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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, December 27, 2009
"God – Our Father"
Matthew 6:5-13

I have enjoyed and continue to enjoy being a father, and now a grandfather. At times, though, being an earthly father can be challenging.

A father had his college daughter say to him, "Daddy, the girl who sits next to me in class has a dress like mine." The Dad replies, "So you want a new dress?" His daughter answered, "Well, it would be cheaper than changing colleges."

Or take the father whose son tells him, "Dad, the Bible says if you don't let me have the car, you hate me." "Really," replies his dad, "Where does it say that?" The son replied, "In Proverbs 13:24 it says, "He that spares the rod hates his son."

Yes, an earthly father has many challenges in ministering to his family.

But where did the word father originate? What is the meaning of the word, father? Is there an ultimate father for all people of the world?

Let's approach this subject of fatherhood this way. To do so we need to start not with us, with humanity, but with the eternal God presented in the Bible.

I. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father.

1. In the Old Testament.

Isaiah 63:16 reads:

"For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not recognize us. You, O LORD are our Father, our redeemer from of old is Your name."

What God is telling the nation of Israel through Isaiah is that even if they disown Him, He is still their heavenly Father.

Isaiah 64:8 says,

"But now O LORD, 'You are our Father. We are the clay. You our potter, and all of us are the work of Your hands."

Jeremiah 31:9 – God told Israel through Jeremiah,

"I am a Father to Israel."

Deuteronomy 32:6, where Moses recognized God as Father at the end of his life.

"Is not He your Father who bought you? He has made you and established you."

Deuteronomy 1:31, the word Father is not used but it is implied – Moses speaking to Israel how God cared for them as they wandered in the wilderness.

"In the wilderness you saw how the LORD carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place."

Psalm 89:26

"You will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, my God and the Rock of my salvation.'"

2. In the New Testament.

Matthew 6:9 – in Christ's pattern for prayer, He calls God, His Father – "Our Father."

John 15:8 – Jesus calls God His Father.

"By this is My Father glorified that you may bear much fruit."

John 15:10 – Again, Jesus calls God His Father.
 “I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

Romans 8:15 – The believer in Christ comes into a personal relationship with the Heavenly Father.
 “But you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father.’” Abba is Aramaic for father.

Ephesians 3:14 – As Paul writes to the Ephesian church guided by the Holy Spirit.
 “I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth derives its name.”

3. Summary of the Old and New Testaments – as God is revealed as Father.

It is very obvious from these verses in the Old and New Testaments that the eternal God, the first person in the Triunity, has revealed Himself to Israel, to His disciples and all of us today as FATHER.

The biblical God then, is not revealed as father/mother, or mother, or mother nature, or some other form that man may try to concoct. He is revealed to us in the masculine as Father.

Tie in this revelation of God, the first person of the Triunity as Father, with all of His other attributes or characteristics that we have considered over the past several months.

God, the Father is Spirit (personality, mind, will & emotion), God the Father is eternal, infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, sovereign, truth, freedom, righteous, just, love, and holy.

That is the biblical God revealed in the Bible as Father – is truly an amazing Father, and there is no other Father God like Him nor will there ever be.

PRAISE HIS NAME!!!

II. The meaning discovered in the name, father.

1. Two words used for father.

**In the Old Testament, the main word is: AB.

**In the New Testament, the main word is: PATER.

2. The description of the two words for father.

****AB in the Old Testament has the idea of begetter, by extension an ancestor, and metaphorically, an originator, or a chief.**

****PATER in the New Testament carries with it the idea of the founder of a race, an originator, a progenitor, an ancestor, having also the idea of nourisher, protector, and upholder.**

So both words describing the same God as Father in the Old and New Testaments mean basically the same thing: One who is an originator, founder of race, a nourisher, protector, and upholder.

Is the biblical Father God that kind of a Father??

III. The biblical God expresses Himself as Father.

1. In the Old Testament.

In the beginning God created the heavens and earth (Genesis 1:1). Although Christ is the agent of Creation (Colossians 1:16), God the Father is the originator of the creation.

