

Father

by Alistair Begg

Alistair Begg emphasizes the significance of tradition and intentionality in prayer, particularly in addressing God as Father.

Duration: 44:03

Scripture: Matthew 6:7-13, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 23:5, Luke 11:1-13

Topics: "Father"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not treating people in a disservice by reinforcing the notion that God is their father and sending them home happy. However, the Bible challenges this approach as it reveals that we are a divided company. The ultimate division is not based on race or intellect, but rather on our relationship with God. The speaker also highlights the role of tradition in establishing healthy Christian living and shares a story about a young girl who lacked peace and assurance because her earthly father only loved her as a success. The sermon concludes with a call to respond to God's unconditional love and acknowledge our need for Jesus.

Transcript

I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to the 11th chapter of Luke once again. If you're using the Bibles in the pew, then it's page 735 if you're unfamiliar with the location of Luke's gospel. During these past two weeks in England, a number of things have struck me quite forcibly.

Most of them I won't mention at all, but one is simply this. The important part that tradition plays in establishing healthy Christian living. Now, in one sense, I'm the last person to even say this, even to notice it.

One of my responsibilities while in the UK--a week passed on Friday now--was to speak to a group of leaders from the southwest corner of England, and they wanted me to talk to them about being an agent for change in a local congregation. For many of them have great difficulty in introducing change in any way at all, and the motto of many of their churches is, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

And anybody who even would think of changing anything is liable to be sent packing off down the M4 or whatever else it is. So I was there to address in part that issue of change. When I moved on from there, though, to a fairly ancient Anglican church in the center of a small town on the coast of Devon, I was struck

again by how it was that so many of these people were in such good spiritual health.

And I found myself remarking on the importance of traditions that they have kept. And what I'm thinking of are little things like this. For example, they always say the grace to one another in the conclusion of their worship, and so at the announcement of the vicar, if he said, Let's stand and say the grace to one another, then they will stand, and as they look at one another, they'll say, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen. And they actually make eye contact with one another as they do, commending one another to God's grace. It is a quite lovely thing, and very meaningful.

Can it be done out of a sense of mechanics? Of course. Can it simply descend into a dull form of externalism and routine without question? Was it like that? I sense not. In the same way, I've said the Apostles' Creed more than once while I've been gone.

I believe in God the Father, the Maker of heaven and earth, and so on. Some of you were brought up on it, and it's a long time since you paid any attention to it at all. You've got the impression that we don't do that kind of thing here.

After all, we are not a liturgical church, and therefore the Apostles' Creed we don't say. Furthermore, it has the word Catholic in it, and we're not about to even mention that. The trouble is we're so dim-witted we don't understand the word Catholic simply means universal, but it's enough to scare many of us off, and so we never say it.

The importance of the saying of the Creed establishes in the mind not only of the new believer, but also of the seasoned Christian, establishes a constant reminder of what we believe. And I struck by that. I then preached each morning and evening in the chancel area of this Anglican church, and on either side of me behind me were two pillars on which was painted in a quite beautiful form the Ten Commandments.

And so that it was impossible for the congregation to sit and worship without simply looking up into the chancel area and being confronted again by the Ten Commandments. And I was reminded of how important they are in teaching Christians how it is we are to behave--that the Lord Jesus did not set them aside, but indeed he came to fulfill them. And they are vitally important.

They are as necessary for life as bones are for the body, or rails are for a train to run on them. And it struck me again how good to have them up there, and every day they come to worship, they look and see them. And then also, in the repetition of the Lord's Prayer, which I did on a number of occasions, it reminded me of the fact that our fellowship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ finds its principal expression in our praying.

It is in our praying that we indicate the fact that we actually have a relationship with God, that he speaks with us and has entrusted us with this amazing opportunity to speak with him. And so here, having run away from so much tradition to the other side of the ocean and back on the other side of the ocean, saying, you know, some of this tradition isn't really that bad. We maybe need to introduce a little more of it than we have.

