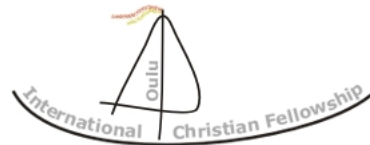


International Christian Fellowship of Oulu Worship Meeting / Message



Date & Time: Sunday, 9.11.2008 at 15.30

Place: Chapel of St. Luke

Topic: Our Father(s)

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Sources: Bible New International Version (www.bibleserver.com),

Lexikon zur Bibel (Fritz Rienecker, Gerhard Maier),

Nikodemus (www.nikodemus.net)

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Welcome

Gathering on Father's day, topic "Our Father", or "our fathers"

Songs related to the topic, and Niels will play the guitar

Tsegaye and Marja will give short testimonies

Opening Prayer

Let's prepare ourselves to come into the Lord's presence.

Of course, we should always be in the Lord's presence, but – speaking for myself and all of us that are gathered here and now –

I want to take the time to get ready and fix our eyes and mind upon Jesus, and ask the Holy Spirit to be part of us, as a gift of God.

In the morning towards Saturday I woke up, rephrasing words from a song that many of you will probably know:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God. And renew a right spirit within me."

Furthermore, in preparing this message I was reminded of being called – as everyone else in this room – to be pure in the sight of God, just like it is told to us in Acts 24:16 (modified):

Let's strive always to keep our conscience clear before God and fellow human beings.

This attitude – trying to have and maintain a clear conscience – will make us receptive to God, and to what He wants to reveal to us in this worship meeting.

So, let's spend a minute in silence and make things straight with God and our fellow human beings.

Tell Him whatever you have on your hearts, and ask for forgiveness for our wrongdoings, even for those we do not know about.

Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ we ask you to pardon us! Thank You, our Father in Heaven, for Your mercy and restoring sacrifice of Your Son!

Endow us with your Holy Spirit, and strengthen us with the right and edifying understanding of Your Word, here and now, and forever more.

Amen.

Introduction

Topic "Our Father", or our fathers

Let me begin by saying a few words about myself and my "fathers", and sort of summarise today's message with regard to God our Father (with a capital F):

I'm not yet a father,
but I know there are a few among us, and some who – Lord-willing – have potential to become a father one day.

I've been blessed with a very good father.
However, my father passed away two years ago.
Does this mean that I'm fatherless? No, certainly not!

So, let me say that even though I or we may not anymore have a father,
or probably never had one,
we may rely upon our Heavenly Father,
if we accept His Son
and are directed by the Holy Spirit.

Note that we as Christians believe in a triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But today we'll deal, especially, with God the Father, our Father.

What does come into your mind when you think about Him as your Father?

Well, I was first reminded about "The Lord's Prayer", or "Our Father" (Vater unser, Isämeidän.
How is it in your mother tongue?)

Matthew 6:9

9 Jesus says: This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...

It's certainly of importance that God is referred to as our Father in both the OT and NT.

In the NT alone the term of God as Father is mentioned over 200 times. We'll look into a few of these today, and explore their meaning to us, also with reference to the OT.

However, in relation to God the heavenly Father other kinds of fathers that have certain meaning to us as human beings:

Let's gather a few, and write them down on a sheet of paper (heart-shaped note pad). Later on we'll put the papers up on a blackboard:

God-Father, Father-in-Law, Spiritual Father, StepFather, No Father, Biological Father, Father-To-Be, Church Father, Father Christmas, Surrogate Father, Single Father, Fatherland (Vaterland, Isänmaa) etc.

Well, let's get back and explore the meaning of God our Father. Later on we'll have the chance to hear the testimonies of Tsegaye (being a father) and Marja (remembering a spiritual/father).

God our Father:

Unique Father

> At first, God refers to Himself uniquely as "I am":

Exodus 3:14

14 God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM.

> God as Creator:

Genesis 1:27

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Malachi 2:10

10 Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us?

Deuteronomy 32:1-6

1 Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. 2 Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. 3 I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! 4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. 5 They have acted corruptly towards him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation. 6 Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?

Matthew 23:9

9 And do not call anyone on earth 'father', for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.

> However, according to the Bible also human beings can take up kind of godly and fatherly qualities, for example (later we hear about others through the testimonies):

(a) Job's example:

Job 29:16

16 I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger.

Job 31:16-22

16 If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, 17 if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless- 18 but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow-19 if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment, 20 and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep, 21 if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court, 22 then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint.

(b) Abraham's example:

Romans 4:1-25

Abraham Justified by Faith

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about- but not before God. 3 What does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. 4 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. 5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is

credited as righteousness. 6 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him. 9 Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. 10 Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. 12 And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. 13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, 15 because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. 16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: I have made you a father of many nations. He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. 18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, So shall your offspring be. 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead- since he was about a hundred years old- and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why it was credited to him as righteousness. 23 The words it was credited to him were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness- for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Romans 4:18

18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, So shall your offspring be.

