

Sermon: One Father Ephesians 4:6

Greetings Christ Church of Wiesbaden!

We are entering our 7th week of virtual worship gatherings.

It's a bummer I know but I hope this time of separation has caused you to have greater appreciation for fellowship in church.

We were never meant to go through the Christian life alone and I can only guess that many of us are feeling the weight of isolation.

Paul wrote in Romans 1:11:

Romans 1:11 ... I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— **12** that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Seeing you encourages me- whether it be in worship, at small group meetings or in the home.

And the fact that we can't do that makes living for Christ harder.

The church is a family and families are meant to do life with one another.

Families make us stronger and more secure than we would otherwise be if we were on our own.

And so it is important that we see ourselves as God sees us.

We are his children, he is our Father.

And to glorify him and bless one another, we must be unified.

That is the topic of our study today: How God being our Father unifies us as a church.

So let us read Ephesians 4:4-6 and the study the unity we have in God our Father.

Read Text:

Ephesians 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

This is God's Word.

The grass withers and the flower fades but the word of our God stands forever.

Pray.

We are in a time of great uncertainty because of the Corona Virus.

It's becoming historic.

I remember in our first week of filming sermons, I used the word "Pandemic" yet I did so reluctantly because it felt alarmist.

Yet this disease and its effects are serious.

The schools are closed, massive amounts of people are unemployed.

Businesses are going bankrupt.

Government deficits are exploding.

Oil is so cheap you can't even give it away.

Public gatherings are forbidden.

Oktoberfest has been cancelled, sports seasons have been cancelled. The Olympics and the European Soccer championships are postponed and may be cancelled.

Airline travel has ground to a halt.

The tourism industry has dried up.

The summer vacation season looks like it just isn't going to happen.

Economic uncertainty abounds and our government officials are understandably befuddled.

And as if things weren't bad enough, there is the growing threat of drought in western Europe.

We may very well be in the early stages of a historic global crisis.

So, how are we as Christians to think about this?

Certainly being a Christian should make a difference in how we process this uncertainty.
But how? What difference does it make?

Well, as Christians, we have something that gives us ultimate comfort.
And that is our relationship to God. He is our Father and he is sovereign over everything that comes to pass.
He sends the rains...or withholds them. rains and gives us food to eat.
He heals our diseases... but he also gives them to us.
Our Father is sovereign over every Coronavirus cell in existence.

This is our Father's world.
And so if we get sick, if we lose our jobs, if there is a lack of food...
There is one thing we know that cannot change and that is that God's is our heavenly Father.

And the church is the fellowship of those who know Him to be their Father.

In Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul list 7 ways that believers are unified and the final form of unity is that God is our Father.

[There is...] 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

And so our task today is to explore what it means to have God as our Heavenly Father.

Now, before we go any further, we need to deal with a difficulty hidden in verse 6.
There is a bit of ambiguity here.

See if you can spot the ambiguity:

6 There is one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

The ambiguity lies in determining what in Paul means by "all".

Is he referring to **all things generally** or is he referring to **all His people in the church specifically?**

The text could go either way.

If **all** refers to **all things generally** then we would read the verse this way:

6 There is one God and Father of all (things) who is over all (things) and through all (things) and in all (things).

Now this is certainly true.

God is the creator and sovereign of all things.

But what bearing does this have on our unity in the church?

It doesn't seem to really apply that easily.

But if we take the "all" as referring to God's people in the church, it applies more easily to our unity in the church.

And because the context of the passage is about the unity of the church, it is safe to think that the "all" in this verse refers to God's people in the church.

So the verse would read

6 There is one God and Father of all (his people) who is over all (his people) and through all (his people) and in all (his people).

And so, because Paul is speaking specifically about Christians - we have to consider how God being our "One father" really unites us.

Certainly, his being our Father means that we all have the same source.
He brought us all into being.

Yet beyond that, there are two main implications that unite us.

The first is that we have intimacy with our Father.
And the second is that we depend upon our Father.

