## The Father's Ears, Eyes, and Hands

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Date: 16 June 2019 Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] And behold, would you look at that? What kind of love is this? That the Father has lavished on us.

! And that tells us that being a child of God is not something out on the periphery of the Christian life and experience.

Oh yes, that's the truth out there with Pluto. I don't even know if Pluto is a planet anymore, is it? But it's way out there. It doesn't have a whole lot to do with my life. No, it's right in at the center.

It's Mercury. It's right around the center, close to the sun. This has a lot to do with the way you live the Christian life. It's a much bigger deal than many Christians make of it, than your pastor makes of it.

This pastor makes of it all too often. It's a major identity as we're studying the identities of the Christian. We've seen that we're soldiers now. We're seeing that we're children of God.

[1:25] In his book, Knowing God, J.I. Packer writes, If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his father.

And if this is not the thought that prompts and controls his whole outlook on life, it means he does not understand Christianity very well. It's just that central.

That if you don't understand, appreciate, be prompted and controlled by this thought in all you do in life, that you don't really understand much about Christianity.

You can't say that about every single one of these identities that we've looked at. But I wonder, do you think Packer's overstating, perhaps? Is he overstating the importance of this identity?

I don't think so. I thought about that. Men can very often overstate. And they write a book and that truth has so gripped them, they want to say a lot about it and they sometimes overstate it.

[2:24] But I don't think so. Two hundred times in the New Testament, God is just constantly telling us that he's our father.

And it makes a difference. In one sample sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus refers to your heavenly father or your father some sixteen times.

It's a big deal. Well, it's so significant that it's to it's to flavor everything about you. It's to influence all that you do from the way that you let your light shine before men so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven.

The way that you give, the way that you pray, the way that you fast, the way you do any deeds of righteousness with an eye to your father in heaven who sees what's done.

In secret. The way you love your enemies and do good to those that mistreat you, just like your father does. The way you aim at being perfect as your father in heaven is perfect.

[3:35] The way you forgive others just as your father forgives you. And the way you trust God and not worry because of who your heavenly father, your father is.

The way you seek first his kingdom and righteousness. The way you expect answers to prayer. It's all with an eye to your heavenly father. And so according to Jesus, the whole Christian life is one of being a child of the heavenly father.

In another context, John Owen believed that most Christians live far below their privileges. And that's never more true than with this privilege of being children of the living God.

And so on this Father's Day, we are going to be studying just a couple of the privileges. We'll see more next week, Lord willing. Privileges of being a child of the heavenly father and what it means to live in the light of it.

What it means to live up to these privileges. So last week, the Apostle John taught us that to be children of God means that we are objects of an out-of-this-world love.

[4:48] Amazing love that we should be children of God. Now today, we'll see that to have the Father's love, to have the Father's heart is to have the Father's ears, to have the Father's eyes, and is to have the Father's hands.

So, to put it another way, being children of God affects the way we pray, and affects the way that we trust Him for protection and provision.

So, that's where we're going today. Number one, to have the Father's love is to have the Father's ears. This is the privilege that belongs to children of God of access to God as a Father.

So, we're right down at the basics. What is prayer? And someone says, prayer is talking to God. And that's good as far as it goes, but it needs to go further.

Prayer is talking to God as your Father. Now we've touched where we need to go. Prayer is talking to God as our Heavenly Father.

[5:55] Notice how Jesus emphasizes this on the Sermon on the Mount. He says, when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father. He doesn't say pray to God. He says, pray to your Father.

Your Father who is in secret. And then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling as the pagans do. They think that they'll be heard because of their many words.

Don't be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

So, this then is how you should pray, our Father in heaven. So, that means that biblical prayer, New Testament prayer, begins with the recognition of God as our Heavenly Father.

That's the starting point of it. It all starts there. That this one true and living God, immortal, invisible, God only wise, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, the great I am, without beginning, without ending.

[7:04] This God is my Father. And I'm now talking to Him. So, prayer begins with this awareness of my identity as His child.

Or, we might say, or as His identity as being my Heavenly Father. It's just two sides of the coin. He's my Father. I'm His child. And it's that identity that is the starting point of prayer.

And that colors everything that we say, then, in the rest of our praying. So, we open with our Father in heaven. And now, everything we ask has to do with our Father. And nothing is the same when it's not thought of as our Father.

So, we're asking that your name, Father, be hallowed, be reverenced, and held high. It's your kingdom, Father, that we want to see come to this earth.

And it's your will that we want to see done on earth as it is in heaven. And it's you that we ask to feed us and give us our daily bread. And it's you we ask to forgive us our sins.