Now, don't be alarmed by that, because you know I have these flights of fancy, and most of them pass with a moment's time. But it was on my mind as I found myself having to study for this little section here on the Lord's Prayer. And it is to this that we're going to give our attention.

Martin Luther referred to this prayer as the greatest martyr on earth, because it was used, he said, so frequently without thought or feeling and without reverence or faith. In other words, people simply took the Lord's Prayer and they repeated it willy-nilly. They never really paid much attention to what they were saying.

And while it is distinctly possible to do that, presumably the answer is not for us to reject the saying of the Lord's Prayer per se, but rather it is to ensure that when we use it, we use it purposefully, and we use it well, and we seek to understand and then apply the principles that it teaches. Now, in my notes here, it says, on another occasion, we will, I hope, study the prayer in detail, for today we have just an overview. Now, that is all of my best intentions.

I have to tell you that in the first service, we didn't get beyond the word Father. So I made a liar of myself in the notes here, and just looking at them as I see them, I thought I should just acknowledge it immediately to you so that there will be no sense of deception involved. We won't be going very far at all.

Now, the context in which this prayer emerges may be summarized in two phrases. One, it emerges out of the routine of Jesus. It emerges out of the routine of Jesus.

The opening phrase of chapter 11, one day when Jesus was praying in a certain place, is a quite customary phrase. And the better we get to know the gospel records, the more we realize that prayer had been established in the life of Jesus as, if you like, a holy habit. Prayer was habitual for Jesus.

And we should not immediately assume that because something is a habit, it is therefore to be disregarded. Indeed, in many aspects of life, it is our ability to do things habitually with cognizance and with vitality that is both a safeguard for us and also a benefit to others. I was thinking about this last evening as I bounced in from Chicago.

Some of you ladies I would have liked to have on the plane, just sitting beside me, just to reassure me. But as we came in on one of those little Continental commuter jets, I noted that the boys who were flying the plane were boys. When you're now an old man like myself, of, you know, whatever, you just know.

I mean, this looks like my son flying this plane, and this is not a good occasion to have a boy flying this plane. After we hit Indiana, it was pandemonium. They wouldn't give us clearance above a certain level.

We flew through who knows what, and the closer we got to the ground, the worse it got. And some of you know what it was like between eight and nine o'clock last night on the west side of Cleveland. It was really quite dramatic.

And I was sitting there in five whatever, saying to myself, I hope these fellas have been here before. I hope they've done at least one of these. I hope they know the routine.

I hope they are able to go and do things habitually that need to be done so as to safeguard themselves and everybody else involved. And of course, they did a quite wonderful and remarkable job. And I told them going out, I said, hey boys, good job.

And they looked up at me and said, who's that galoot going out the door? But I said, I was pleased, because I was sitting one seat removed from the stewardess, and she was not having the best evening she'd ever had in her life either, I can guarantee it. So the routine of Jesus was to pray early in the morning before moving on in Mark chapter one, when he has gone away in the early hours of the morning to pray,

and the disciples come to him and they say, now Jesus, the things have gone tremendously well last evening, and the crowds are gathering, and they're ready for more of the same. And Jesus says, no, we're moving on from here.

I need to go to other villages too, so that I might preach the gospel, and that is why I came. How does Jesus make the decision to move on? In what context does he make the decision? In the context of prayer to his Father. He meets with God the Father, if you like, at the outset of the day, in order that he, getting through to headquarters, might have the plans established for him, and that he might proceed accordingly.

Before the choosing of the twelve, in Luke chapter nine we saw the same thing. It was out of the routine of prayer that Jesus emerged to choose these twelve who would be his immediate disciples. In the face of death, when you get to the end of his earthly pilgrimage, where do we find him? In the garden of Gethsemane, if it is not in the place of prayer.

