

# The Father

by Harris Franklin Rall

---

*Jesus' teaching centered on the thought of God as Father, who is gracious, merciful, and holy, and who offers fellowship and forgiveness to all who come to him.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:9, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 11:27, Matthew 20:1, Mark 12:26, Luke 15:1-20

**Topics:** "God The Father", "Holy Living"

---

## Description

Harris Franklin Rall preaches about Jesus' profound concept of God as the central theme of his message, emphasizing God's nature as the Father, the God of mercy, and the holy God who desires justice and mercy from His people. Jesus reveals God as the living God present in the world, teaching reverence and fear towards Him, and highlighting the importance of a holy life. Through parables, Jesus illustrates God's forgiving and gracious nature, challenging the legalistic views of religion prevalent in his time and emphasizing the value of every human soul in the eyes of the Father.

---

## Transcript

Despite the place which it occupied, it is not the idea of the Kingdom that determines the faith and the message of Jesus so much as the thought of God. It was this thought of God that filled his own life. His conception of the world and of men, of what man must do and what he may hope for, all depended upon God.

Jesus does not come proclaiming any new God. He brings to men Jehovah, the God of their fathers, "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Mark 12:26). He speaks the simple ancient creed: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Mark 12:29). We may note three elements in that lofty prophetic faith upon which Jesus built: (1) Jehovah was one God, God of all the earth; and not merely creator and ruler of nature (Gen 1), but ruling the nations and moving in their history (Isa 40 and 45). (2) He was the God of mercy, the covenant God who had chosen this nation and redeemed it (Deut 5:6; Hos 11). (3) He was the holy God, and it was holiness that he asked from men. This holiness was not sacrifice and ritual, but justice and mercy to fellow men (Isa 1; Mic 6:6-8; Amos 5:21-24).

Israel had not kept this height. Her religion had become narrow, centered in her own welfare. She had lost the sense of Jehovah as the living God, present with her and speaking to her. A great system of laws and rules had taken God's place. God was a great bookkeeper, keeping record of men's obedience. Religion was to observe these laws. If she did this, Israel believed that at some future time God would again assert

himself and rule in her midst. For the present, since God was holy he must be separate from this evil world.

Jesus goes back to the faith of the prophets; though not dependent upon them. (1) For Jesus too there is but one God, the God of all power, whom men are to reverence and fear. He teaches his disciples to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt 6:9, 10). This reverence is in his own soul; "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," he prays (Matt 11:25). With this God all things are possible (Mark 10:27). Jesus chides the questioning Sadducees with not knowing the power of God. Their petty quibbling, with which they tried to make him ridiculous, falls down before his great thought of God (Mark 12:18, 27). There is nothing here of the mere sentimental good nature that some people have read into the teaching of Jesus. He says plainly that men are to fear God (Matt 10:28). (2) God is the living God, present in his world. As the parables show, this world was constantly speaking to Jesus about God. The birds and the flowers were witnesses of God's care (Matt 6:26-30). He could even say of the worthless sparrow dead by the roadside, that it had not fallen without his Father's knowledge (Matt 10:29). (3) That Jesus believed in the holiness of God need not be pointed out. He did not often use the word, because it had come to mean something ritualistic and external, but the Sermon on the Mount shows the prophetic thought of a God whose supreme concern is the holy life, and whose kingdom belongs to the pure and merciful and those that hunger after righteousness.

The heart of Jesus' thought of God is the idea of Fatherhood. It is the mark of his influence over the faith of men that it is this name by which men everywhere today call upon God. The change is more apparent when we realize that in the Psalms, Israel's book of worship, Jehovah is never called upon as Father. The Old Testament shows us God as the Father of his people, that is, of the nation, and as Father of the king as representative of the nation; but he is not referred to as the Father of individual men and men do not pray to him as such (Hos II. 1; Isa 1:2; Deut 1:31; Isa 63:16). For Israel Jehovah was the King. The King, like any ruler, would show fatherly kindness, but he was first of all King, and religion was obedience to him. For Jesus God is, first of all, Father. That is his nature, his heart. And religion is being a son; it is fellowship with the heavenly Father. There is no question that the source for this idea of God and of religion was Jesus' own consciousness. It was out of this consciousness that Jesus said, "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son" (Matt 11:27).