[8:06] And it's you, Father, that we ask to not lead us into temptation, but to deliver us from the evil one. It's all connected, you see, and flavored by who it is we're talking to.

It's our Father. So, according to Jesus, prayer is talking to your Heavenly Father. I'm not saying exclusively. There's other passages that tell us we talk to the Lord Jesus and we talk to the Holy Spirit.

But preeminently. This is where we begin and where prayer has its heavy weight. We are talking to our Heavenly Father. And what a huge difference it makes in everything that we then say to this great God.

So, the question this morning is how much does your identity as God's child influence the way you pray? And what you say once you start talking to Him. How much does it flavor that request for your child, that request for an unconverted person, that need that you have?

Whatever the prayer is, is it being flavored by this identity as a child of God? It's a dearly purchased privilege of His children.

[9:19] We've been singing of it. It costs Jesus' blood to open this new and living way into the Father's presence. What a shame it would be that we make little use of it.

Ephesians 2.18. For through Him, through Christ, we both, Jew and Gentile, through Christ, we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Access to the Father. Through Jesus Christ. Through His blood shed for us. So that just as Jesus, when He talked to God, spoke to Him as my Father, so now we can speak to Him as my Father.

Now others might have to wait months to see some great King. Isn't that the way it goes? If you get to see Him at all, you could have to wait months.

Whereas His children, His own children, have immediate access. At any time, wherever Daddy is, they're always welcome. And that is an access given only to children.

[10:30] And that's our privilege with the God of heaven and earth, since He is our Father through Jesus Christ. No waiting rooms. Immediate access. Never too busy.

Never too distracted with affairs of state and more important things. Never do you get a secretary that you can't get through to Father.

Or even worse, never a computer voice. Always straight to the top. Always right to the Heavenly Father. Every time. Wherever, whenever.

Never a recorded message. Telling you to call back during certain hours. Anytime, day or night, He personally hears us. The surgeon at Riley Hospital who operated on Maya two days ago was a very smart man.

And a very gracious man. The nurse told us that afterwards that He doesn't have children of His own. And so when Julie said, well, when will I see Him next?

[11:32] She said, well, you'll see Him tomorrow. And the next day. On Sunday and Monday. He comes in every day. To see His little patients.

It's like He almost treats them as His own children. Well, there's no as if. With God. You are His child.

And He cares for you that much. And as gracious as that surgeon was, you know He didn't give us His personal phone number. And say, call me anytime.

With your questions, your problems. Day or night, I will answer. It's a promise. Now, I'm glad He doesn't. He had been too tired to do that operation on little Maya.

It was so intricate and detailed. So I'm not saying that in a pejorative sense against Him. I say it rather to praise your Heavenly Father. Because He does do that with us.

[12:32] He's never more than a prayer away. He's right there. 24-7. All the time. And He Himself will hear your prayer.

Not one prayer goes unheard. What a blessing is this love of being children of the Father.

Trust in Him at all times, you people. Pour out your hearts to Him. For our God is a refuge. So, who can you pour your heart out to?

Just empty the whole picture and tell everything to. How about a father? Who all the time, at any time, invites you to come and pour your heart out.

Well, He's waiting for us. Usually, we're the ones that are slow at calling Him. And when we do, He's saying, I don't know why you waited so long. I knew you had the need.

[13:31] And I'm always here for you. Make use of me more often, more quickly. Billy Bray was a rough and tumble, cursing coal miner from Cornwall, England.

He was often drunk and always ready for a fight. Then the Lord saved him. And what a different Billy emerged from the transforming power of the gospel.

He was a new man. And everybody knew it. They couldn't help but know it. He was full of the joy of the Lord, of forgiveness. He'd walk down the street more like he was dancing. And he said, I can't help it.

When I lift up one foot, it shouts glory. And I lift up the other foot, it shouts amen. And that's the way we go down the street all day long. A very peculiar, a bit peculiar, but very simple, straightforward man.

He had been saved by the blood of Jesus. And he couldn't get over it. And so he told everybody. He was joyful. He was happy. He shouted to the nuisance of others, even.

[14:33] He loved the Lord. But his favorite saying was, I'm the son of the king. I'm the son of the king. And so he knew his identity as a child of God.

He had been a child of the devil. Served the devil for many, many years. And now he was a child of the king. And it shaped the way he lived. And it shaped the way he prayed.

Whenever a problem came up, Billy would say, well, I must go talk to father about this. Just the way a little child, when having a problem, would just say, I've got to go tell daddy.

That's how real the identity as God is my father. And I'm his son was to Billy. I must go talk to him about that. Sometimes as they were going down deep into the mine, he would get down on his knees in front of these rough coal miners and say, Lord, if an accident must happen today, take me instead of them.

