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Teaching: Carlon Tschetter
Series: The Sermon on the Mount
Message: Our Father In Heaven

Transcribed Message
May 13, 2018
Matthew 6:9

On more than a few occasions, I have made comments about the providence of God and the amazing timing of just how God works in bringing us to a passage of Scripture or a particular topic that is timely in regard to either what's happening on the calendar, in world events or the life of our church. You just sometimes sit back and I have said I didn't plan this. This is just the work of God. Well, in full disclosure, this morning is not one of those mornings. If it had been five weeks from today, I would have had a great introduction and a great comment to make. This is Mother's Day and the title of our lesson this morning is "Our Father in Heaven". I will not yield to a modern liberal theology and suggest that we change the name of this prayer, as they do suggest, and pray our Mother-Father God. We will go ahead and stay with the text and leave it as our Father.

But here's what I will do. I will make sure that you get out of here early today. Did I say early? Let me say that again. I will tell you that we will get out of here at least on time and that you will beat not only the Baptists to the restaurant, because we don't have community groups today, but you'll beat the Methodists, the Presbyterians and even the Episcopalians. That is my promise to you today on Mother's Day. We're in the Gospel of Matthew. We're in a section called the Sermon on the Mount. In that section on the Sermon on the Mount, there is almost like a series within a series, because we have come to the Lord's Prayer in the 6th chapter.

We'll do a quick review. If you haven't been with us, this is a picture of what we have before us. We have the right question. In Luke 11, this all unfolded Luke tells us when the disciples came to Jesus and said Lord, teach us to pray. Here is the answer that our Lord gives. We have the right question before us. We have no excuse with this in mind with regard to this matter of prayer. Of all the things that we can say about our prayer life, or what it is that we know or don't know about prayer, we really shouldn't say

I don't know how to do this this. We may be young in our faith and we may have things to learn, but right here before us we have the answer to that question. If you don't know how to pray, that excuse can be taken away because Jesus tells us right here. Pray in this way.

The second thing we noted was this is a pattern. We have the right question and we have the right pattern because in giving this to us Jesus really gives us the framework of prayer. He gives us some major themes and topics that should be a part of our prayer experience, that are to be a part of our regular time of prayer. I think as you look at this, the question arises oftentimes should we pray this prayer? The answer to that is absolutely pray this prayer. But don't limit your prayer life to this prayer. This is truly a pattern. This really is a framework. This is a broad outline. Jesus says when you pray, pray like this. Pray with these things in mind. Certainly you would want to elaborate and enlarge upon that. So this is more than a prayer to say. It's more than a prayer to memorize. It really is a guide.

Then lastly, we have the right perspective. We are talking to the Father about the Father. We're talking to the Father about his family. As you look at how this prayer breaks out, you see that you begin with the focus being entirely on God. It's about the name of God. It's about the reign of God. It's about the will of God. Jesus rightfully focuses our heart and attention first on God, and then we focus on God's family. Then we focus on needs within our own life. We have a myriad of daily needs that we bring before our Father. We bring our need for forgiveness of others and our need for protection. It really to me is almost like Jesus said here is a picture of the heart of God as it relates to this matter of prayer. Here's the answer to your question. Here's a framework to follow. Here's a perspective that guides you as you pray.

What we want to see this morning is this. Come in prayer to your Father. Come with the boldness of a child that comes to their father to ask something of them, but as you do that come with a sense of awe for He is the God of all creation. Let's look at first things first. First things first. The very first thing I want you to notice is that Jesus begins by referencing the relationship that we have with God. He does that by speaking first of all of God as being our Father. now there is a very familiar expression, and I'm sure most of you are familiar with it and have heard it many times, and it is simply called the

fatherhood of God. The fatherhood of God. When Jesus talks here about our relationship with God, He introduces us first of all to this idea of God being our Father. What does it mean when we say God is our Father? What is behind this expression the fatherhood of God? Listen.

To talk about God as your Father has incredibly profound implications. To talk about God as your Father has incredibly profound implications. You say what? You say how incredibly profound are those implications? JI Packer, one of the outstanding theologians of the 20th/ 21st century made this statement. It is stunning and it requires us to sit and think about it for a bit. But here it is. He said this: "You can sum up the whole of the New Testament teaching in that single phrase if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's holy Father." Do you see what he just said? This man who has an incredible mind for theological truth has just told us that this expression that God is our Father is literally the key to unlocking all of the New Testament. I don't know how much more profound you can get. If that statement is in fact true, and I believe that it is, and we'll see more of why we think that, then this teaching that Jesus introduces us to is amazing. It is incredible. It takes us to a depth of spiritual truth that we do well to mine.

