

### Lesson 3: Our Father in Heaven

“That we may know what and how to pray, our Lord Christ himself has taught us both the way and the words, as we shall see.”

- Dr. Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*

Thesis:

Jesus invites us to pray to God and call Him Father.

Key question:

What does it mean to call God Father?

Catechism:

Sverdrup's Questions 275-281

Accompanying Bible Story:

Luke 15:11-32 – The Extravagant Father

My questions:

For years and years and years, people who study and teach the Bible have called it the story of “The Prodigal Son.” Prodigal means wastefully or recklessly extravagant, and the younger son in the story certainly did recklessly and foolishly waste his inheritance. Many Bible teachers, however, have suggested that a better name for this story, a parable Jesus told, could be “The Parable of the Extravagant Father.” As Jesus created the details in the story, He purposefully exaggerated how incredibly generous the father was.

When the son asked for his inheritance, it was like wishing his father was dead. The father did not argue but instead gave the boy what he asked. Then the father waited and watched for his son's return knowing full well that the son was wasting all his money on sinful living. Eventually the son went home hoping at the most to be hired on as a servant. The father, however, ran to meet him, hugged and kissed his filthy, dirty boy, and gave him new clothes and a ring. The father fully accepted his son back as a member of the family. The father then threw a big “welcome home” party. When the older brother complained, the father did not argue with him. He simply told the older son that all the father had was his. The father owned so much that the younger son could be welcomed home and the older son could have it all, too.

Everything in the story goes against what we might think is fair, but that is exactly the point. Jesus wants to show us that God, our Father, wants to lavishly, without limits, give us “all things.” He lavishly forgives our sin. He lavishly gives us new life. He lavishly gives us the Holy Spirit. He runs to us and lavishly covers us in grace and mercy even though it is not fair and we do not deserve it.

To help us in the relationship He wants to have with us, Jesus gave us a model prayer. We can use this prayer as we have our continuing conversation with Him. We call it *The Lord's Prayer* because our Lord Jesus taught it. Both Matthew and Luke wrote the prayer down for us in their gospels (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4).

Jesus began this prayer by telling us to pray to our Father who is in heaven. He invites us to have a conversation with our Father God, the Father he showed us in the parable of the extravagant father. In this lesson, we will learn more about what it means for God to be our Father. In the next seven lessons we will study seven petitions, seven requests, Jesus tells us to make to our Father. We pray this prayer as we learn to rely on Him not only for salvation but for everything we need in life.

\* The Lord's Prayer begins, "Our Father, who art in heaven." Copy the meaning of this introduction from your Lutheran *Small Catechism*.

\* Read and summarize the following verses. What do they say about God as Father?

Psalm 89:26

Isaiah 63:16

Jeremiah 3:19

Matthew 5:44-45

Luke 23:33, 34

Read the two Bible passages where the Lord's Prayer is found. Think about how you have memorized the Lord's Prayer. Compare and contrast the three: the Matthew text, the Luke text, and the words you have memorized. Write down your key observations.

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What did I learn in this lesson (three or four sentences)?