I'm ready to go to heaven. They aren't. He had that access down in a deep, dark mine. He knew he had immediate access to the God of heaven and earth.

[15:36] And he called on him. You can be Jonah down in the belly of a fish and have immediate access to the God of heaven. You can feel lower than Jonah, more alone than Jonah, and know that not one prayer goes unlistened to.

That's our privilege, brothers and sisters. And what do we find every time we call out to him? What do we find when we do pray?

As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. Psalm 103, 13. That's what we find. The compassion of a father for his children.

We meet with no apathy, no indifference, but the greatest loving concern. And the Lord Jesus is out to convince us of this compassion of the father for his children and the difference it makes in our prayers.

That's where he's going in the Sermon on the Mount. So later on he says, so ask, since you have this father in heaven and all that he said about him, so ask and it will be given to you.

[16:48] Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened. Because in the family of God, whoever asks, receives, and whoever seeks, knocks, or finds, and whoever knocks, the door will be opened.

That's the way it is in the family. Six times he assures us of the promise to hear and answer the prayers of his children. And then he has a word for you fathers.

Which of you has a son? And if he asks for bread, we'll give him a stone. The boy's hungry. Would you give me some bread, dad?

And you hand him a stone, a flat stone to break his teeth on. If he asks for a fish, would you give him a snake instead? Why not? Because you say, I love him.

I want what's best for him. I don't want what's harmful to him. And that's at the bottom of any true father-child relationship. It's the desire of the father for the good of his children.

[17:53] That's the way God designed fatherhood to be. And wherever it's not that, it's the perversion of fatherhood. So, Jesus continues, if you then, though you are evil, because there's only one good, and it's God.

So, if you as being a fallen, sinful father, even a converted father who still has sinned. If you, though you're evil, know how to give good gifts to your children.

How much more will your father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him? So, dads, take your love for your own children. And now start multiplying.

Not times seven. Not 70 times seven, but just infinity. Go on, keep multiplying. And that is the heart of the heavenly father for you.

For every one of his children through faith in Jesus Christ. And because he is your father, when you pray to him, you need to walk away with expectancy.

[19:02] That you're going to receive an answer to your prayer. He's not going to wipe it away. You say, well, he may not give me what I want. If he doesn't, it will be something better. No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

So, if he doesn't give you what you ask, it's not good for you. Not now. He'll give you something better. He'll answer it later. But you'll never go away the loser.

And you need to have something of that expectation. Because you've been to your father. You see, that makes the whole difference of how you go away from your time in prayer. You go away with expectation. You go away with hope.

I've talked to father about this. He knows about the need. And I've made my request to him. And father knows best.

And he'll give me what is best. How poorly we often think of our father's heart for us. His children. And that's all to our impoverishment and to his diminished praise.

[20:02] Rather, it's how much more? How much more? How much more? That's the language of Jesus. When he's comparing earthly fathers to the heavenly father.

Or earthly pictures of it to the heavenly father. He argues from the lesser to the greater. It's Jesus realigning our hearts with reality.

The reality is that whatever you see of care and concern on this earth. It is how much more when you come to think of your father's concern for you.

So we need to honor his generous heart toward his children. You don't love your children more than he does. So don't pray like you do.

Pray like he loves you far more than what you love your children. How much more? Our own flesh is slow to believe it.

[21:00] We're suspicious of his love being that good. The devil wants us to doubt it. He slanders God's goodness toward us. Believe his word, brothers and sisters.

Take him at his word. Believe his heart toward you. And ask accordingly as a little child of your heavenly father. So how do your children ask from you dads?

It's very simple and to the point, isn't it? At least little kids. Younger children. And even older ones.

Can I borrow the car this afternoon? There's no five minute flowery speech beating around the bush. He gets right to the point. I want the car, dad. Can I have it? Can I have 20 bucks for the game tonight?

Can I date George? Can I marry George? We don't. They get right to the point. It's simple prayer. And one of the things that stands out about the Lord's Prayer is just how simple and direct the requests are.

[ 22:07 ] Give us this day our daily bread. God, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sinned against us. Don't lead us into temptation. Deliver me from the evil one. It's simple, straightforward requests.

Children talk that way to their father. Jesus says God's children do the same. Oh, for more childlike simplicity in our praying to the father. Sometimes the reason we think we've got to have all the flowery stuff going in with it is that we somehow think that we've got to impress the father in order to earn his hearing.

Jesus has a word about that. When you pray, don't keep on babbling like pagans. For they think that they will be heard because of their much speaking. That the more words they have, the more credit it gives them for God to listen and answer them.