And so it is that as this individual, one of his disciples--he's not identified by name--as this disciple seemingly observes Jesus or listens to Jesus in prayer, he is struck by the reality of it, by the intensity of it, and it has created a hunger in his heart to learn the secret of real prayer. So the context in which the instruction emerges is, on the one hand, the routine of Jesus, and the other, the request of the disciple. Lord, he said, teach us to pray the same way that John taught his disciples to pray.

Now, I think that each of us would be prepared to say that we can identify almost immediately with this request. For in our Christian lives, nothing is more important and nothing more difficult to establish and maintain than a meaningful prayer life. Let me say that to you again.

Now, at the age of almost forty-eight, having professed faith in Christ as a small boy and having been preserved along the journey, the fact is that I know now as clearly as I have ever known that there is nothing more important and there is nothing more difficult to establish and maintain than a healthy, meaningful prayer life. That although we can find time to do just about everything else--good things, industrious things, ministry things--it seems that when we get to the issue of prayer and getting serious about what it means to pray, it is then that everything militates against us and squeezes out of our lives and squeezes out of our days the opportunities that we would seek to seize in that way. At the same time, the danger is that our prayers become just babbling.

We just dribble on and drone on, and yet it needn't be. We don't talk to those we love in that way. We shouldn't.

And Jesus, in the Matthew account, says, I don't want you to pray the way the pagans pray, because the pagans think that they're heard because they simply heap phrases on one another, and they really are a bunch of babblers. He says, please don't babble when you pray, but instead, when you pray, these are the things I want you to say. Now, let's move on and notice the nature of this request.

What is this man asking for? Lord, teach us to pray. What is he asking? Is he asking for a form of words that he can use? Is he asking for a pattern that can be followed? Is he asking just for some general instruction on the subject? Because those are all possibilities, right? Lord, teach me to pray. Now, in reply, you will notice that Jesus provides him with a form of words.

When you pray, he said, say. When you pray, say. So we know from the reading of that that he intended that this prayer may be used just as it stands.

Now, this is different from the record that you have in Matthew, and I think the explanation is simply this--not that we have to try and combine these two events, but I don't think there is any difficulty in recognizing that Jesus would have given this instruction on a number of occasions, and that in the record of Matthew, he was given the instruction far earlier in the events, and he did so not as per a request, but he did so in reaction to the pharisaical stuff that was going on around him. Here, later on, he returns to the same framework, and so consequently and naturally, the way in which he instructs these listeners is substantially the same as what he has told them on a previous occasion, as recorded by Matthew, but it is not exactly the same. Now, we may employ this prayer to our profit in private, and we may also use it to our benefit when we're together in corporate worship.

You will notice that all of the pronouns are plural. Give us. Forgive us.

Us. Lead us not. And what we have here is a prayer for Christians to pray in seeking God's glory and his grace in the midst of everyday life.

When you look at the prayer, you realize that there is much instruction contained in it about the nature of the fatherhood of God, what it means for his name to be hallowed, the nature of the kingdom, the provision of God for our daily needs, the necessity of forgiveness in our experience and in forgiving others, how we deal with temptation as it comes and hits us, and so on. So we ought not to think of this as something that it just gets tagged on in a liturgical kind of way, but rather we ought to consider it as a realistic help to us in establishing our own prayer lives. Incidentally, in the morning hours at this conference at which I was speaking, the prayer time was at 9.30 in the morning.

I didn't make it on the Tuesday or the Wednesday because I got in a political discussion with the proprietor of the hotel. He never talked about religion or politics. Actually, the first morning I got into a big discussion about religion, because there was a scientist there--at least he told me he was a scientist.

He wanted me to know he was a scientist, and he wanted me to know that the Bible was a load of bunk. So we had an interesting interchange, and then on the second morning we were engaged in trying to sort the British political scene out and trying to stop Tony Blair mimicking William Clinton and so on. That took me a long time, and I missed the prayer time.

But on the second two days, I made it. But I never ever prayed. Do you know why? I never got the chance.

