

Day 1 – Our Father who art in heaven

Preparing: *When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm.*

– Ps. 75:3:3

Pausing: A time of silence, resting in the presence of God.

Reading: Psalm 33; Gal. 3:26-4:7

Reflecting:

The first word of the prayer, “our,” should not be quickly glossed over. In fact, we see Jesus use plural throughout. In our individualistic, “I’m free to be myself” culture, Jesus calls us to pray as a community, with the understanding, “We’re all in this together.” To be sure, when Jesus calls us to himself, he does so as an individual. But he then brings us into a family. Like any family, we may not always like or get along with one another, but we need one another. We need one another to grow, to care for, and to be cared for.

The word Jesus invites us to use to address God, “Father,” confirms this communal, family nature of our life of faith. It’s not an easy word for all to use, given our life experience, but we need to let God’s word define it for us. The OT echoes are rich and two-fold. First, Father highlights the God who has created and given life to all things. As Moses asks the people of Israel, “Is he [God] not your Father, your Creator, who made and formed you?” (Deut. 32:6b). And the prophet Isaiah reveals God as the potter and we as the clay, the work of God’s hand (Isa. 64:8).

Second, Father highlights the One who, like a loving Father, has reached out to rescue us and bring us into his family, even when we may have wandered away. Israel is identified as God’s “firstborn son” who this Father rescued from slavery in Egypt (cf. Ex. 4:22f). And Isaiah identifies this rescuing role of this God: “You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name” (Isa. 63:16).

Paul, in his letter to the Galatian church, describes the God who has given us life, rescued us from sin and death, and promised us an incredible future, as known by and through the name “Father.” As we respond to his work in our lives, we become part of his family, a relationship that goes beyond our kinship or biological ties to one that is like an adoption in which we are privileged to call one another brother and sister (cf. Mk. 3:33-35).

This Father, the prayer reminds us, is a heavenly not an earthly Father. Psalm 33 reveals that this heavenly Father is perfect (vv. 4-5) and can therefore be trusted. He also has an ultimate, “wide angle” perspective on the world (vv. 13-15). Finally, he has power even over death (vv. 16-19). The God to whom we pray is absolutely wonderful and amazing!

Reflection Questions:

1. When you pray, do you tend to think of yourself as all alone, or as part of a family? Why?

2. How might the communal nature of prayer to which Jesus calls us be especially important and helpful for you in these days of staying at home and social distancing?

3. Where have you most noticed the “inescapable network of mutuality” (Martin Luther King, Jr.) that we are all a part of?

4. How does it feel to have a Father like the God revealed in the pages of the Bible and in the person of Jesus?

5. Which of the three aspects of the God who is “in heaven” (perfection, perspective, power), is most significant or important to you right now? Why?

Singing/Listening: [Good, Good Father](#) (click to listen)

Praying:

Almighty God, our good, heavenly Father, thank you for . . .