(c) Paul's and Timothy's example (each other and Church of Christ)

1 Timothy 1:2

2 To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 4:14-17

14 Paul says: I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. 15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me. 17 For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

**> God the Father being revealed as one person of the Trinity
(in addition to the Son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit)**

Colossians 2:9

9 In Christ all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

John 10:30

30 Jesus says: I and the Father are one.

John 6:46

46 Jesus says: No-one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.

John 14:9

9 Jesus answered: Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

John 8:19

19 Then they [the Jews] asked him, Where is your father? You do not know me or my Father, Jesus replied. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.

John 8:42

42 Jesus said to them [to the Jews], If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.

John 14:6

6 Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.

1 John 2:23

23 No-one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

> God becomes Father for us through His Son Christ. We can be newly born and grow as children of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, and thus enter God's family!

1 John 5:1+2

1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.

2 Corinthians 6:18

18 I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

1 John 3:1

1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

1 John 1:2+3

We proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:28+29

28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

1 John 3:9+10

9 No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

1 John 4:7

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

> Children and Father metaphor not only in NT but OT as well (see above Abraham's example)!

Galatians 3:6-14

6 Consider Abraham: He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. 7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. 8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: All nations will be blessed through you. 9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. 10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law. 11 Clearly no-one is justified before God by the law, because, The righteous will live by faith. 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, The man who does these things will live by them. 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Galatians 3:26-29

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Songs:

673 There is a Redeemer

170 Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart

Righteous Father

John 17:25

25 Jesus prays for all believers: Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.

Perfect Father

Matthew 5:48

44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Generous and Consistent Father

James 1:17+18

17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Caring Father:

1 Peter 5:7

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Luke 12:22-34

Do Not Worry

22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? 27 Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. 28 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:25-34

Do Not Worry

25 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Comforting Father

Isaiah 66:13

13 As a mother comforts her child, so will I [the LORD] comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.

John 14:1-4

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

1 Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are

many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.

Compassionate Father

Psalms 103:13

¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;

Endowing Father (Giving Holy Spirit, Making us heirs)

Romans 8:14-17

14. ... those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Revealing Father (Revelation in Christ) Granting understanding

2 Timothy 2:7

⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Supporting Father

Deuteronomy 1:30-31

³⁰ The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, ³¹ and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.

Faithful Father

Psalms 27:9+10

Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Saviour. ¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.

Psalms 68:5

⁵ A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

Persistent Father

John 5:17

¹⁷ Jesus said to them, My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.

Everlasting Father

Isaiah 9:6

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Directing, Guiding, Disciplining Father

Hebrews 12:5-11

5. My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Glorifying and Praising Father:

Romans 8:16+17

16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Matthew 5:16

16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Forgiving and Redeeming Father:

Luke 23:34

34 Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Luke 15:11-32

The Parable of the Lost Son, in contrast to Deuteronomy 21:18 (rebellious, not obedient son – death punishment by stoning)

Isaiah 63:7-19

7 I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us- yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. 8 He said, Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me; and so he became their Saviour. 9 In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. 10 Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them. 11 Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people- where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, 12 who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself everlasting renown, 13 who led them through the depths? Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble; 14 like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the LORD. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name. 15 Look down from heaven and see from your lofty throne, holy and glorious. Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us. 16 But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name. 17 Why, O LORD, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so that we do not revere you? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes that are your

inheritance. **18** For a little while your people possessed your holy place, but now our enemies have trampled down your sanctuary. **19** We are yours from of old; but you have not ruled over them, they have not been called by your name.

Loving Father:

John 16:27

Jesus Says: the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

1 John 4:10+19

10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (...). **19** We love because he first loved us.

Conclusion:

We've explored the meaning of God our Father according to OT and NT readings. Sure, this is not an all-compassing exploration but I guess sufficient for today's worship meeting.

What does God expect from us as His children? Think about it in the rest of this week! To sum it up, living a godly life, attaining to God's qualities through our faith in Jesus Christ, and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

And let's have a look at the other fathers that have been mentioned today – maybe we can even hear and learn something from these examples, also with regard to us as Christian believers:

Testimonies:

Tsegaye – father

Marja – spiritual/father

Song:

128 Father God, I wonder [Child of God, Family, praises]

Closing Prayer:

Ephesians 3:14 (modified, changed wordings – we and us form)

A Prayer for the Ephesians

14 We came before the Father, **15** from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** We pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you and me with power through his Spirit in our inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

And we pray that we, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that we may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Songs:

139 Father, We Adore You
200 Great is Thy Faithfulness

Announcements: Bible study

Fellowship Time: Chatting over cup of tea or coffee, voluntary offertory, e-mail list, guest book ...