

Ps 9:1,5
 Hy 1A
 Ps 80:1,3,8
 Ps 68:3,4
 Hy 47:1,10
 Luke 11:1-13
 Romans 8:12-17
 Lord's Day 46

Yarrow, January 16, 2011

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Last week → Lord pleased to use people in glorious task of governing His world. He, made humanity in His image, established bond of love, gave privilege to man to speak with God re joys and questions of ruling over creatures in Paradise.

- Though lost ability to image God, and lost right to speak with God through fall into sin, this ability/privilege restored in Jesus Christ.
 - We rule over sections of God's world (home, family, work, community) and may speak with Creator about those joys/questions – and He hears our requests provided we ask according to His principles of ruling, ie, promises in the covenant. Privilege indeed!
- Saints of Old Testament, then, spoke with God in prayer.
 - Yet disciples sought instruction from their Rabbi how they could pray better. Their question did not revolve primarily around technique, but around content. Ie, what, in real terms, ought we to say to God?!
 - That's our Q too: if we are kings with the Lord in His world, what we to speak about with Him?? How our thoughts to go?
 - Today listen to beginning of Jesus' instruction, re name we call God

WITH THE WORD 'FATHER' WE CONFESS THAT GOD GIVES DELIVERANCE.

1. 'Father' in the Old Testament
2. 'Father' in Jesus' life
3. 'Father' today

1. 'Father' in the Old Testament

To people of Israel God's power and majesty was very much in their face.

- Cf plagues of Egypt: what a God! Ibid crossing of Red Sea, miracle of manna.
 - Especially God's revelation of Himself at Mt Sinai, ie, Exodus 19f. ∴ fear of Exodus 20:18f
 - We sense: does this majesty not discourage people from approaching/speaking with God?
 - So we think: thankfully New Testament shows us more approachable God...
 - Then we read Hebrews 12:28f – and we're not so sure God more approachable for us.... God seems so much *God*, our prayers so feeble, we so often feel unanswered..., and sense grows that *heaven* so distant from earth....

- Cat asks re words 'in heaven' → warns us "not to think of God's heavenly majesty in an earthly manner".
 - This a fitting warning today: God is God; He not your buddy!! Attitude gaining ground today, also in our midst, where something casual and familiar in way speak to God, eg, 'I just wanna say...'
 - Result: we who pray set agenda of topics we want to speak about with God, ie, fair bit re self..., our requests.
 - But in point of fact God is God, so He sets agenda of what we may say to Lord. Recall last week: not selfish; rather, God-centred. Ie, work with promises of covenant, be it of blessing or curse.
 - At same time is much consolation in fact God 'in heaven' ie, God of majesty, for catches notion He mighty to hear and answer, ie, He not limited in His power to help.
- But there the question: *does* He hear/help?? Cf Old Testament revelation re 'Father'
 - God is eternal, almighty Creator. From nothing He fashioned world, including humanity.
 - ∴ Deuteronomy 32:6b. Note connection between 'Creator' & 'Father'
 - This same almighty Creator sovereignly redeemed Israel from bondage to Pharaoh,
 - Ie, He cast eye of love on despised nation of slaves and adopted them for Self.
 - See Exodus 4:22f – implication of term 'son' is that He Israel's Father
 - Term 'son' did not mean no trials for Israel, cf 5:6ff. Then plagues; first three affected Israel as well, ie, water → blood, frogs, gnats. Easy for Israel to think positively in terms of God as 'Father'?? Is that what 'Father' is supposed to do???
 - But point is: Lord was busy working deliverance! Point of His title 'Father' was that Israel had *hope*, perspective.
 - Result: deliverance happened. Through Red Sea, manna, covenant at Sinai, etc. See Deuteronomy 8:2-5. Ie, God indeed 'Father' = Deliverance.
 - That deliverance did not happen instantly underlines need for *trust*; that deliverance happened eventually underlines place of confidence. ∴ Isaiah 63:16.
 - So, when Jesus teaches disciples to call God 'Father', He laying this Old Testament material before them, ie, Father = hope, deliverance, redemption. Rich gospel.
 - There's no contradiction between God being 'in heaven' and being 'Father'. Rather the *almighty* would hear/help. Here same comforting combination as in Lord's Day 9: "He is able [to hear] as almighty God and willing also as a faithful Father."
 - This beautiful picture becomes clearer in life of Jesus Himself, 2nd point:

