

Wendy's June Prayer Thoughts

Just after the death of Pope Francis the Vatican released an ancient clip concerning his conversation with a young boy called Emanuele. He had been given the opportunity, at a gathering, to ask Pope Francis a question. He went to the microphone which was directly in front of the stage where the Pope sat. Nerves got the better of him, and instead of speaking, he burst into tears. "I just can't do it. I just can't do it." he said while sobbing profusely. There was a hush as people waited. The priest who was standing by to encourage him gave him a hug. Then he shared the question which was so disturbing the youngster. "He's worried his papa isn't in heaven, because he was an atheist." "Come, Come to me Emanuele, and whisper in my ear. Whisper it in my ear." The boy joined Pope Francis. Sadness could be seen on his face. The Pope hugs him, and still his sobs are heard from afar. The Pope held Emanuele close, quietly speaking with him, then Emanuele climbed down to sit with two boys at the front.

Pope Francis began to address the people "I asked Emanuele to repeat his question, so I'll say it out loud. 'A short time ago my father died. He was an atheist, but he had all four of his children baptised. He was a good man. Is my dad in heaven?' What a beautiful thing that a son says of his father, 'he was good.' That man gave a wonderful testimony for his children to be able to say, 'he was a good man.' It's a beautiful testimony on the son's part. It's a beautiful testimony that the son has inherited the strength of his dad. And also that he has had the courage to cry before all of us.

If that man was capable of raising children like this, it's true. He was a good man. He was a good man. God is the One who decides who goes to heaven. But how does God's heart react to a dad like this? How? What do you think? A Dad's heart! God has the heart of a Father. And faced with a dad, a non believer, who was able to have his children baptised, and to give them that courage, do you think that God would be capable of leaving him far from Him? Do you think so?" The people called out "No." Say it loudly, with courage. "No." Does God abandon His children?" All shout No! Does God abandon them when they are good? All yell, 'no!' Does God abandon them when they are good? There you go Emanuele, this is your answer.....

..... God surely was proud of your dad, because it's easier being a believer to baptise your children, than not being a believer and baptising your children. Surely, this pleased God greatly. Talk with your father, pray to your father. Thank you Emanuele for your courage. Emanuele sat with arms folded alongside his brothers.

It might be expected to find copious references in the Bible to God as Father, but this is not so. Moses often reminded the Israelites of how they were held in special relationship with God, which entailed special obligations on their part. They were to remember that they were His children, the ones whom He had redeemed, yet who often turned from Him violating their covenant agreement. "You are children of the Lord your God.....you are a people holy to the Lord your God; it is the Lord who has chosen you out of all peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession." Deuteronomy 16:1-2. Though fatherhood is inferred, it is the Prophets who directly speak of God as Father. Jeremiah relays God's message, in which He personally refers to Himself as Father. "And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me. Instead, as a faithless wife leaves her husband, so you have been faithless to me, O House of Israel, says the Lord." 3:19b-20.

Isaiah declares, "You, O Lord, are our father; our Redeemer from of old is your name." 63:16b-17. in the next chapter he speaks about their waywardness. "There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand." 6:7-8 .The writer of Psalm 89 wrote of how God had defended and saved His people. "I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will declare your faithfulness to all generations." v1. In verse 26 he is reminded of God's presence in David's life. "He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.!'"

In contrast to the sparse mention of God the Father in the Old Testament, the New Testament notes 163 references of its usage. They show God in a new light. Jesus reveals God as His Father. God is no longer distant because Jesus introduces us to "our Father," to the One who is good to us, Matthew 7:7-10, who is omniscient and sees in secret when prayed to. Mathew 6:5.....

..... Jesus used the more intimate term "Abba," when He prayed passionately to God in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was connecting intensely with His Father, and He was doing so with an obedient heart, as He fought within Himself to know God's will. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet not what I want, but what you want." Mark 14:36 Abba is an everyday Aramaic word which was primarily used by little children to their father. and is similar to our saying daddy. The term carries a warm sense of closeness and trust. Paul reminded Christians in Galatia that they were adopted sons through Christ who had redeemed them. 'And because, you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"'

When we pray to God, we are able to use the term Abba, because Jesus has given us entrance to the Father at all times. Thank God that we can approach Him in an intimate way, because Christ in His resurrection appearance to Mary in the garden, not only spoke of His eternal relationship with God His Father, but He assured her and His followers of the privilege of knowing God as Father too. "Go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" John 20 17b.'" Take time to meditate on David Bilbrough's song.

"Abba Father, let me be, Yours and Yours alone. May my will forever be Evermore Your own. Never let my heart grow cold, Never let me go. Abba Father let me be Yours and yours alone."...