Here is what I want us to see. I want us to see this matter of the fatherhood of God and what it means. In one sense it does mean that we're all God's children. If you've heard that expression the fatherhood of God outside of the walls of the church, most likely those people are talking about the fact that all religions lead to a God, whoever that God is. When the world talks about the fatherhood of God, you need to have your ears awakened and sharp. They're talking about something totally different than what we're talking about here. When the world talks about the fatherhood of God, they're basically saying that we're all going to the same place. We're all taking different paths, but eventually we're all going to get there. That's why they freely begin this prayer in some cases by saying dear Father/Mother God. That's just another expression of a pathway to whoever this God may be. In one sense, it is true that every human person is a part of God's family. We're all within the fatherhood of God in the broadest sense of that expression. Paul talks in Acts 17:28 about the fact that it is in Him that we live and move and have our being. That is all of humanity. In that broadest sense, yes, we are all children of God. We are all products of one human race, which by the way, is

one of the great arguments for being against racism because we're all of one human race. There aren't multiple human races. There is one.

Jesus himself narrows this idea down and notice what He says about the fatherhood of God. He says there's another sense in which only those who have put their faith in Christ are to be understood as being God's children. God's family involves those who have put their faith in Christ. We have narrowed this definition down. Now it speaks as Jesus says in John 1:12 – but as many as received Him to them He gave the right, the power, the privilege to become sons of God, children of God. So there is a much smaller subset to this sense of humanity being all within the fatherhood of God. It's not just a matter of creation. It's a matter of new creation. It is not a matter of just being a part of the broader human race. It's a part of being brought into God's family by what means? By means of adoption. You see, this is why Packer says this word “father” is the defining concept for all of the New Testament. Just a couple of other quotes from Packer. These all come from *Knowing God* and comes from his section on adoption. Listen to what he says: “If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new and better than the old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish is summed up by the knowledge of the fatherhood of God.” That's why he says what he does.

If you want to unlock and understand all of the New Testament theology, you go through the doorway of our Father who is in heaven. You go through the doorway of justification. You go through the doorway of adoption being brought into God's family. Listen to this incredibly remarkable statement that Jesus makes in the Gospel of John. In the 20th chapter of John's Gospel He says this in His encounter with Mary Magdalene in the garden. John 20 verse 17: “Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them I am ascending to My Father and to your Father and to My God and to your God.’” Folks, that ought to just blow the doors off of our understanding of what it is that Jesus is teaching us here in

this opening statement with regard to how it is we address God in prayer. Our Father is the access point we have. Because of that, it means that we can say these words. Because that is true, because we are in God's family by faith in Christ, adopted into the family of God, we can say our Father.

I would suggest to you that for most of us that is so familiar, that is so common, that is so ordinary for us to address God as Father. It is something that most of us have heard for probably all of our spiritual journey. When Jesus said this to this audience, you need to understand that when He said those words, it was shocking. When He said those words, it was scandalous. When he said those words, it was in the eyes and ears of the Jewish listener as being disrespectful. You did not do that. If we had a little assignment and I said take out a piece of paper. We're studying the Lord's prayer. I want you to read over it. It takes 30 seconds to read it, right? I want you to jot down two or three observations about the Lord's prayer. I don't know if any of us would put on that list I find it absolutely amazing to begin prayer by calling God Father. It's just what we've heard all of our life. It is the most familiar way that we address God. Listen to me. If you had passed out pieces of paper and pens to that group sitting there listening to the Sermon on the Mount, number one they wouldn't have known what to do with it. But number two, there wouldn't have been a person there that got past the first thing. They all would have asked, "Did He just say what I thought He said? Did He just say we're supposed to address God as Father?" you did not do that.

In all of the Old Testament, 39 books of the Old Testament, do you know how times the word "father" appears in reference to God? 14 times in all of the Old Testament. Do you know how many times it's spoken in a personal relational way to the God of heaven? Not once. 14 times the word "father" appears and 14 times it's an expression of God as the Father of a nation, of Israel. You come to the New Testament and 275 times the writers of the New Testament under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God addressed God as Father. 60 of those times it's Jesus. Every time Jesus addressed God, He addressed Him as Father with that one exception that you know of on the cross, when He said my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That's the only time Jesus did not begin His prayer with Father.

