

Oregon City United Methodist Church  
18955 S. South End Road  
Oregon City, OR 97045

Rev. Michael Benischek  
503-522-9807  
November 4, 2018

**Series: The Lord's Prayer**

**Sermon: Our Father . . .As it is in Heaven**

**Matthew 6:9-13**

“This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.”

**Sermon**

This past week was Halloween. All Hallow's Eve. The Eve before the Hallowed Day, for us, of All Saints Day. Hallowed. Sounds kinda like a funny word. An oldish type of word. A Bible kind of word. However, the only place in the entire New Testament where you find the word Hallowed, is in the Lord's Prayer. For the next few weeks, we will delve into the Lord's Prayer. Each week we'll take a small section of the prayer - some of them are found in Holy Writ, some are not (we added a lot to the prayer over the years). Did you notice that the prayer in today's reading is a little different than the one we usually pray? Don't let it bother you too much, we also believe in the traditions of our faith that added the complimentary liturgy, in the spirit of the prayer, to what we say. But if you're a Bible literalist, you gotta stop using the Lord's Prayer. Today's verbiage - Our Father, who art in heaven Hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done, On Earth as it is in heaven.

To help explore the Lord's prayer a little bit, I also want to pair each sermon up with a famous painting about prayer. There's a few famous paintings about prayer that many of you would recognize, and so it is with this Sunday's lesson: Take a look. (PIC). Of course, you would know this character as George Washington. And if you had to guess the setting for this image, it could possible be at . . .Valley Forge. Arnold Freberg was the artist, also did much of the drawings and paintings in the backdrop you see in the movie The Ten Commandments. Studied under the some guy named Norman Rockwell. Was drafted in World War II, his job was to create patriotic posters, but he wanted to go to the front, so they sent him, not a lot of volunteers wanted to go that way - and he ended up drawing combat maps during the actual combat, to help higher ups know what was going on in the middle of the battle. Later on in life, he did a series of patriotic portraits - including this one. George Washington's Prayer.

Here's an account from one newspaper account of those days: “The inhabitants of the surrounding country, knowing this sad state of the army, were very uneasy; one of them left his home, one day, and as he was passing thoughtfully the edge of a wood near the hut-camp, he heard low sounds of a voice. He stopped to listen, and looking between the trunks of the large trees he saw Gen. Washington engaged in prayer. He passed quietly on, that he might not disturb him; and, on returning home, told this family he knew the Americans would succeed, for their leader did not trust in his own strength, but sought aid from the hearer of prayer, who promised in his word, “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

There are open questions as to how true these accounts are, but here is another one. “A woman, who lived at the Valley Forge when the army was encamped there, told a friend who visited her soon after they left it, that

she had discovered that it was the habit of Washington to retire to a short distance from the camp to worship God in prayer.”

Washington’s own nephew who served with his uncle once wrote: “One morning, at daybreak, an officer came to the general’s quarters with dispatches. As such communications usually passed through my hands, I took the papers from the messenger and directed my steps towards the general’s room. Walking along the passage which led to his door, I heard a voice within. I paused, and distinctly recognized the voice of the general. Listening for a moment, when all was silent around, I found that he was earnestly engaged in prayer. I knew this to be his habit, and therefore retired, with the papers in my hand, till such time as I supposed he had finished the exercise, when I returned, knocked at his door, and was admitted.”

Valley Forge. Winter of 1777-78. Washington with soldiers such as Benedict Arnold. He was there. Aaron Burr, Alexander Hamilton, Nathaniel Greene, Henry Knox - so many folk famous in their own right, shared bunks. 12,000 troops that harsh winter. 2,000 died. No wonder Washington found solace in prayer. Praying for his troops. Praying for wisdom. Praying to know if this was the right path. Thy will be done, right?

Our Father, who art in Heaven. Hallowed Be thy name. The first noun in our prayer is Father. I understand it might not be politically correct anymore, and some people don’t like their fathers, so it colors it just a little. But the point is this: Jesus teaches us to have an intimate and personal relationship with God. When you go to the store to buy a Father’s Day card, you look at the cards which say Father or Dad. There’s a difference between those two. For me, I was always drawn to the cards with Dad because Father is just too formal. Whenever Jesus talks to God he uses the word Abba which means Father but it is more like a child’s use of the name Daddy. It signified an intimacy and familiarity of God, a close relationship. Part of what Jesus wants us to realize is that relationship with God is meant to be intimate and familiar. He doesn’t want us to pray like this: “O Great Spirit in Heaven, verily I beseech thee; or O Light of all Lights...” No, he wants us to pray, Abba, Dad or Daddy in heaven. God is a personal being. He’s not some distant entity, but He is a personal and intimate being. That is grounded in the fact that when God created us it was out of His desire to give love away. God created us to be recipients of His love. He created us for the very reason we have children, not to be our servants but because there is something within us which longs to give love away. And that’s how God feels about us. But we also know that God created us not only to receive his love but to reciprocate his love. He created us to understand his love, to experience his love and to be able to respond to his love by giving love back. So when you pray and talk to God, you are entering into that relationship or fellowship with the Lord. That’s why when you pray, we call God Dad or Daddy and not Father. If you have an image of God as some authoritarian, disciplinarian kind of figure, then consider the softer side of God. The God that loves and cares and walks with us in the garden. Some of us take God way too seriously.

But on the other hand, He’s also Holy. This is the most important phrase for us today. In the same breath that we call God dad, we also pray that his name is holy. That’s what it means to hallow God’s name, to call it holy. It’s to revere God and stand in awe of God. On the one hand you have the closeness of God and on the other, the awesome holiness of God. Both of these are important. You need to have both to have balance. If God is just holy then he is far and distant God. If all you have is closeness to God and you don’t have the fear, reverence and awe of God then you are also in danger of taking God for granted in who he is and you lose one of the great catalysts to live holy lives yourself. God is holy. He is to be feared and revered. We handle his name with care. It’s one of the Ten Commandments. Jews never even said the name of Yahweh. In the Scriptures the name of God was written “YHWH” without the vowels so it could not be pronounced. When they came to the name, they said “hashem” which means “the name.” It was so holy that they would not pronounce it. But how different that is with how we deal with the name God. We throw it around without abandon. If you have an image of God as some touchy feely happy-go-lucky spirit, then consider the weightier side of God. The God that calls us into account, who one who can judge, who has our eternal life in his hands. Some of us take God not seriously enough.

And that's how it was with George, right? I'm not claiming Washington was like God, but there was a soft side to George. You could call him by name. He listened to the common soldiers and younger officers. He cared about his troops and suffered with them. He wrote almost 20,000 letters - including to families of soldiers who had died. He was a lover of dogs, he fell in love, had a long marriage, etc. There was also a hard side to him. He was General. And President. He had the task of executing mutinous soldiers. He once lit into General Lee for retreating at Monmouth that General Scott remembered, "He swore till the leaves shook on the trees." There is but one commander in chief.

There is but one God. And we are not Him. Thy will be done. Not my will be done. He is kind and gentle and hard and demanding. May we remember that his is Abba. Dad. And He is Holy. Hallowed. As the Psalmist says, "Not to us, O Lord, but to thy name give glory." Together may we always hallow his name. And the family of God said, AMEN.