

In the gospel today, our Lord's disciples ask Him to teach them how to pray. Jesus gives them the words that have come down to us as the "Our Father." While the Our Father is one of the most familiar prayers, if we stop and think about what we are saying instead of just rattling the words off, the Our Father is a lot more than just a prayer to say. It's really a whole philosophy of prayer, telling us how to pray, when to pray, who to pray for, and what to pray for.

While an extensive reflection could easily be given on the Our Father, what I would like to look at is what gets tacked on after the Our Father in this passage. Jesus says, "If you forgive the faults of others, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours. If you do not forgive the faults of others, neither will your Father forgive you."

We expect God to forgive us. No matter what we may have done, no matter how wrong it was, or how many times we did it, we still expect God to forgive us. We depend on God to forgive us. We rely on God's forgiveness. We expect that from God. But how willing are we to forgive others? We are often a lot less willing to extend to others the forgiveness we expect and rely on from God. Jesus tells us it cannot be like that. If God forgives us, no matter what we've done or how terrible it was or how many times we did it, we must forgive others in the same way.

I don't think that God will stop forgiving us if we don't forgive others, but these words in our gospel emphasize just how important that is. If we are going to accept forgiveness from God, then we must extend that same forgiveness to those who hurt us. Just how willing are we to do that?

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