He was the Father of Adam (who became a father) and Eve – creating them, and giving them instructions on how to develop an on-going relationship with Him. In fact, God, the Father, created earthly fathers, who really through faith in Christ, represent their heavenly Father to their families. Of course, that is a message in and of itself, a good reminder any time, especially on Father’s Day.

As their Father, He provided for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

As their Father, He was also their Redeemer, yet He disciplined them as they had to leave the Garden of Eden. At the same time, God the Father, offered them hope and the world hope as the promise of the Redeemer was given in Genesis 3:15.

As their Father, He was also their sustainer, protector, and upholder, while giving them His hope.

In the first three chapters of Genesis, we see the God the Heavenly Father at work setting forth aspects of His Fatherhood that run all through the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

- **God the Father is Creator.**
- **As Father, He desires to develop an on-going relationship with His people by communicating with them through His word – at first direct communication, and now through His Word the Bible.**
- **As Father, He gives His people the opportunity to make good decisions to follow Him and bad decisions to not follow Him – yes, the opportunity to fail.**
- **As Father, He sometimes has to discipline His people.**
- **As Father, He is the Redeemer of His people.**
- **As Father, He provides for His people.**
- **As Father, He sustains His people.**
- **As Father, He protects His people.**
- **As Father, He encourages His people, wanting the best for them.**
- **As Father, He upholds His people, and gives them His hope.**

When God the Father chose Abraham to be the father of the nation of Israel, these same concepts were expressed by God in His relationship with Abraham, and with the nation of Israel, and through the prophets as we have seen, as God reminded them that He was their Father.

He was the potter and they were the clay. In the midst of their disobedience, God the Father had to discipline Israel for their rebellion, but in the midst of sending them into captivity, He was always there sustaining, protecting, upholding, and giving them hope that they would return to their land. But even more than that, the Messiah was coming who would bring them salvation as well as the world. God as Father was always offering His people HOPE.

2. In the New Testament.

When Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Savior was born, and eventually started His ministry on earth to show us who God the Father really was, we hear Christ talking about His heavenly Father. In fact as mentioned above in John 15:10, Jesus called God, the Father, MY Father. "I keep My Father's commandments."

Now we begin to see visibly in the God-man, Jesus Christ, a glimpse of His relationship with His heavenly Father.

(1) Christ's person.

John 10:30 "I and my Father are one" Jesus was saying that He was of the same essence, the same substance as the Father – He was God. A great verse, by the way, about which to talk to the cults who deny that Jesus is God.

John 14:9 "He who has seen me has seen the Father." Christ's words to Philip who said show us the Father. Christ was saying that He was God, and seeing Him was seeing God the Father in action.

Jesus Christ was God in Flesh. He was deity as His Father was deity. He was of the same essence as His Father – God.

(2) Christ's work.

John 5:19 – Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."

Jesus Christ, the Son, then, carried out the Father's will on earth. He had the Father's authority in life and judgment.

John 6:57 - In His humanity, Jesus was sustained by His heavenly Father, and carried out His will, ultimately to be the Savior of the world. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me."

John 11:40-42 - In His ministry on earth, Jesus Christ prayed to His heavenly Father before He called Lazarus to come forth from the grave, and at other times as well.

One of the classic prayers of Christ is found in John 17, His high priestly prayer for His disciples and those who would yet believe in Him. At the beginning of that amazing prayer, the Lord said, "Father, the hour is come glorify Your son, that the son may glorify You."

John 15:9 – He talked of the Father loving Him, "Just as the Father has loved Me."

In fact, Christ's Heavenly Father at His baptism and transfiguration told Him, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." What an encouragement God the Father was to His Son.

John 15:23 – He pointed out that "He who hates ME hates My Father also." Telling us of the close identity and relationship Christ had with His Father.

But then in **John 8:44**, Jesus began to tell those who rejected Him, the religious Pharisees, to be specific in this passage, that they had another father, not His heavenly Father, but their father was the devil and they wanted to do the desires of the their father. Jesus was teaching that there were actually two spiritual Fathers. His heavenly Father, who He represented, and the devil who was a father to those who rejected Him.