So intimacy and dependence make up the points on our outline.

Having God as our Father means

I. We Share An Intimate Relationship with God

Our relationships with one another in the church are based upon this central relationship: That God is our Father.

Not everyone in the world can claim this.

Now in a general sense God is the Father of everything and everyone he has created.
Yet this reference to his fatherhood here is loose and it really just refers to him as the creator.
There is no special intimacy in this general sense of God's fatherhood.
He is just the creator and sustainer in this sense.

Yet God's people have a special relationship with him as Father because of what he has done in Christ.

In John 1:12, John writes:

12 But to all who did receive him [that is, Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

When we have faith in Jesus, we enter into a special relationship with God.
And this is all because of the New Birth.
John tells us that God has brought us forth- he has given us a new birth.
And because he has done this, he is our Father in a way that he wasn't before.

It's not general thing.

Not everyone who claims God as their Father really has God as their father.
To have God as your Father, you must be born again.

So how do you know you have been born again?

Is it because you have been baptized or because you made a profession of faith long ago or because you joined a church?

No. None of these things bring you into a relationship with God as your Father.

The one act that changes everything is faith in Christ.

Again from John 1:12:

12 But to all who did receive him [that is, Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Our faith is the real sign that God is our Father.

And so do you believe this?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he was offered for your sins and that he rose again for your salvation?

Our relationship to God as a father hinges on our Faith in Jesus Christ.

And a Christian is one who cannot imagine going through life without this relationship.

I believe this relationship is perhaps the greatest gift that a Christian has in this world- the knowledge that God is their father.

That he's sovereign- he's in control of everything.

And that he intends everything for our good.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:29:

Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. **30** But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. **31** Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Having God as our father gives us confidence and security.
And we know he is our father when we have faith in Jesus Christ.

But the relational benefits aren't limited to just **confidence** and **security**.
God also offers us **an astounding intimacy** with him.

In the Old Testament, the references to God as Father were few and far between.
Him being the Father of His people was sort of only hinted at.
In Deuteronomy 1:31, Moses wrote:

Deuteronomy 1:31 ... in the wilderness, ... you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.'

In Psalm 103:13, David writes:

Psalm 103:13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

So in the Old Testament, the relationship of God as our Father is hinted at.
But in the New Testament Jesus taught us that God is Our Father explicitly.

Consider Matthew 6:9 where he taught us to pray:
Saying: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name..."

Anyone well acquainted with the Old Testament knows how revolutionary this prayer really is.
The Jews would not have quickly assumed such intimacy with God.
And yet Jesus opens the way to such a relationship.

In Him, God is our Father.

And yet he is more than just Father. The Scriptures go even further and teach us that he is "Abba Father."
Again, we have to know our bibles to know how privileged a relationship this is.
The term Abba is so intimate, it is used only 3 times in scripture.
The first time the word "Abba" is used is in Mark 14:36 where Jesus prayer in the garden of Gethsemane- right before he was arrested.

In Mark 14:36, he prayed:

Mark 14:36 "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me.

This term is so intimate that it's only used once in the Gospels- only in Mark.
You can hear the intimacy in the word "Abba."
It's a term of endearment that even the youngest child could utter- just like Papa or daddy.
And in Christ, we have this kind of intimacy with God available to us.
In Galatians 4:6, Paul writes:

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Again, in Romans 8:15

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

The fact that this term is used only 3 times in the bible tells us something.

It tells us first that God doesn't want us to forget that he us first and foremost the eternal, omnipotent sovereign God.

We should not presume to have this kind of intimacy with him.

Yet the fact that God wants us to call him "Abba" tells us that God holds us most dear.

We are his kids- his little ones.

He has the most tender regard for us and we always have access to him.

God is our "Abba Father" because we are in Christ, and God was his "Abba, Father."

Our intimacy with God could be no greater.

Believer, do you have any idea what you have?