So here we have this amazing, amazing picture. The Greek word for father here is *pater*. Jesus spoke Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. It's very likely with Aramaic being the common spoken language that he was speaking in Aramaic. In Aramaic, the word *pater* would be translated *abba*. Here is this expression. Jesus said when you pray, pray like this. Pray Abba Father. This is that expression that Paul speaks of in Romans chapter 8 and verse 15 – for you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, as sons by whom we cry Abba Father. The exact expression that Jesus references here Paul says the same thing in Galatians 4:16. We have this term of endearment. that's what Abba is. That's what *pater* is. It's a term of endearment. It is an expression that a child would use in relationship to their father.

But with that, I want to say secondly this is a term of intimacy for sure but it's not a term of casualness. We want to be careful that what Jesus is introducing us to here is certainly a term of intimacy. When you go back into the Old Testament as I said Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea ... go right down the list. None of them called God Father. Here we are and we have this term of endearment. But it is not a term that we should use casually because why? Because it is our Father who is in heaven. It is our Father who is in heaven.

Notice first of all God is with us. God our Father is a father to us. He is with us in that sense. And you notice, it's not just my Father. It is not your Father. It is our Father. Jesus says when you come in prayer, come with a sense of family. Come with an understanding that you're coming as a member of a family. I think probably what is being indicated here is we're praying for each other. We're a part of a family that loves and cares for each other. It takes us to the point where Jesus in His focus takes the attention off ourselves, puts it on God the Father and puts it on the fact that He is our Father. He puts it on others. It's really easy for me to rush into God's presence and start listing all the things I need, all the things I want, all the things I think I have to have, all the ways I want God to help me. I can forget all about the fact that the very first thing Jesus says is when you come, come to Him as Father but don't forget you're coming with a sense of togetherness.

Secondly, God is infinitely above us. He is certainly a Father to us but He's infinitely above us. He is in heaven. There is that sense of awe and wonder that is in view here. This speaks of God's transcendence. He is above us. He is over us. He is the sovereign Lord of all creation. Yes, there is His eminence because He is our Father. He is with us. The results of that picture His transcendence. Listen to what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 5: "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools. For they do not know that they are doing evil. Do not be rash with your mouth nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few." He is not telling us we all need to offer just short prayers. He is giving us a perspective. He is giving us an understanding that we are coming into the presence of One that we rightly call our Father. But that endearing word is also to be understood in the context that He is the Transcendent One, and we dare not become so casual that we treat God in a way that forgets that.

Let's take that idea, this understanding that it is our Father who is in heaven that we call out to, that we come to. Let's just look at five things that take us to the heart of God with regard to prayer. I want to put before you five things and next Sunday, Lord willing, we'll look at the first petition. This is the salutation. This is Jesus saying when you come to God in prayer, remember who He is. He is your Father. He is your Father who is in heaven. Then He launches into the first petition – hallowed be Your name. We'll look at that Lord willing next Sunday. But here are five things.

The first one is pray because God commands us to. Pray because God commands us to. There is a mystery about this whole matter of prayer. Here is the God who knows the beginning from the end and the end from the beginning. He is the God who has ordained and decreed the things and events that will happen in our world and in our lives. Somehow within that sovereign purpose of God, there is this amazing invitation to step into that arena. This God who knows the beginning from the end invites us and yes, commands us to come to Him in prayer. Many times we are commanded. It's an imperative that we come in prayer. We come out of a sense of obedience. We don't have to come out of a sense of duty because it's our Father. As a

child runs to his father to express need and to express love, so we come to our Father. We are commanded to do so. We pray, but we don't pray out of duty.

We pray secondly because this is an awesome privilege. This is an awesome privilege. Think of it. The God who runs the world gives you an audience to express your heart to Him. God of infinite wisdom and of awesome power. We don't inform Him about anything. That is what Jesus said in the earlier section we looked at. He knows what you need before you even ask Him. The point of that isn't to say to you don't bother asking if He already knows anyway. The point of that is to give us a picture of the heart of God. He knows our life circumstance. He knows what is happening. He is God. When Paul says in Romans chapter 11 in that climactic statement at the end of the 11th chapter: "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been His counselor? Who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever and ever, amen." He invites us into that process.

Remember James said you don't have because you don't ask. I think that's a statement, not just a comment. I think that's a reality. There are things that we don't enjoy. There are places and opportunities that are not open to us. I think one of the reasons Rise ministry has arisen is it was on the heart of people who were praying about it. What if we had just neglected it? What if we had not prayed about it? Think of all of the things that are open to us to call out to our Father. James doesn't say you're going to get everything you asked for, but he does say there are many examples evidently in our life of things that we don't have because we don't even ask. I love this statement and I can't attribute it to anyone because I don't know where I got it. But God will not do apart from prayer what He has ordained to do by prayer. That to me is a wonderful encouragement. God will not do apart from prayer what He has ordained to do by prayer.