2. 'Father' in Jesus' Life

- Jesus is eternal Son of God, cf John 1:1f. From eternity in glory with Father, cf John 17:5. Deeply loved, cf John 3:35
 - Yet Father "sent" this Son to earth, cf John 5:37. Note contrast with glory of heaven:
 - Poverty (cf manger), living with sinners (parents, siblings, friends), pain, sickness, temptation (cf Mt 4). Climaxes with anguish of Gethsemane, arrest, scourging, crucifixion. Even rejected by God..., cf Mt 27:45f.

- Yet every time Jesus in this hell addresses God He does so with title 'Father'!
 - Eg, John 11:41; 12:27f; 17:1,11,21,24. See also Luke 10:21. Note: Luke places Jesus' instruction on prayer (11:1ff) *after* this prayer of Lord in Luke 10.
 - Only exception is Mt 27:46 – when His Father rejects Him altogether, and so Jesus quotes Ps 22:1.
 - Point: disciples should use same term for God as Jesus customarily did.
 - Why Jesus tells disciples to use *same word* as they address God? See John 1:12f. Ie, through Jesus Christ this God *adopted* sinners to be His children.
 - Given Old Testament content of term 'Father', this means disciples are to embrace good news that almighty God is *their* Father, ie, promises redemption, deliverance from life's troubles....
 - We say: if He 'Father' will He not *prevent storms* from afflicting His own??? Does 'Father' not mean protection, safety??
- ∴ back to Jesus: *even in hellish anguish called God 'Father'*. Cf Luke 22:42; 23:34. Does so despite fact that own heavenly Father sent Him into this suffering! But Jesus believes that 'Father' = deliverance, hope, help, ie, almighty Creator/Redeemer not forsake His own.
 - On cross *did* forsake Jesus Christ, but Christ persevered..., and God accepted Christ's sacrifice, ie, Jesus knew His Father would answer His prayer of John 17:5,24.
- Clear: all of this together gives much encouragement to disciples as they seek to talk to God, their God by covenant.
 - Who He?? Distant, remote?? So wrapped in glory/majesty that He effectively unapproachable??
 - Not at all! It true that He 'in heaven', and ∴ picture of Isaiah 6 to stay in our mind.
 - But He approachable! He 'Father' and ∴ wants to hear His people's thoughts as they go about their task in God's world.
 - See Romans 8:15ff*

3. 'Father' today

- Delightful gospel: almighty God is *your Father through Jesus Christ today!*
 - Glorious result: you may draw near confidently, openly! He adopted you to His son/daughter, and ∴ you precious to Him; even gave own Son to adopt you to be His. ∴ speak to Him of trials/troubles you experience, and He hears. Of course, do so in light of His promises in covenant....
 - Hear it said: term 'Father' is too masculine; we need to stress God's feminine attributes to understand/get in touch with our feminine side....
 - This is modern psychology that flows from a culture too busy with the self. God was pleased to use word 'Father' re self, not 'mother', and with the word 'Father' He gave His children in Israel *all* encouragement/comfort they needed in questions and sorrows of life. Same is true today. Q of gender in relation to God misses point of God's gospel of adoption/deliverance.

Two things follow for our prayers:

- Know self to be His child! Point is not whether you worthy – you not. But God takes sinners as John, Peter, Andrew, etc, and makes them His children; *they* told to call God 'Father'.
 - This not change despite their sins, cf Mt 26:62ff.

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- Ibid Paul – though persecutor, blasphemer (cf 1 Tim 1), he took Jesus' instruction re prayer to heart, ∴ Romans 8:15. Note: this 'received', not earned...
 - ∴ be bold to speak to God as to Father re all in your life/circumstances.
 - He promises deliverance, help – exactly because He Father. This not mean He spare you any difficulty, cf Israel in Egypt, Jesus in life on earth. Rather, trust that He a wise Father and works all things for good, Romans 8:28.
 - So lay your cares before Him, no matter how life hurts or what storms feel like. Do so in God-centred fashion, and be confident: He provides for your needs, ie, delivers from troubles you have, now and forever. Not necessarily do so immediately, but at His time.