things – created the world and everything in it, sent His Son to die for us – but then He begins to work in our lives and the respect and love grows and the worship comes – “hallowed be Thy name”
- It’s moments of passion sprinkled into a lifestyle of devotion – which frankly, sounds a bit like **marriage**, which coincidentally, is called a “hallowed” institution, isn’t it?
- The best of marriage is a mix of respect and love – your best friend, but in a different way – which is why we say that people sometimes “worship the ground that someone else walks on”
- Our Father, who art in heaven, **hallowed be Thy name**

Key Thought:

God, in all of His greatness, still welcomes our prayers because of His great love for us.

...we don’t even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all things knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will. **(Romans 8:26-27, NLT)**

Conclusion: He welcomes us (Show part II of video of Jack and David in LOST)

- Refer to the clip - **He wants to be a part of your life – and you need to help make that happen**
- **“A kingdom of heaven life consists of things to do and ways to think, but if there is no prayer at the center nothing lives. Prayer is the heart that pumps blood into all the words and acts. Prayer is not just one more thing in an inventory of elements that make up a follow-Jesus, kingdom-of heaven life. Prayer is the heart. If there is no heart doing its work from the center, no matter how precise the words, no matters how perfectly formed the actions, there is only a corpse. It may be a very lovely corpse.” (Tell It Slant, pl. 167-168)**
- It starts with praying: “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name”

Response: 2 minutes to pray