The Apostle John wanted us to be astounded by this truth and so he wrote in 1 John 3:1:

1 John 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

When you read the scriptures, God never allows himself to be sentimentalized.

He never allows our relationship with him to be reduced to emotional drivel.

Never.

And so we should be amazed that God would allow us to call him Abba Father.

This greatest intimacy that one can have with God and as believers, we all share in it.

So let me ask you: what are you are doing with this invitation to such intimacy with God?

Are you emotionally distant from him?

Do you tell him all your cares and concerns?

Do you enjoy prayer and fellowship with him?

You see, the church is the fellowship of those who have this intimacy with God.

And when we draw near to God individually, we also draw near to one another.

Ephesians 4:6 [There is...] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

When we draw near to our Father, we also end up drawing near to one another.

It's inescapable.

To love God immediately translates into love for his children.

In our day and age, many believers are content to have a relationship with the church that is kind of "one foot out, one foot in."

Yet, Ephesians 4:6 shows us that such a believer really doesn't know God all that well.

Because having God as our Father draws us together.

When we truly draw near to God, God points us to our brothers and sisters in the faith who are in need.

Maybe they just need a friend or maybe they need some sort of service.

Maybe they need to be discipled or counseled.

To have one Father is the ultimate form of unity because it places us all in the same family.

1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

So, are you taking advantage of this intimacy with God?

And is it working itself out in love for your brothers and sisters in the faith?

So, having God as our Father means...

I. We Share An Intimate Relationship with God

Secondly, having God as our Father means...

II. We Share A Common Dependence Upon God

The church is the fellowship of those who look to God as their Father to provide for them.

We aren't frantic and panicked in times of scarcity.

We do not fear for the future.

We do not faithlessly scheme and fret.

And the reason we do not is because we have a Father in Heaven who cares for us.

The scriptures have a lot to say about living faithfully in difficult times.

The book of Habakkuk in particular deals with how we look at suffering.

In his short book, Habakkuk considered what the impending invasion of Babylon into Judah would mean.

The suffering would undoubtedly be immense.

Habakkuk in no way minimizes the suffering. He is clear eyed about it all.

And yet he keeps sight of God's faithfulness.

Habakkuk ends his book in Chapter 3 this way:

Habakkuk 3:17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
19 GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.

Having hope in God in the midst of great suffering is a major theme in scripture.

It is the theme that dominates the Psalms.

In the bible, there seems to be suffering on each and every page.

And for God's people, the proper response to suffering is to have it drive us deeper into our relationship with God and his relationship with us.

In the Old Testament, God was primarily pictured as a savior and deliverer.

But Jesus would have us think differently about that relationship.

Because God is still a savior and deliverer.

That is what Jesus name means: Jah Saves.

But God is more than just our savior.

He is our Father and this truth should show itself in how we depend upon him.

Jesus addresses the issue squarely in Matthew 6:25:

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

Do you see how Jesus hones in on our relationship to God?

He is our heavenly Father.

He's a provider and we can depend upon him.

In verse 31, Jesus goes on:

31 ... do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Jesus tells us that our worry and anxiety go against the very heart of God's relationship to us.

He is our Father.

And within the job description of a Father is the responsibility to provide.

So, does your knowledge of God as your Father lead you to trust him and not to worry?

The church is the fellowship of those who are learning to trust in God as their Father.

Some of us are quite advanced in this trust.

Some of us still have a long way to go.

And so it is important that we talk honestly with one another and develop deep relationships.

Because those who are mature in the faith can be a great encouragement to those whose faith is wavering.

And if you are in a period of suffering, it is vital for you to be in relationship with believers who have navigated difficult times and come through them.

God never intended for us to go through our Christian lives alone.

He is our Father and he has placed us in a family- the church.

And it is in the context of this family that we learn to depend upon him.

We learn a lot about what it means to trust God by seeing others trust him.

So get to know others in the church. Make yourself known.

Be honest about your struggles and allow God people to encourage you.

For there is one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Amen.