Indeed, Jesus knew what His real mission was in coming to earth. He came to give His life a ransom for many.

Matthew 26:36-46 – we have Jesus incredible prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He prayed three times to His Father in heaven, that the cup of death would not have to be His portion. But He submitted to His Heavenly Father, and won redemption for us through His death, burial and bodily resurrection.

So what do we learn about the relationship of the Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ?

1. They were both of the same essence – God – Which meant that they had an eternal relationship that existed before time began, before the creation of the world.
2. The heavenly Father loved His Son and the Son loved His heavenly Father.
3. The heavenly Father had an on-going relationship with His Son during His earthly ministry and ultimate sacrifice on Calvary.
4. As His heavenly Father, He sustained His Son, protected Him, upheld Him, and encouraged Him to continue on in His ministry, gave Him hope, for He would lead many sons to glory.
5. Jesus Christ the Son learned obedience, obeying all the God's commandments, fulfilling all of the law, and submitted to His heavenly Father in death to win redemption for the world.

Yes, God the Father, and Jesus Christ His Son, had a perfect relationship, certainly in eternity before Christ took upon Himself sinless humanity, but also while Christ was on earth accomplishing redemption for us and then His eventual return to heaven to continue that eternal relationship with His heavenly Father.

IV. Jesus' heavenly Father can become our heavenly Father.

1. Jesus' words #1 (Matthew 6:9).

Jesus made one more statement about His heavenly Father which I have left until now.

It is found in what is called the Lord's prayer, which is really the pattern for prayer, for the Lord's prayer is His high priestly prayer we referred to awhile ago.

Note what Christ said in Matthew 6:9

"Our Father who is in heaven."

What does that mean? The word, OUR, tells us what the means. That means that we can have the privilege to have a relationship with the same Heavenly Father that Jesus does. That is really incredible no matter how many times we have heard it. We can have a relationship with the Heavenly Father of Jesus like Jesus has with HIM.

How great of news is that as we come to the end of the year 2009 and are about to enter the new year 2010 – a whole new decade!!!

But there is a problem.

2. Jesus' Words #2 (John 8:44).

We just quoted this verse above where Jesus told those who rejected Him that they were of their father, the devil. They did his desires. Christ was saying that what He taught in John 3 was that those who haven't accepted Christ as personal Savior are under condemnation needing God's forgiveness and grace.

Paul amplified this teaching when he wrote to the Ephesians telling them that before accepting Christ they lived "according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

Paul adds to this in his letter to the Colossian believers that they were in the kingdom of darkness before coming to know Christ as personal Savior, but now were transferred into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13).

Such is not always the easiest to accept, for there are lot of good people who do many good deeds, and to think that the devil is their father, or they live according to the prince of the power of the air, which is really the devil as well, is hard to digest. Such thinking, however, misses the reality of God's holiness and that all of our righteousness before Him is tainted with our own sin, so that we can never gain acceptance before God no matter how much good in the sight of man we do. Our very pride in thinking that the good we do will gain merit before the Lord, will keep us out of heaven where there is no pride, no sin whatsoever.

3. Jesus' Words #3 (John 1:12).

"As many as received Him (Christ), to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to them that believe in His name." Our heavenly Father provides us His redemption through faith in Christ.

That means that the one who accepts Christ as Savior is born spiritually into the family of God who is now the believer's heavenly Father, the Father of Jesus Christ.

I trust that you have made that decision to ask Christ to be your personal Savior.

Paul emphasizes this reality in Romans 8:15 for the believer in Jesus Christ that you have not received the spirit of slavery, but the spirit of adoption as son by which we cry out "Abba, Father."

The believer in Jesus Christ then is not just a spiritual child of the Heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ, born into God's forever family, the believer is also placed as a mature son or daughter

into God's family to be an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. Such is true because both believer and Jesus Christ have the same Heavenly Father! How marvelous is that!!!

So what does this all mean for us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ and are seeking to live for Him in the nitty gritty of life?

4. Jesus' Words #4 (Matthew 6:9-13).

(1) I have the true Heavenly Father to worship (Hallowed be your name) – 6:9.