Thirdly, pray because He Himself hears. Pray because God Himself hears you. You don't have to go to a priest. You don't pray through a saint. You surely don't pray through Mary. You don't have to come to a pastor and say, "Pastor, I want to pray to you and then I want you to pray to God. I know your prayers are heard way more than mine." Absolutely not. We are all believer priests who are in God's family by faith in

Christ. We're in a real-time conversation with God and He is the one who hears us. 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men. That is the man Christ Jesus." We have this direct access to the heart of God.

Number four. Pray alone. Pray in your room. Pray with your family. Pray with others. That is all captured, I believe, in what Jesus instructs us to do here. That's the point of verses 5 and 6. Jesus says find a place. Be alone. Go to your closet and pray. I think it's good to actually physically have a place that's a little bit separated from the activity and the noise and the things that are happening in your world and have a place that you understand this is a time and a place where I try my best to have a conversation with God. Being Mother's Day, some of you might push back and say show me where that is and when that is and I would be delighted to do that. Understand that there are seasons where that is a challenge. Pray with your family. If you live with family, pray with your family. Husbands and wives, pray with and for each other. Pray with your children. If you don't pray with your children, they're going to learn that prayer is really not that important. They're going to learn that prayer is not that big of a deal to you. We want our children to understand that this invitation is an amazing one that they can enter into very early in their own spiritual journey.

Lastly, pray anytime anywhere about everything. It is part of the command to pray without ceasing. I think you can liken prayer to breathing. You breathe naturally and you just pray naturally. God help me. There's some circumstance or some situation that you call out to Him wherever you are. You express thanksgiving wherever you are. It is just as natural as breathing. We recognize that we have this amazing privilege. It is simply to live in the light of His presence. That's all this is. When the Bible says pray without ceasing, when Jesus says come in this way, come with boldness to your Father. Live in light of the presence of God. That is the way we are to live. It is the most natural thing that we do. so call Him Father because you're His child. Come with confidence and boldness but come with a sense of awe as well.

So what do we take away? Starting with God because that's what Jesus does, He starts this instructional prayer and He says as you come into God's presence start with God. It's not just a good way to begin praying, it's outstanding theology. It is the best way that we get our life centered and focused on what I believe is the number one

calling that we have...and that is to live our life to the glory of God. We say the vision of our church, the one that overrides and supersedes everything else that we do, is to be a people who are passionate about the glory of God. How do we do that? One of the ways we do that is as we think in terms of this whole matter of prayer, it is our obligation, our duty, our privilege to acknowledge God as our Father focusing on His glory.

My friend, this is what is available to every child of God by faith in Christ. This is the journey that Jesus introduces us to with regard to this matter of prayer. I hope it encourages you to realize and think about the fact that God as your Father is just as anxious for you to come to Him and express your need in your heart as I am as a father to hear from my children and grandchildren, as you are to do the same as a father and as a mother. If you are not a part of God's family, you can be. You can be before this morning is over. You can have a spiritual birthday today. You can have a spiritual birthday this morning. You can come into this amazing family and you can come and approach the God who has created you and designed you. You can enter into a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. It's not by works which we have done but according to His mercy that He has saved us. We don't earn this privilege. We don't earn salvation. We receive it as a gift. That's as simple as recognizing that Jesus is the Son of God. The purpose that He came to this earth was to die on a cross so that the sin in my life, which the Bible says is true of every one of us. All of us of sin and fall short of the glory of God. Sin always brings death. Sin always brings destruction. Sin always brings separation. God in Christ has bridged that gap through His death on the cross. Do you know what He asks of us? To believe that. To believe that we can't do it on our own but to believe that what Jesus did is all that was necessary. Do you know what happens when you believe that? You have a spiritual birthday. You're born into the family of God and you're adopted into God's family. Do you know what happens then? The whole New Testament opens up to you in a way that you never saw before. Now you're a child of God.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, what an incredible privilege Jesus introduces us to. This amazing truth that having been adopted into your family we come to you as our Abba Father. Lord God, encourage us as your people, encourage us to come to You

anytime anywhere with anything, that we may in this relationship display our utter dependence on You. We ask in Jesus's name, Amen.