**Sunday, June 21st, 2020**

**Matthew 6:9-13**

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

           on earth as it is in heaven.

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When our lives, and hearts, and minds, and souls, need a Father, we have these words:

Our Father who is in heaven . . .

With these words we enter into the loving presence of our God.

Our Father in heaven invites us to be with him – always.

The Bible is the story of our Father who is in heaven.

It is the story that we have a Father who loves us more than we can imagine,

no matter what we have done, or what we have failed to do.

Remember the story of the prodigal son? That is our story.

Down from the house the father has run.

Up the narrow path the son has trudged.

And there at the gate, the two meet once again.

The son is wearing a tattered robe, his hair is tangled, his legs, coated in mud.

All he has to offer is the smell of pigs, and a rehearsed apology:

“Father, I have sinned against God, and done wrong to you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

However, there is one problem with this picture.

Though the boy is willing to stop being a son,

the father is not willing to stop being a father.

Don't miss the look on the father's face.

See the tears glistening on his cheeks.

Don't miss the smile shining through his graying beard.

One arm holds the child up so he won't fall.

The other holds the boy close so he won't doubt.

“My son was lost.

But now he is found!"

The child thought he had lost his place in the home.

He thought he had lost his place in his father's heart.

He abandoned his father.

He wasted his inheritance.

He assumed he had forfeited his privilege to sonship.

The father, however, doesn't give up that easily.

In his mind, his son is still a son.

The child may have been out of the house,

but he was never out of his father's heart.

He may have left the table, but he never left the family.

Don't miss the message.

We may not have done what God wanted us to do.

We have done many things God did not want us to do.

But no matter what we have done, or not done,

God is not willing to stop being our Father.

Of all his names, Father is God's favorite.

We know he loves this name most, because this is the one he used most often.

While on earth, Jesus called God "Father" over 200 times.

We ought to follow his example.

In his first recorded words Jesus explained:

“Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?”

In his final triumphant prayer he proclaimed:

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

God loves to be called Father.

After all, didn't Jesus teach us to begin our prayer with the phrase, "Our Father"?

Those first 2 words of the Lord's Prayer carry a great significance:

“Our Father" reminds us we are welcome in God's house.

Because we have been adopted by the owner,

we are God's children, always, and forever.

He invites, permits, and empowers us,

to speak with him in such a familiar and trusting way.

He invites us into his presence – at any time, all the time.

God not only forgives us; he claims us as his children.

It would have been enough if God simply forgave us and cleansed our name.

But he does so much more.

He gives us his name. He adopts us, takes us as his own children.

He takes us home to be with Him

God didn't adopt us because we were good looking.

He didn't need our money, or our wisdom.

He didn't adopt us because of all the good things we have done,

(after all we can never do enough).

Our heavenly Father adopted us simply because he wanted to, because he loves us.

He knew full well the trouble each of us would be, and the price he would have to

pay, but he signed his name next to ours and became our Father.

If we ever thought we did not have need of a father, He was still with us.

In all the world's troubles, and difficulties, and uncertainties,

we are more than conquerors through him who loves us.

Nothing in all of creation,

will ever be able to separate us from the love of our Heavenly Father.

Our Father will never turn us away.

The doors of his house are never closed.

Practice lingering in God's presence.

It is right to call him Holy.

We speak truth when we call him King.

But if you want to touch his heart, use the name he loves to hear.

Call him Father.

Whenever your heart needs a father, he is there.

Amen