

## LORD, Teach Us to Pray – Part 2

### Introduction

Throughout her history, one of the ways the people of God have described their rituals of the worship of God was simply by the word “prayer.” Even the temple, where the sacrifices were offered to God, was referred to as the “house of prayer” (**Isa. 56:7; Matt. 21:13//Mar. 11:17//Lk. 19:46**) and the times of sacrifices at the temple were called the “hours of prayer” (**cf. Lk. 1:10; Acts 3:1**). The synagogues were known as places of prayer or “prayer-houses,” where God’s people would gather regularly to pray the *Shema* (**Deut. 6:4**), the *Amidah* (or *Shemoneh Esreh*), and the *Kaddish*, all, as we saw last week, heavily influenced the prayer Jesus taught to His disciples.

As His disciples, one of the ways that we identify with our Master Jesus is by following Him in prayer to God as He taught us to pray. As Jesus said, “a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master” (**Matt. 10:24-25**). One of the ways that we become like Jesus is by learning to pray as he both modeled and taught us to pray.

Further, as we continue our lifelong journey and growth in learning to pray to our God, don’t you want to know what Jesus says ought to be your concerns when you approach your heavenly Father? If He is your Master, don’t you think His concerns – what He prays for, or teaches you to pray for – ought to be your concerns? So it will be important for us to slow down and take some time to unpack what Jesus is teaching here so that we can begin to pray for what he taught us to pray.

Last time we looked at our passage, we noted especially the incredible beauty of the brevity, simplicity, and especially the directness of the prayer.

### Father (11:2; Matt. 6:9; cf. WSC 98-100 - Preface)

It is the directness of the prayer that is especially evident in Jesus’ opening address of God as simply “Father.” Jesus’ teaching on prayer, begins (v. 2) and ends (v. 13) with “Father.” You will notice there is no long litany of groveling before His Heavenly Father as when the pagans often approach their gods of wood or stone as if they must first pay the price of admission in order to be found worthy to enter the presence of their often capricious deities. No! Jesus simply intrudes into His Father’s presence as a child who excitedly jumps into his or her father’s arms as he walks through the door after a long day away.

Further, it is clear that Jesus addressed His Father as “*Abba*” (Aramaic) when He prayed (cf. **Mark 14:36**). We noted, last Sunday, the unique intimate quality of the term “*Abba*.” While it is true that some of the Jewish prayers at the time of Jesus addressed God as “Father,” (throughout the *Amidah*) the word (*ab*) they used and how they used it were far more formal than Jesus’ *Abba*. This formality would make sense for a group of worshippers who were forbidden to verbalize the personal name of God (*Yahweh*), choosing instead either “*Adonai*” (Lord), or the far more distant, “the name,” (*HaShem*). What is more important than the usage of individual Jews in Jesus’ day is the extremely rare usage of any form of “Father” by an individual Palestinian Jew in the Old Testament (cf. **Ps. 89:26; Jer. 3:4, 19**). It is almost non-existent.

The uniqueness of Jesus’ use of *Abba* is especially noted by two important facts. (1) One is that the Greek-speaking churches of the first century, even before our four Gospels were written, had already retained the use of the Aramaic, *Abba*, in their worship services (cf. **Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6**). This means that the term, which was never used by Palestinian Jews in their prayer to God, was so precious to the early Christians that it was simply carried over into their Greek-speaking services, much like our common usage of the Hebrew “*Amen*.” This is especially poignant seeing that Greek speakers had their own term for “father” (*ho pater*; diminutive “*pappas*”) and did not need to borrow the term from Aramaic. Had the use of *Abba* been in common parlance by the Jews in the first century, the church would have most likely not carried the term over as if it had special significance for the Christian community. Rather, it was important to the early Christians to preserve the usage of *Abba* because that is how Jesus spoke to His Father.

(2) This then leads us to the second important fact to be noted about Jesus’ use of *Abba*, namely, that the early church understood her usage of *Abba* in her prayers as a means of sharing in a common bond of sonship or inheritance with Jesus (cf. **Rom. 8:16-17, 29; Gal. 4:6-7**). There is such a bond or union between Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, and us that we now find our identity exclusively in Jesus. As Paul says, “It is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (**Col. 1:27**), and that “He is our life” (**Col. 3:4**) and:

**Galatians 2:20** <sup>20</sup> “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”

Jesus’ life so now defines your life so that what is true of Him is now true of you. Let us look at **Rom. 8:14-17**. What Paul is saying is that because of our union with Jesus Christ, which is made by the Spirit of God (see **v. 9-11**), that we so share our life with Jesus, as the adopted children of His Father, that He welcomes us to call upon His heavenly Father with the same intimate term, “*Abba*,” which He uses when He prays. Think how amazing is this gift that Jesus has given to you. The author of Hebrews says:

**Hebrews 2:11** <sup>11</sup> For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Jesus looks at you, the rebellious, prodigal son, and not only does He welcome you home into your Father's good pleasure but He is not ashamed to call you His brothers, and even invites you now to call upon His Father with the same, intimate address by which He lovingly speaks to Him, as if to say to you, "I want you to call my Father, *Abba*."

And this is all the more precious when we further understand the degree of intimacy expressed in the use of *Abba*. The reason why there is no record found anywhere in the first century of a Palestinian Jew using *Abba* to refer to God is because the term would have been used exclusively by children (both young and old) of their earthly father in the home; a term far too informal to be used of God in worship. It was a family word, much like our terms *Dada* or *Papa*, used in a close intimate relationship reserved for the family circle. This then makes sense why Jesus would exclusively use the term to speak to His Father, because He – the exclusive Son of God – has spent eternity in God's house and spoke to His Father in such intimacy that the equivalent of "*Papa*" would be quite appropriate for Jesus. What is so priceless about this fact is that the early Christians, empowered by the Holy Spirit, recognized in their union with Jesus – that Jesus so identified with them as to call them His brothers – that they were led by the Spirit to call God not simply *Ab* (formal for Father) but *Abba* (diminutive of Father). Further, this was exclusively theirs because of Jesus' own unique sonship so that no one independent of Jesus had the right to call God "*Abba*." In other words, no Jesus, no sonship. No sonship, no *Abba*.

