

One of the most heart-wrenching tasks we face is trying to communicate the truth of our souls to our fellow human beings. We are so often misunderstood, misheard, misrepresented by others. Perhaps even more often than that we are guilty of saying the wrong thing, lashing out in anger in a momentary loss of control, or gossiping when we really meant to be sharing prayer requests.

Mature people for the most part, I think, have good intentions toward their family and friends and neighbors and want desperately for those people nearest and dearest to us to know that we care for them and would do anything at all to help, anything just ask.

Nowhere is this disconnection more pronounced in human relationships than in the family. Especially parent and child relationships. I love my children. But if you asked them on the odd Tuesday evening when I was worn out just trying to get supper on the table and I lost it on them... you know what I mean... I wonder if they would say if you asked them, does your daddy love you? Would they in that particular moment know that I still emphatically, wholeheartedly, and absolutely without question LOVE them? That may be my personal tiny demons that sit on my shoulders, whispering reminders of my inadequacies to me, but I bet it is a heartbreak that we all face. Despite what I might say or how I might act, does my person know that I love them?

Let me ask you this. What if you could broadcast your deepest intentions and heart for your children directly into their heart and soul? What if you could open a channel of communication that always stayed open no matter the weekday spats or decades long estrangement? Sometimes we get lucky. For me it is in the car. I have a captive audience, and we can talk about anything because the alternative has yet to seem worse than the conversation, that is a heart-to-heart with dad seems more palatable than throwing open the door and becoming intimately connected to the speeding asphalt below. Or sometimes there are those teachable moments where some injury or disappointment happens right in front of me and I am able to scoop them and reassure them that it will all be alright somehow and even if it never is alright I still love them. It happens, but such moments seem rare.

What if you could broadcast your deepest intentions and heart for your children directly into their heart and soul? What if you could open a channel of communication that always stayed open no matter what. In our Gospel lesson this morning the disciples present Jesus with just such a rare opportunity, a teachable moment breaks open in the midst of the travels Jesus and his disciples are on. They say, "Lord, teach us how to pray." Imagine Jesus's heart swelling at the chance to open that deepest channel of communication to the love he has known in eternal communion and unity with the Father.

Let's get some context. This version of the Lord's Prayer seems a bit shortened. It seems to have most all the familiar parts without some of the flowery language we say in church. I am so thankful that we have a Gospel with different voices. We find the more familiar to our ears version of the prayer in Matthew's Gospel. And in that Gospel, it is situated amongst the great set of teachings called the Sermon on the Mount. It sits almost directly in the middle of probably the greatest set of teachings ever. We picture Jesus with a crowd of eager listeners, "Blessed are the... for they shall... AND You have heard it said that... but I say unto you..." There is time for extra words. We find ourselves in Luke's gospel, on the road. For a large majority of Luke's Gospel Jesus is on a journey. They go up a mountain, they go down the mountain, along the way Jesus says... as they entered a certain town... Jesus is still offering a master class in what it means to be human but it looks more like on the job training for Luke. And that is most definitely where I find myself these days. I feel like I barely have time to sit down so, "Jesus, if we are gonna do this, you're gonna have to come with me." Luke's Jesus is all to happy to oblige, knowing that our wandering together is not aimless, we're not going between save-a-lot and kroger to see who has the best price on green beans and paper towels... we're going to Jerusalem and everything that means for both of us.

So in the midst of the frenzy of activity, up the mountain, down the mountain, bickering with our sister in the back seat, save-a-lot, feeding the 5000... it dawns on us a teachable moment, "Jesus teach us how to pray." This is the perfect opportunity for Jesus to teach us the words that go along with the music he has been making... opening that permanent channel of connection between humanity and a God whose love for them cannot be measured or understood. Our connection has to be rooted in 5 things:

God is holy. *hallowed be your name.*

God cares about justice. *Your kingdom come.*

There is enough. *Give us each day our daily bread.*

We are deeply wounded and we deeply wound each other.

*And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.*

We cannot stand on our own. *And do not bring us to the time of trial.*

I cannot think of a prayer that I have ever said in my heart or out loud that does not fall under these criteria. The times where I have gotten it wrong I think were the times when I forgot the truth that Jesus is trying so hard to impart. Jesus wants us to know that whatever the circumstances of my life, if it looks like on my side of the mirror that God has forgotten me or that God is indifferent to the suffering of people I love, or I'm sad today and I don't know why... Jesus is reminding us of the true heart of God. It may look like I don't love my children when I playback the Tuesday night scenario, but

in my heart of hearts I want them to know that I do. God who doesn't lose his cool or get tired or lose patience is a much better father than me. Jesus is reminding us of God's unfailing commitment to us. Don't be afraid to keep asking, to keep looking for glimpses of the true intention of a loving God for this world and for you. Sometimes the exercise of continuing to ask or seeking connection is immensely formational for us, whether we see the outcome we look for in our prayers or not.

When I was in seminary, I was placed with a mentor who is the rector of a parish here in the diocese. This course was supposed to be an exercise in practical experience in the field. Each week I was to report back to a small group of my classmates and a professor who moderated the conversation. As you might guess, it being in the middle of the raging pandemic, my engagement was a little less than I hoped for. I wanted so badly to get the most out of this opportunity not only to learn but to build a relationship with a future colleague. I attended vestry meetings via Zoom, I watched their services online. I was supposed to have a weekly meeting with my mentor, but it just wasn't happening. I began to tell myself all sorts of stories about my mentor. He shouldn't have signed up for this if he didn't have time for me. I bet he is avoiding me. I feel like such a burden to this congregation. Maybe I'm not cut out for this. Finally the professor in charge of the class confronted me and I broke down explaining all the fears and concerns I had. She said give it one more chance and tell your mentor exactly what you need and I'll intervene if need be. I remember being so nervous. I called my mentor and laid out exactly how I felt. His tone and demeanor softened in a way I hadn't noticed before. By the end of the conversation we both understood each other and were willing to make the adjustments our relationship needed. I ended the conversation by saying, "Well, I never wanted to be seen as the "squeaky wheel" as in the squeaky wheel gets the grease." I will always remember his answer, "Squeak away my friend."

How much more than a distracted mentor, or an irritable dad, or an aloof boss, or a out of touch governmental system, or whatever gears we grind against in our lives, how much more will God be willing to listen. God is big enough to listen to our prayers, and the channel is always open. Squeak away. You cannot say the wrong thing. There is so much grace available. I asked at the beginning of the sermon, "What if you could broadcast your deepest intentions and heart for your children directly into their heart and soul?" God has made a way for that to happen in our hearts. The Spirit is already working within you, with groanings too deep for words. What if we became keenly aware of the heart of a generous God reaching out to us intending the deepest possible connection and relationship between us. That is what prayer is.

*I have said these things to you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*