I never got the chance. There was never a five-second gap between the amen at the end of one prayer--this is no exaggeration--between the amen at the end of one prayer and the father at the beginning of the next prayer. Ninety-eight percent of the people in the room were at least sixty-five years of age.

And I said to myself, you know, when this generation goes, I don't know who's going to do this. Here was a group of individuals absolutely committed to seeking God in prayer, recognizing that actually the most significant event in all of the day was not the teaching in the morning hour or the teaching in the evening hour or the singing in either hour or even the missionary displays that were all around, but was actually in a group of individuals coming before God and saying, Father in heaven, we look to you for the events of our lives and the deeds of the day and the needs of the world. And their faces are fastened in my mind, many of them.

Who will take up this challenge in prayer? And when we address God in prayer, we're going to address him as Father. Notice that. When you pray, say, Father.

Now, is that important? Is it significant? Yes, it definitely is, for a number of reasons. First of all, and in an earlier day I wouldn't even have had to mention this point, but today I need to, it is Father and not Mother. It is Father and not Mother.

The inclusive language Bibles, which are increasingly before us, some of them begin the Lord's Prayer as follows, Our Father, Mother in Heaven. The edition by the Oxford University Press, it was published here in the States in 1995, for example, begins this prayer, Our Father, Mother in Heaven. Now, what is this? Well, the campaign for such inclusive language emerges from an argument which says that a male domination of society has influenced the way in which God's character has been understood in the past, and that we have not understood the Bible properly because we have viewed it in a very gender-specific fashion.

But now that we're coming to be able to study the Bible better and to understand the nature of God better, we are not going to be hidebound by these dreadful male chauvinist-dominating dimensions. There is no question that male domination has been a feature of large parts of our lives, but the Bible is absolutely clear in its declaration of God's fatherhood. It is unequivocally clear.

Now, for those of you who are concerned about this--and each of you should be, and that's why I'm telling you of it, because I said to you at the turn of the year, one of the great arenas in which the cause of the gospel is going to be fought, I would assess, in the next ten years, is in the matter of gender and sexuality, and not least of all in the framework of the church. So what are we going to say in response to those who say, Well, I don't like to pray, Father hallowed be your name, I like to pray, Mother hallowed be your name. Well, we're going to say this.

First of all, we dare not tamper with God's self-revelation in order to please the demands of contemporary society. We dare not tamper with God's self-revelation in order to please the demands of contemporary society. These demands are emerging in large measure from those who do not accept the Bible's authority or its inspiration.

And when we view the Bible with humility and with an average intelligence, it is impossible for us to evade the fact that the Bible consistently uses Father as the designation of the first person of the Trinity. Secondly, we need to be honest enough to acknowledge before those who would debate the matter with us that God sometimes chooses to use the picture of motherhood to describe his relationship with his people. Isaiah, the prophet, speaking from God, says, As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.

Which gives us, of course, one of the phrases from our song when we sing, Who loves us? As a mother loves her newborn child. And God speaks of himself in that way, in terms of that endearing dimension. However, his fatherhood stands out as predominant.

And also, the Lord Jesus, who is truth, made it plain that it is the Father he reveals to us. For example, in Matthew 11, No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Derek Prime comments helpfully, Desires to change this most eloquent description of God's relationship to his people spring either from a failure to understand the perfection of God's revelation in Scripture, or from a preoccupation with sexist issues which tend to see

threats everywhere.

So it is not as a result of some male-dominated prism that we call God Father. It is as a result of the fact that God, in his self-disclosure, has disclosed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This in no way denigrates femininity or women or anything remotely related to it.

And yet, from the strangest and unnerving quarters emerge these notions. The second question is this. Whose Father is he? Whose Father is he? Oh, says somebody, that's an easy one.

He's everybody's Father. No, he's not. No, he is not.

It is true that the Bible speaks of the fatherhood of God as a kind of fatherhood of all inasmuch as he is the Creator. And in that sense, we could speak about the fatherhood of all. But the Bible does not generally use the term Father of God as Creator.