No, no, no. You don't need to earn God's attention with long prayers. You already have his attention. Jesus won that for you. You're his child now.

You can't get out of his attention. Don't be like them. When you come asking at this throne, don't think you have to use a lot of words to overcome some reluctance in God to give.

[ 23:18 ] No. The king is your father and there's no reluctance to give. I was reading Charles Bridges. The reason he sometimes waits is not because he is reluctant, but he waits to prepare you for the answer.

But there's no reluctance. No indifference or disinterest like some important kings who have no time for a mere commoner who comes with a request.

We are not mere commoners to God. We're his dear blood-bought children. We're his dear blood-bought children. And so when we come to him, we instantly have his heart, you see.

And if we have his heart, we have his ears as well. Instant access. Instant willingness to hear and to give. Do not be like them, for your father knows what you need even before you ask him.

How does he know before we ask him? Because he's already had his eyes on you. So you not only have his ears, you also got his eyes. He's been watching you. He cares about your need. Does she have what she needs?

[24:26] Is he going into a problem? What will he need here? He's watching. He never slumbers or sleeps in his watch care over his children. And that's the loving concern that we bump into every time we pause and say, Our Father, I need help.

He's already seen it. So you don't need to impress or inform him. His loving eyes have already been on you. He cares for you. There's a sweet verse in 1 Peter 3.12, For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, you see.

You've got his eyes. He's watching out for you. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers. You've got his heart. You as child, you've got his eyes and his ears.

His compassionate, watchful eye, and his delighting to hear your cry for help ears. It gets even better, because to have the Father's heart is to also have his hands.

His hands to protect and to give to us that which we need. Think of his protecting hands. Father, deliver me from the evil one.

[ 25:50 ] You see, I'm no match for Satan. But Father, he's no match for you, so you deliver me. I've got his hands. I know I have his hands. Why? Because I've got his heart. I've got his eyes.

I've got his ears. And so he will deliver me from the evil one. He's my Father. And so Jesus says about those sheep of his, that I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, because nobody can pluck them out of my hand.

And then what does he go on to say? He goes on to talk about his Father being greater than all, and nobody can pluck them out of my Father's hand. We have his hands to protect us, to deliver us, to provide for us all that we need as his children.

So your children, they ask very direct, very simply, do they only bring to you the big things? Dad, I'm going to college. I might need some money.

I'm alone, please. Or do they bring you the little things as well? Well, if your kids are anything like mine, they bring the little things as well. Maybe they're big to them, but they're little things in the full scheme of things.

[ 26:55] Daddy, I have a knot in my shoestring. Can you fix it? That's kind of a little thing, isn't it? My bike has a flat tire. My dolly's arm fell off.

Can you make it better? I got a boo-boo on my knee. It's a simple childlike trust in the loving arms of their father. And you hear their requests, small and big alike.

Now, do you think you're a better father than your heavenly Father? You think he only listens to the big stuff? You don't want to hear the little stuff, the little problems, the little fears, the little cares?

Well, then why does he say, cast all your cares on him? Because he cares for us. Because he cares for you. He cares and wants you to cast all your cares, your little ones as well as your big ones.

If it registers at all on the care meter of your heart, he wants to know about it. He wants to hear from you about it. He wants you to cast it upon him. It can't matter to you and not matter to him because he cares for you.

[28:08] So cast all that you care about upon him. I'm sure that's something you parents are familiar with. Your hearts are inseparably bound up with your kids, aren't they?

And if they are hurting, you are hurting. You may not have asked for the hurt. You may not have contributed to the hurt. But if they're hurting, you're hurting. It's that sympathetic bond between a parent and a child and the father-son relationship.

The heavenly, it's the same way. You cannot not be concerned for the things that concern your children. And that's just a dim reflection of your heavenly father's concern for you, his child.

In all their afflictions, he himself was afflicted. What a father. What a sympathizing father. The truth is, our life is made up of a lot of little daily cares, isn't it?

That's 97, 98% of our lives. It's the little stuff, isn't it? The little daily cares. So if you're saying, I'm only going to bring the big stuff to God, what are you saying?

[29:22] Well, I'm going to forfeit this wonderful privilege of having a close relationship with my heavenly father. Because I'm not going to bring the 98%.

I've only got the 2% that he really even cares about. And so we settle for distance in the relationship. And so we bear those burdens, unbefriended and alone, while all the while the father's there, eager heart, willing eyes, watching eyes, listening ears, helping hands, waiting for us to cast our burdens on him.

