



Meet Our Father in the Lord's Prayer

Read:
Isaiah 55:10-11
Matt 6:7-15

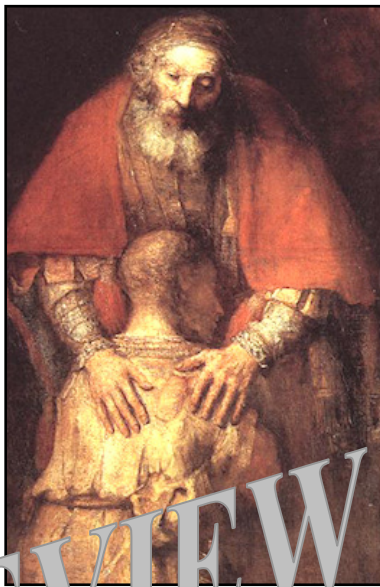
In Matthew 6:7-15, Jesus is showing us how intimately our Father loves us. In Isaiah 55:10-11, we see our Father reminding us that whatever he has promised to do for us (promised in his Word), he will indeed do for us. Why do we doubt this?

We received our first idea of what God the Father is like from our human fathers and other authority figures (including mothers). Since even the best of parents loved us insufficiently, our knowledge of God the Father's love is insufficient.

When we pray the "Our Father" prayer — if we really pay attention to the words, praying from our hearts instead of rattling off the words like babbling pagans — we open ourselves to his complete love.

Each part of this prayer, which Jesus learned from his own experiences with the Father, is a prescription for an intimate relationship with our heavenly Daddy. As a spiritual exercise, pray it slowly, line by line, reflecting on how each part connects you to the love of the Papa who loves you perfectly and completely and unconditionally.

At the end of this Gospel reading, Jesus offers us the key that unlocks the power of our Father's love. It's no accident that he gives additional instruction for only one part of this



prayer: "If you forgive the faults of others, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours." Unforgiveness closes our hearts to love. When the door is shut, we're not open to receive love, not even our perfect Father's love.

This is why Jesus told us to pray to *our* Father instead of to *my* Father or to *the* Father. We're all in this together.

When we pray to "our" Father, we acknowledge that we're united to all of God's children. How can we love God while refusing to love someone for whom he cares deeply? The more willing we are to love others — including those who are most difficult to love — the more we unlock our hearts, opening ourselves to the love of our Father.

And the more we open ourselves to his love, the more love we have available to share with others.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread;
and forgive us our sins as we forgive
those who sin against us;
and do not subject us to the final
test, but deliver us from the evil one.