If you read your Bibles carefully, you will find that it keeps it especially for those who have become his spiritual children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, for example, in Romans chapter 8 and in verse 15, Paul says to the Roman Christians, he says, You did not receive a spirit of slavery that brings you to fear, but you receive the spirit of sonship, and by him we cry, Abba, Father. So rather than being the father of all, he is the father of his own people by an act of redemption.

We are not the children of God by nature. Now let me say this to you as clearly and as kindly as I possibly can. This takes me back to my scientist in the small hotel in which I was staying.

As a result of the scientist sharing his views, the proprietor of the hotel jumped in and decided to fly on the back of this man's wisdom, and pointed out to this man and his daughter and myself and the fellow's wife--the small group of us sitting in the breakfast area--he pointed out that there had been some time prior to my coming a man there who had tried to make everybody in the room a Christian, and he said he was a most obnoxious sort of fellow. I find myself in two minds, because the chances are he was a quite obnoxious sort of fellow. However, I would have enjoyed, I'm sure, his desire to convert the whole dining room if he was given the opportunity.

But the answer of the proprietor of the hotel was this. He said, and he had no need to do that, he said--speaking in a relatively Yorkshire accent--he had no need to do that, because we were all Christians in the room. We were all Christians in the room.

He was seeking to foist on us a special kind of Christianity, which we didn't want and we didn't like, and of course we didn't need, because God is everybody's Father. And as surely as mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the noonday sun, so we are all Christians. Now, you need to go to your Bible and ask the question, is that the case? Isn't that the argument of the Jews when they were dealing with Jesus? As they get in the conversation, as is recorded in John chapter 8, declaring themselves to be the children of Abraham, Jesus says, well, you know, if you were really Abraham's children, then you would do the things that Abraham our father does.

So he says, you're really not Abraham's children, and then they protest, we're not illegitimate children. And then here it comes, the only father we have is God himself. The only father we have is God himself.

So if you want to get to the bottom line, Jesus, let's just lay it out. We have God as our Father. Now, let me tell some of you why it is that the Lord's Prayer really means very little to you at all.

It's because you can't say, Father, and know the reality of it. Now, let me unpack that for you for just a moment. Before we come to trust in Christ, the Son of God, we are actually cut off from God, and we belong to a different family altogether.

That's what he had to tell these religious people. He said, If God were your Father, you would love me. For I came from God, and now I'm here.

I haven't come on my own, but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you're unable to hear what I say. You belong to your Father, the Devil, and you want to carry out your Father's desire.

Now, this is not very politically correct, is it? I don't suggest that this meets the standard religious prerequisite standards for public discourse in our day. This is the one of the things that's in the top ten lists you mustn't say to people. After all, if they've been kind enough to come to the church building in which you happen to be talking, don't do them the disservice of treating them in this way.

Simply reinforce for them the notion that God is their Father, and send them home as happy as they possibly can be. Well, that would be all very well, were it not for the Bible. That would be all very well, if that was the objective of the exercise--to simply come together and bolster one another's religious egos, and then just shoot out the door, and then endeavor to try and do the best we can.

But the fact is, we're a divided company. We are a divided company. And the ultimate division is not racial, the ultimate division is not intellectual, it is not in terms of our chronology, or our background, or any of these things.

We are a divided company, and here's the division. There are some for whom God is Father, and there are others for whom he is not. Here's my question.

Is God your Father? Is God your Father? Now, if the Bible is correct--and you're a sensible person, and you'll want to check this--but if, as I say to you, this is correct, and you will find it in the Bible, that we are not by nature the children of God, but we are by nature the children of the evil one, surely there has to come an encounter somewhere, there needs to come a crisis somewhere, in which we who are not the children of God become the children of God. Oh yes, there's somebody. I became a child of God when I was baptized.

