

Aldersgate UMC of Butte, Montana
Sunday, January 17, 2021
Pastor Matthias (Matt) Krier
www.aldersgatebutte.org - 406.782.2425

Message: Our Father in Heaven

“Our Father in Heaven”

Use of Father is akin to the word “papa”

*

Abwoon d'bwashmaya

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos

You create all that moves in light

This is a Syriac version of the Aramaic made accessible by Neil Douglas-Klotz from the King James Version.

*

The Lord's Prayer or what is also known as the **“Our Father”** which is no doubt one of the most common prayers amongst Christians around the world, but I doubt it is the most powerful. For some there is no doubt that this prayer has transformed their lives but for others it is simply words on a page. **How do I know this?** Because until my late 20's, the Lord's Prayer was a ritual we recited each Sunday morning and it had little or no impact on my life. Truthfully, I really never gave it much thought, and like other prayers I had memorized, it had little or no effect on how I lived.

Children have learned this prayer from little on and have unintentionally made alterations of this prayer like the little boy who came home from Sunday school and said that God is an artist. Parents were puzzled as usual with little Johnny, so they said, “Okay, Johnny, how do you know that God is an artist?” And little Johnny proudly said, “Our Father who does art in heaven!”

The Lord's Prayer is without a doubt the most recited prayer within Christendom, but for many, its power is undiscovered. I could liken it to a well that is untapped:



... just waiting to offer life giving water. Jesus spoke of this life-giving water on two occasions. One comes from the Gospel of John, Chapter 4:

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)
⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)* ¹⁰Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'
¹¹The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' ¹³Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' ¹⁵The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

Tapping into the Lord's Prayer is like being parched and finally getting the chance to drink this life-giving water. Today we will take a closer look at the first part of this prayer:

"Our Father in Heaven"

Use of Father is akin to the word “papa”

*

Abwoon d'bwashmaya

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos

You create all that moves in light

Keep in mind that God was much more remote and distant for many at that time and to call God something akin to “papa” was a radical idea in the belief that God could be intimate, as intimate as a father could be to his children.

In the Aramaic, *Abwoon d'bwashmaya* says a great deal more than what the English translation can offer. Furthermore, the Aramaic does not make a gender distinction for God. Instead it includes both the feminine and the masculine in:

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos

You create all that moves in light.

Imagine that the Creative Force of the Universe, Father-Mother of the Cosmos creates all that moves in light.

Let us not forget what we shared on Christmas Eve as we passed the light to one another. As we passed the light to one another, we looked into the eyes of another and said, “You are the Light of the world!”

Why? Because Jesus said to the disciples and to us, “You are the Light of the World.”

This past year all around the world folks have been struggling through a pandemic and all that entails. The struggle continued for millions coping with unprecedented storms and wildfires and the continual threat from those who undermine our democracy.

There is a great deal of work to be done in restoring the values we hold so dearly.

During this time we have grown weary and for frontline workers exhausted striving to care for fellow Americans. It is times like these that we discover what we are made of. It is times like these we feel called to step up and let our light shine in the darkness. **And as many of you know, this is possible how?** Yes, by the grace of God! By the grace of God, we can drink the life-giving water ...



... that Yeshua offers which will empower us to share this life-giving water with others to have the courage in the face of threats not only to our democracy but to leaders who are standing strong for truth, justice and equality. This life-giving water will empower us to remain strong in the face of whatever lies ahead.

Our Mid-Week Reflections group that met on Wednesday were intrigued by some other translations of "*Our Father who art in heaven.*" Also, I wanted to give you a sneak preview of the next part of this verse for next Sunday which we will unpack more then. Hear this translation from the New English Bible:

*Our Father in heaven
May your name be honored*

New English Bible

*Our Father in heaven!
May your Name be kept holy.*

The Jewish New Testament

But a favorite for many of us was this from the Message Bible:

Our Father in heaven,

Reveal who you are.

The Message Bible

This puts a different slant on a very familiar verse. It wasn't that we did not appreciate keeping the Lord's name holy or revered, it was an opening of our eyes in asking God to reveal to us mere mortals, the Nature of God ... this Birther, Father Mother of the cosmos. It is a challenge for me to somehow communicate the power and presence that comes through the Aramaic. In some ways, I feel as though I am only scratching the surface of this mystical tradition. It is as though we have a treasure chest of prayer yet to be opened.

I shall offer you a prayer in a few moments of how the Aramaic interprets "*Our Father who art in heaven.*" It is mind boggling how one word such as *Abwoon* can have so much meaning beyond what we understand as Father-Mother. Following the word *Abwoon is d'bwashmaya*. Words that are used to describe this word are more than just what we hear in English in the word "heaven". *D'bwashmaya* completes the motion of divine creation with Light, Sound, Vibration, Name or Word. Again it is rather difficult for our Western minds to comprehend how one or two words can have such seemingly different meanings. Yet, this was the worldview of Middle Eastern mystics of the time.

I confess that at one time, the Christianity that I was practicing was sorely lacking until I discovered in the early 2000's the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic. It opened a whole new world of *Spirit, of Light, of Meaning, of Love, of Joy, of Purpose, and a Peace* that surpasses all understanding.

Furthermore, I felt a connection to Our Creator that was beyond my comprehension. This connection awakened something that is difficult to put into words.



I have rephrased this just a bit to fit my experience of the Divine:

In the beginning, Abwoon, created the heavens and the earth.

This connection was stirring something within me ... of a deep sense of awe and wonder. Words fail me to describe just what took place in me when I learned to pray the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic.

An analogy that might help to shed some light on this, pun intended, is when you are in a large city looking up at the night sky. With all the light pollution, we really cannot see the stars and planets, if at all. However, in the darkness at 10,000 feet elevation in the mountains with a clear sky, the view takes your breath away. For me, the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic is being able to see and experience the night sky at 10,000 foot elevation and experience the awe and wonder of creation.

This is why I will share with you this prayer that is interpreting these words in Aramaic, *abwoon d'bwashmaya*, into English.

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos,
You create all that moves in light.

O Thou! The Breathing Life of all,
Creator of the Shimmering Sound
That touches us.

Respiration of all worlds,
We hear you breathing--in and out --
In silence.

Source of Sound: in the roar and the whisper,
In the breeze and the whirlwind, we
hear your Name.

Radiant One: You shine within us,
Outside us -- even darkness shines--when
We remember.

Name of Names, our small identity
Unravels in you, you give it back
As a lesson.

Wordless Action, Silent Potency--
Where ears and eyes awaken, there
Heaven comes.

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos!

In a few moments we will take in the Mystery of Christ in the
Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.



If we open our eyes and ears to see and hear and taste the wonder of Creation ...

... maybe we can see and hear and taste the wonder of the Lord's Prayer in the days and weeks to come.

... maybe we can see, hear and taste the mystery of the Lord's Supper in ways we had not before. Amen and so be it!