

Aldersgate UMC of Butte, Montana
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Pastor Matthias (Matt) Krier
Sunday, November 1, 2020
All Saints Day
Scripture: The Lord's Prayer ... Matthew 6:5-15

Message

Prayers & Presence *(notes to message)*

I happened across this cartoon and thought it humorous, so I thought I would share this with you:



"Halloween is over, Bub. It's All Saints Day. Beat it!"

For All Saints Day, I chose the Lord's Prayer for the scripture text because I do not believe there is a better scripture passage for reflection on this very special day. Not only do we reflect on those who have passed and those who have touched our lives in a special way, but for all the Saints who have inspired generations of Christians.

The Lord's Prayer is undoubtedly the most common prayer that potentially unites most if not all Christians, at least on one level. Although there are some differences between various versions of the Lord's Prayer, this is a prayer that Christians can recite together in any setting no matter their backgrounds or denomination: at home; in church; in youth group; in the hospital; in a hospice room, over the phone and at the graveyard. I believe if this prayer was truly taken to heart, it would bring about a Reformation once again in Christianity! If this prayer became more than just words on a page ... if these words were more than just a ritual prayer we recite, it could and would transform the followers of Jesus. How is that you might ask?

By the grace of God!

Oliver Wendell Holmes said:

"My religion is summed up in the first two words of the Lord's Prayer"

Every Christian knows these first two words, but I am not sure they know its power. **“Our Father”**. I am not sure I know its full power! Let’s just examine these two words and how Jesus addressed a remote and distant God as that of a personal Father. Imagine at a time when God was not and did not feel personal, Jesus is calling God something akin to “Papa”. Imagine how this might have excited his followers but created havoc and tension with the religious folks of his day.

This lays the foundation for a personal relationship with God as that of a parent and child. This was unexpected and cuts out any possibility that God could be seen as a cruel tyrant often depicted because of Old Testament theology. We know that parents are not perfect and indeed make mistakes, but to understand that God is like the most loving parent one could ever know was a new way of thinking about God.

Notice Jesus did not say, *“My Father.”* Instead Yeshua said, **“Our Father”**. If we could somehow awaken to what Jesus was teaching, we would be transformed. How is that? Because **“Our”** speaks to the truth that we are all brothers and sisters, siblings if you will, to one another. Imagine if we claimed that we are all related as the Lakota Sioux saying:



Mitakuye Oyasin” which means we are all one; we are all connected; we are all related whether we like it or not.

This cuts away the illusion of our separateness. This dismisses the illusion that members of any nation, or group, or race, or class, or color, in the sight of God, is superior to any other group. We may not all be treated equal, but we were created equal. With this in mind, **“Our”** not only implies it, but requires praying for our siblings from all walks of life. We are all connected. What we do to another, we do to ourselves. What we do to this earth, we do to ourselves. Is this why Yeshua gave to us the Golden Rule to follow: *“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”*

Maybe because folks have only been saying the words of **“Our Father”** and not truly understood what Jesus meant by them. With understanding comes compassion. With compassion comes unconditional love. With unconditional love comes an acceptance of who we are to one another. With this acceptance, we can be true to ourselves and live out the calling God has for each of us.

That calling is still with us despite COVID and despite our response to the election results we are called to be followers of Yeshua reflecting the Light and the Love of Jesus, the Peace and the Joy of God, and the Hope and the Comfort of the Holy Spirit that can be ours by simply praying, **“Our Father.”**

Over the years, I have counseled with men, women and youth who have not had a positive relationship with their fathers. Many of them prefer to use another name, rather than Father. One woman in particular had been abused by her father and could not use **“Father”**, as a name for God. As you know, God has many names and those who choose to do so are as equally blessed as those who use the traditional language.

For example, in the Aramaic, Jesus’ native language, *Abwoon* is the name used for God. *Abwoon d’bwashmaya* is what we understand in English as *“Our Father in heaven.”* Abwoon is not gender specific. The prayer in Aramaic is rich and full of this kind of imagery in translation. Here is the translation of *Abwoon d’bwashmaya* into English is this;

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

Yeshua laid the groundwork some 2000 years ago that we all shared the same God and that we are all One in Christ. Praying **“Our Father”** or “Our God” or **“Father-Mother”** and experiencing what Yeshua had intended will change the way in which we live and move and have our being with one another.

The hymn we are about to sing speaks to this Oneness with God through Christ:

One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
One cup of blessing which we bless
And we though many throughout the earth
We are one body in this one Lord

Hymn of Preparation # 620 One Bread, One Body <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z01zrrOFkNE>