

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Jul 24th 2016

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” How many times have we said this prayer? It may be the first prayer we learned. Today we see where it comes from. And in a bit of irony, this formal prayer almost everyone knows seems to come from Jesus telling the disciples not to rely on formal prayers, but to pray simply, familiarly, and from the heart.

When he is asked about prayer, Jesus says to call God our father, to speak to him like family, because he is our father in heaven, and like our father on earth, wants to help and protect us. We should call God Father. I called my father “Daddy.” We can say, “Daddy, how are things in heaven?” And we should respect God, like we respect our parents. His name is holy, and we honor our father. We call on him for what we need. We ask for our bread. What father would give a snake to a child asking for food? None. Nor would our heavenly father. If an earthly father cares for and supports his family, how much more will our heavenly father? When we ask for what we need to live, he will provide. He is a good father to us. Our earthly parents don’t abandon us if we do something wrong, nor will our heavenly father. God wants to teach us right from wrong and protect us from danger, like any good parent. We’re not perfect. We sin, even when we try not to, and we probably don’t try hard enough not to. And if we imperfect beings are still good parents to our children, how much better is our perfect heavenly father. And he is our role model. Like our Father loves and forgives us, we should love and forgive each other. We should help our friends in need like our Father provides for us. We should forgive each other like our Father forgives us.

The prayer has become standardized and formal. We say it every day (or we should say it every day). And when we do, we should think about what it means and what we are saying. In these or other words, we are talking to our father. We are acknowledging that we love and respect him. We are asking for our basic needs, asking for his forgiveness when necessary, and promising to love and care for each other like he loves and cares for us.

Tamora Whitney-Creighton University's English Department