Oh, you did? Yes. Who told you that? Who told you that you became a child of God by having a religious professional do something to you? Oh, I don't know who told me, but that's what I understand. What if it's wrong? You prepared to stake your eternity on that? Jesus came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, the grace of God does not pass through human genes, nor of human decision, or of a husband's will, but children who were born of God. You see, the problem this man had in the hotel was that this individual who'd shown up was one of these born-again types. He was actually saying that you have to be born again to be a child of God, and he knew, as everybody else apparently knew, that that was not the case.

That was just one kind of Christian, you know. But the other general Christians are a more happy-go-lucky group of people. They like just to get on with things and not get unduly concerned about these matters.

Well, does this read at all? As many as received him, to them he gave the power to become the children of God. And having become a child of God, I may then start the Lord's Prayer for the first time in my life, in reality, by saying, Father--and there's all the difference in the world between the notion of the fatherhood of God as a cosmic principle, or a bright idea, or a great unmoved mover, or the great cause of the universe, or what it is--somebody who is up there, I don't know who it is or what it is, but it eases my mind, you know, to go, and it helps me to say the Lord's Prayer from time to time. I understand.

But wouldn't you like to know him personally? Wouldn't you like to know God? That's the question. And when we come to receive the Lord Jesus, we are made his children. And the Bible describes this in all kinds of terms.

It says that we're justified--justified freely by his grace. What does that mean? It means that we who were in the wrong with God are put in the right with God. We who were under condemnation are no longer under condemnation.

On account of what? On account of the fact that we were able to move ourselves from the condemned section over to the justified section? No! He justifies the condemned. He justifies the ungodly. He declares righteous in his Father's sight those who are without God and without hope in the world.

You see, this is the gospel. Not that we are made virtuous, but that we are made right with God. And another word that is used--and I'll just give you one other one--is adoption.

We are, when we believe in the Lord Jesus and receive him, we are adopted into God's family, and thereby given all the rights and all the privileges of sonship. There are only three children who can come up my street and call me dad. Any of the rest of them can make a chance and make a stab at it.

I don't know why they would ever want to. But they're not my kids. They only have one father, and it's me, and I only have three children, and they're mine.

But we could adopt another one and say, you know what, you can use my name, and you can drive my car, and you can enter into all the benefits that will accrue to you because I today become your father. That's what Jesus does for us. When we receive him, God the Father pours out all of the blessings and benefits of his fatherhood upon his adopted sons and daughters.

All of my debts are canceled as if they never existed, and I am admitted into a family to which I do not belong by nature. That is a complete and utter miracle of grace. The old sixties song is good, is it not? It took a miracle to put the world in space.

It took a miracle to hang the stars in place. But when he saved my soul, and he cleansed and he made me whole, it took a miracle of love and grace. You see, because by nature, I don't want to live in God's family.

I just want to know that he's up there and all is right with the world. I just want to be able to come when I want and leave when I desire. I want to know that somehow or another there is somebody around to whom I may turn if the going gets rough.

But I do not want him to be my father and to control my life. By nature, I have no interest in it. Listen to how Paul puts it to the Ephesians.

He says, In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves. Can I ask you again? Is God your Father? If I asked for everybody and will stay the rest of the day simply to come up across the platform here, I'm going to give you sixty seconds to stand at this box and explain volume one and volume two in your life. Pre-Christ, post-Christ.

Do you have a volume two? Some of you, I would recognize, have had an experience of human fatherhood that has left you with a lot of pain and disappointment and even confusion. You have unhappy recollections of fatherhood. And unfortunately, the temptation is to project those notions of fatherhood onto God.

I need to say to you that we do not recognize--we recognize that we don't call God Father because features of his character remind us of our earthly parents. The opposite is the case. And the name of Father did not go from us up to God.

The name of Father came from God down to us. And if you want to know about having a dad and a father, then here is a wonderful opportunity. I came across a wonderful illustration of this, and with this I will close.