The law of Fatherhood Jesus shows to be forgiveness and grace. The religion of Jesus' day was steeped in legalism. It was a matter of earning and getting. It brought about, on the one hand, a spirit of pride in those that were conscious of keeping the law, on the other hand a hard and even contemptuous spirit toward others. "I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get" (Luke 18:11, 12). Men who could pray in this fashion naturally criticized Jesus severely. For Jesus, as we have seen, received men who were not keeping the law, he sat at table with them, and even forgave their sins. Jesus seemed to the Pharisees to be undermining the very foundations of religion, which they saw in the ideas of law and of merit and reward.

Jesus answered them in a series of parables in which he justified his own course by pointing out this nature of God as Father. Three of these parables are found in Luke 15, though probably not all spoken on the same occasion. The first two have the same meaning. These sinners, he would say, are the Father's children, his possession. Every one is of value to him. The shepherd who has lost a sheep is not satisfied, though he may have ninety-nine in the fold. He must find that lost sheep. Like the woman who has found

her lost coin, he rejoices over his lost sheep that he has found. And so these sinners that are turning to the Kingdom are filling their Father's heart with joy (Luke 15:1-10). The point of the parable is the value of the human soul. The same thought is in the story of Zacchæus. There too he was criticized because he had "gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner"; and his answer was, "He also is a son of Abraham."

Luke's third parable is commonly known as that of the prodigal son. It might better be called the parable of the forgiving father. It is not meant as a picture of sin and its consequences. It is a picture of the forgiving heart of God. When the lost son comes back an earthly father does not weigh his desert. He rejoices that he has regained his son, and forgives. That is the way with God. All the rest of the parable, the boy's impertinent demand, his foolishness and wickedness, his degradation, his filth and rags--these are simply the strong colors that Jesus uses to bring out more clearly the wholly unmerited mercy of the father. But he makes us see that this is really the heart of God (Luke 15:11-32).

The parable of the laborers is more drastic still in routing out the whole merit and reward idea of religion (Matt 20:1-16). A steward, or overseer, is hiring men in the market place. Some he finds early in the morning and sets at work. He goes back in the forenoon, at noon, and in the afternoon, hiring others as, he finds them. Late in the afternoon he finds still others, who work for him the brief remainder of the day. When night comes each man receives the regular day's wage, and the last named as much as the rest. At which the first complain, pointing to the greater work that they had done. The steward's answer was, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good?" The old allegorical method, by which each point and person in the parable had a special meaning, would land us here in endless difficulties. If we are contented with the central point or argument, then the meaning is clear. God is giving the Kingdom to penitent sinners as the steward paid the late comers among the workmen; it is not what they have earned but what his goodness bestows. The complaining workmen are like the Pharisees, grudging this gift. But God is not the master, giving servants what they earn, he is the Father, giving and forgiving because that is his nature. Matt 5:43-48 brings out the same truth.

The King is Father, therefore, not taskmaster. But that is not all, the Father is King. This gracious and merciful Father rules all the world and therefore men may trust in him and be unafraid. Very beautifully Jesus brings this out: "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matt 6:26, 28, 29). Jesus saw love and power joined together. That was why men, when they feared God, could rejoice and fear nothing else. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body," he told his disciples, "but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt 10:28-31).

But the greatest gift of this Fatherhood is not this care, nor even forgiveness, but fellowship. That is what the forgiveness of the Father means; it is the admission of the sons to the Father despite their sin and ill desert (Luke 15:20-24). Such a fellowship meant peace of conscience and quiet of soul, and the strength that comes from trust when a man knows that all his life is under God's care. The deepest meaning of this fellowship, or sonship, Jesus showed in his own life. The disciples saw it in his praying, and asked him to teach his secret to them (Luke II. 1). He himself was conscious that it was his great task to lead men into this life of sonship. That, indeed, was his double task: to show men the Father, to make men sons. That consciousness is expressed in a wonderful passage that rises to a lyric note: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord

of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt II. 25-30). It was this fellowship, with its love and gratitude and trust, that was for Jesus' followers the spirit and power of a new life.

#### Directions for Reading and Study

Read Matt" 6:25-34; 10:23-31; 11:25-30.

Read the four parables in Luke 15 and Matt 20:1-16. Tell the story and bring out the argument of each.

Read Matt 5:43-48 and Luke 19:1-10. Recall from previous study the instances of a Pharisee and of a publican from whom Jesus accepted hospitality.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/harris-franklin-rall/the-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](http://www.sermonindex.net)**