We become like the one or the thing we worship. That is why Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:1 to be imitators of God. Why John tells us to walk as Jesus walk, in His steps (I John 2:6).

(2) I can have my Heavenly Father's understanding of what His will is for me and the world – 6:10

My heavenly Father wants His heavenly will accomplished in this old world which is no friend to grace. What's His heavenly will for this world? The Great Commission, friends. To go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

God the Father's heavenly will is that people come to know Christ, grow in Him and reach others for Christ. Christ is not out to bring in His kingdom into this world (In the future will be the millennial kingdom, another part of God's kingdom, eventually the eternal state – the new heavens and earth). One aspect of His kingdom is already here in the church of Jesus Christ. The church is to be a witness for Jesus Christ, that is you and I are to be a witness for our Heavenly Father telling others about His Son, Jesus Christ.

We are to be available to tell others as He gives us opportunity.

(3) I can depend on my heavenly Father to supply of all my needs - 6:11.

This is not just physical needs but spiritual needs as well. (The word of God is given to strengthen, guide, and empower us for living for the Lord). He provides and sustains as my heavenly Father. He provides the strength for me to labor. He is there to encourage us on in the midst of our challenges – to give us hope when there doesn't seem to be any hope. He has promised not to give us snakes and scorpions when we ask for different needs (Luke 11:10-13).

(4) I can experience my heavenly Father's forgiveness as I forgive others – 6:12 (Ephesians 4:32).

Our heavenly Father knows that our relationship with Him can be broken for we are still in our sinful bodies. We never lose our position as sons and daughters of the Lord. Thusly, our heavenly Father provides the way back as we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. He wants us to have a forgiving attitude toward those we offend. In fact we are to ask their forgiveness first so that God our heavenly Father can forgive us. Our heavenly Father wants harmony in our relationships as He and Christ have harmony in their relationship.

(5) I can experience my Heavenly Father's encouragement for spiritual victory in my life - 6:13a.

Lead us not into temptation, means not that God tempts us for He does not (James 1:13-14), but when believers are tempted by their own lusts, the sirens of the world, and the devil himself, they can rely on the power of the Holy Spirit using the Word of God to have victory over temptation. God the Father may test our faith, but He does that to strengthen us not to weaken our faith. God our Father wants us to keep trusting in Him, for since God the Father is for us, no one can be against us.

(6) I can rely on my Heavenly Father to give me strength to defeat evil or the evil one – 6:13b).

Again, we can use the Word of God to give us discernment into what is right and what is wrong. We can resist Him through the blood of Christ and by being a testimony for Jesus Christ. The believer can use the armor of Christ in Ephesians 6:13-20.

The bottom line in Christ's relationship with His Heavenly Father was obedience to do His will (Philippians 2:8). Obedience to His heavenly Father gave Him joy, for the joy set before Him He endured the cross.

The bottom line in the believer's relationship with his Heavenly Father is obedience as well (Romans 6:17). Obedience to the Lord also brings joy to the believer's life (Galatians 5:22-23).

The believer's heavenly Father wants to have an ongoing daily relationship with each of us who knows Him personally by faith. He is the gracious loving heavenly Father, who leads, guides, nourishes, sustains, encourages us, is always just a thought away.

He is God, our heavenly Father. who is Spirit, eternal, infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, sovereign, truth, freedom, righteous, just, love, and holy.

As we walk with Him by faith each day, He is orchestrating events in our lives so that He may be glorified in all that we think, say and do. Remember, our Heavenly Father is always sovereignly working to accomplish His purposes for us and through us.

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry, to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished. On December 19 a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days.. On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home. On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a Cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church..

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later.

She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet.. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?" The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria.

The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten the Tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria.

When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured, sent to prison and never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home, that was the least he could do.. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return.

One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving.

The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike.

He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier.

He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine (True Story - submitted by Pastor Rob Reid).

If you know the Lord as your personal Savior, enjoy your fellowship with your Heavenly Father today and every day. Let's be alert to who or what He may bring into our lives so that we can follow His promptings by His Spirit directing our lives. Let's serve Him with gladness and anticipation!