Captain Stephen Anderson, who was an evangelist in the Church of Scotland for many years until he died a couple of years ago now, led all kinds of evangelistic missions in the country. In leading a holiday mission with a group of young students who were part and parcel of his evangelistic team, he became keenly aware of the fact that one of his team members, a young university student girl, seemed to lack a dreadful sense of peace and assurance. And on the basis of things that he had known of her, he felt inclined to say this to her.

He told her that her father only really loved her as a success, whereas her heavenly father loved her for herself just as she was. The girl broke down in floods of tears, and she confided in her team leader this, that her father had from her earliest recollection spoken with disappointment that she had been born as a girl. For he had hoped for a boy who would take on the family business, and she so clearly wasn't going to.

And for Stephen Anderson both to identify this logjam in her life and to speak to her of the unconditional love of her heavenly father, it flooded her with a new relief and an unspeakable joy. Some of us may well be there this morning. When you pray, say, Father, is God your Father? Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? And if not, what we are not by nature we may become by grace.

And are some of us in stumbling along the Christian pathway in a form of bypass meadow, because we have such a convoluted and mixed-up view of our heavenly Father? Then let the love of God enfold you in his wisdom and his power. Some of us are caught in a dreadful trap, always looking--when you're playing soccer, always looking to see if when you missed that pass, your father was watching and whether he was frowning or disapproving. Always wondering.

I'm reading a book at the moment. I just picked it up in the airport yesterday. This is the reverse of the case, but it works the same way.

I told you I would only have one illustration. That was the truth, but I just changed my mind. And it's this.

I'm reading the story of one of the most successful soccer managers in professional soccer in Britain, a fellow by the name of Ferguson. And actually, I watched this event in somebody's home here who has ESPN2 last May, on the 26th of May. And that was Bayern Munich against Manchester United.

The biggest game of Alec Ferguson's life with this team. Which eventually they won 2-1 in two goals that were scored in the last 90 seconds of the game. It was the most amazing finish to the European Cup that they have ever had.

But he told the story in the book of how, as he got ready to go out to lead the team out onto the field for this game, one of his sons came to him in the vestibule of the hotel lobby, and he said this to him. He said, Dad, no matter what happens today, you are a great father. And I love you.

And you are a great soccer manager. And irrespective of the result, I will love you when we get to five o'clock this afternoon or eight o'clock tonight or whatever else it was. And he said that.

Which father could not go out and do his best with that kind of unconditional love? And that is exactly what the Father says to us. Takes our heads in his hands, and he says, look, I know all about you, but I love you just the way you are when you pray. Say, Father.

Father, grant then that we might respond to your word. Some of us in turning from ourselves and our religion to acknowledge that we have never received Jesus. We've been baptized.

We've been now regular in church attendance. We've actually been coming along and trying to change our lifestyle on the basis of a variety of external things. People around us are pretty convinced that we are actually Christians.

But when we say, Father, it has a hollow ring. And the light's gone on. And so we come today to say, Lord Jesus Christ, I trust in you.

I believe in you. I trust unreservedly and wholly on your sacrifice on the cross as the only means of putting me in the right with God. And I thank you that by means of your amazing grace, I may call God Father.

And for those of us who've set God up by projecting our warped views of fatherhood upon him, we ask you to forgive us, and we pray that we may see you with a clear eye. Not always looking over our shoulder, wondering if we're gaining your approval or if we're living beneath your frown, but recognizing that we will never be more acceptable than we are today as accepted in your beloved Son. And unto him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty and dominion and power now and forevermore.

Amen. That concludes this message. Thanks for listening to Truth For Life.

If you'd like information on ordering additional messages from Alistair Begg and Truth For Life, then call our resource line at 1-888-58-TRUTH. Write to us at Post Office Box 39-8000, Cleveland, Ohio 44139. Or visit us online at truthforlife.org. Truth For Life, where the learning is for living.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18975.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/alistair-begg/father/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net