Therefore, the church's exclusive use of *Abba* in prayer to God is not only an expression of our discipleship in Jesus, as we said earlier, as a way we can identify with our Master, much like a warrior might carry a banner or an emblem on his shield to identify with his clan, but now we see that in using this term, *Abba*, to speak to God we are also identifying with Jesus in His exclusive sonship to His Heavenly Father. In other words, one of the ways that our own sonship is made visible in our day-to-day lives is in the act of prayer, which is addressed to "our *Abba* in Heaven."

### **Hallowed Be Your Name (11:2; Matt. 6:9; WSC 101 – First Petition)**

It is because of the treasure we possess in "our *Abba*" that we then ask Him for the first petition taught to us by our elder brother, Jesus: "hallowed by Your name." "Hallowed" is such a foreign word to our modern ears. Hardly anyone uses such a term anymore but even our modern translators of the Scriptures refuse to update the language of what is probably one of the most memorized and daily prayed passages of Holy Scripture. "Hallowed" is the past tense of "to hallow" or "to honor as holy." It essentially means "to consecrate" or "sanctify" – "to set apart" – something as holy or sacred. What we are praying for then is that God's precious name would be sanctified, or set apart as holy.

But you most likely noticed that the petition is not in the active voice as if we were saying that “we are sanctifying God’s name.” We are not hallowing God’s name, which wouldn’t make sense as a prayer to God in the first place. Why would we pray to God that we are sanctifying His name? The prayer is rather in the passive voice – or the divine passive to be more specific – in that we are asking that God would see to it that His name is sanctified or set apart as Holy. This is after all a petition for God to act and to act on behalf of His own holy name.

But the sanctifying of God’s name here is not a request for God to sanctify Himself but an appeal to God to so act first in His people in such a manner that His holy name would no longer be profaned by those who call on Him as LORD. The language of sanctifying God’s name is connected to why Israel was exiled in the first place (cf. **Ezek. 36:22-23**). Remember that in Jesus’ day, the Jews still saw themselves as living in exile and as not having received the full promises which the prophets pointed forward to in the second great deliverance or exodus of the coming Day of the LORD. The Jews therefore believed that one of the causes (as well as one of its results) which would hasten that coming day of salvation would be the sanctification of God’ name.

This petition is therefore a cry of dependency upon God to fulfill what He had promised in the New Covenant through Ezekiel. We are asking Him to make His people live in such a way as for His name to be sanctified in and through them. But this sanctification of God’s name is not something that is merely carried out by God in us. Rather, the sanctifying of God’s name takes place first and foremost in Jesus, the Messiah. The author to the Hebrews said:

**Hebrews 10:5-6** <sup>5</sup> ¶ Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; <sup>6</sup> IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE . . . **Hebrews 10:9-10** <sup>9</sup> then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Notice that the author to the Hebrews says that Jesus was given a body so that He could sanctify us by which God’s name would be sanctified. Further, we find that Jesus continually prays for us as our High Priest to maintain our sanctification, by which He continues to sanctify God’s name (cf. **Rom. 8:34 → 8:29**). It is in Him that all we do as the Kingdom of Priests is made acceptable to God. Peter writes:

**1 Peter 2:4-5** <sup>4</sup> ¶ And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, <sup>5</sup> you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices *acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*.

But it is not enough that God would sanctify His name in us, His people, who have been made willing to sanctify God's holy name in Christ now, but we are also praying that God would make all people – the whole creation – sanctify His name as holy, even those who must be made to sanctify His name at the final judgment. Paul says that:

**Philippians 2:9-11** <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Notice that every knee and every tongue will submit to the sovereign LORDship of Messiah Jesus in the end. Some will do so now made willing by the Holy Spirit of God through a regenerated heart and by God's grace. But everyone in the end will be made to bow before the King of kings and every tongue will be made to confess that Jesus, God's Messiah, is LORD and all will be for the glory of God the Father's holy name.

We could therefore describe salvation as essentially the work of Jesus the Messiah where He makes the sacrifice necessary for us to sanctify us before God so that we, in Him, are made to sanctify the name of God now. Now, that desire for God's name to be sanctified as holy is made willingly in us because God has made us, by His Spirit, to will or want God's name to be holy. We now desire to live in such a way – in thought, word, and deed – so that we might honor the name of God in all that we are so that all would look upon what we do in His name and give praise to our Heavenly Father (**cf. Matt. 5:16**) – in other words, to bless and sanctify His name as holy.

But that salvation now also means that we will not be included among those who will be made to bow unwillingly before Jesus the King and finally being made to submit in defeat through confessing that Jesus is LORD of all to the glory of God the Father. Think about it for a moment, if in the end, every knee will be made to bow and every tongue will be made to confess the LORDship of Jesus – if it is the inevitable plan of God which no man or woman can thwart – wouldn't it make sense to bow your knee now and confess Him to be your LORD willingly, from your heart, than to be made to do so at the final judgment unwillingly. Yet the majority of the human race chooses to not go down without a fight and would rather curse the name of God with their last breathe, which He gives to them, rather than submit now in love and honor of His name.

But the gift of your salvation could really be summed up as God's grace that was shown to you in this present age – right now - so that you could be made true worshippers of God:

**1 Peter 2:9** you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light - **Amen! -SDG-**