What a privilege to carry everything to father in prayer. Let's live up to our privilege. Well, that's the first way that our identity controls our life.

It affects our prayers. Everything about our prayers, it's different because he's our father. And just briefly, it should also strengthen our trust and free us from our worries.

And that's in the text as well, isn't it? This is the backbone of his teaching on why we shouldn't worry. Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you'll eat or drink, your body, what you'll wear. Look at the birds of the air.

[30:39] I did what Jesus is telling us last night and just took a walk and there was a robin. Look at the birds of the air.

They do not sow or reap or store away in barns. I thought of the farmer's problem. You know, they can't even get the seed in the ground, much less to get it out at this time of year. These robins don't sow and reap.

They're just harvesting right away. The more rain, the more worms to the surface. They're eating away. The Father's feeding them. They're not worried. It doesn't say your God is feeding them.

It says your heavenly Father is feeding them. That's what Jesus is wanting to convince us of. The one who feeds the robin is the one who's feeding.

Even less than a robin, a sparrow. Well, and are you not much more valuable than they? Sparrows were going for two for a penny, we read in Matthew 10.

[ 31 : 45 ] And yet your heavenly Father cares for them. He feeds them and he knows every time they fall to the ground. And are you not far more valuable?

Much more. You see, here's the how much more. So, don't worry. You've got a Father in heaven that cares for you. And why do you worry about clothes?

Look at the lilies of the field. You've seen the tiger lilies or the flocks, the dandelions, that yellow flower that grows up in the farmer's fields when they can't plow it early enough.

And the whole field looks, it's gorgeous. I know they don't like it, but it looks wonderful. And Jesus is saying, have you looked at the fields and seen how God clothes the grass of the fields?

Even Solomon in all of his splendor and all of his wealth and regalia that he wore on his body was never clothed like one of these. And yet it's just grass that's going to die, wither and die in a day and be burned up.

[ 32:49 ] How much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith? So don't worry, saying, what shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear? For pagans run after all these things and your heavenly father knows that you need them.

Pagans, they have a right to worry. They have a reason to be preoccupied and running about trying to do for themselves because they don't have a heavenly father who cares for them. They have rejected the heavenly father.

They're living for themselves and therefore they have to do for themselves. They have a reason to be worried. But that's them. You have a father in heaven and he knows that you need these things.

So don't worry. Don't be like them. Rather, he frees us up from worry that we might do something else. That we might seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these other things father will take care of.

He will see to it that we have what we need. He doesn't want us preoccupied and so driven that the kingdom of God and his righteousness takes the back seat.

[ 33:54 ] That's more like the pagans, folks, who don't have a heavenly father. Rather, Jesus is saying your heavenly father has freed you from such preoccupation by his promise to care for you.

Give yourself to his kingdom. Give yourself to his righteousness. So it's there's nothing more practical than being a child of the living God of your identity. it has so many ways that it impacts our lives.

Are you using it to fight off worry and fear? I had to do it this week. I'll tell you. That's why Jesus talks about this stuff.

He knows we are going to worry and be afraid. And he also knows that we have a heavenly father to cast those worries upon. Jesus' important teaching on our identity as children is captured in a poem.

Somebody had listened in to a conversation in the backyard between the sparrows and the robins and said the robin to the sparrow I would really like to know why those anxious human beings rush about and worry so.

Said the sparrow to the robin well I guess that it must be that they have no heavenly father such as cares for you and me. So next time you see a sparrow next time you see a robin any bird for that matter what our Lord Jesus is doing he's saying is let the things of this light jog your mind remind you whose child you are remind you who your father is and how much more he cares for you than these birds that he's just doing fine feeding and so with the next time your child asks you for something and you find your heart just going out to them and remember you've got a father in heaven and that's just a faint whisper of a likeness to his heart for his children he loves you he wants to hear from you he wants to do you good next time you see flowers adorning a field of grass think how much more your father values you than grass this how much more thinking is to send us to our heavenly father in expectant prayer well may your identity as a child of God affect you this week then every time you pray remember who am I talking to

I'm going to talk now to God my father remember it when trials and needs press in the first sign of worry and fear let these things be things that send you to your father in heaven make use of him as such he's not your father for nothing you know he loves to be used as your father not abused but he's your father because he wants to meet your needs so go to him with him cast your cares upon him you'll never overused your father you have his heart you have his ears you have his eyes and you have his hands and so according to Jesus a faithful monitor of how much we make of being children of God is to see in the way that we pray in the way that we handle our worries may it be that the Lord hears again those words of Billy Bray this week well I've got to go talk to father about this let it be heard from you and if we live more that way then the more we will be always giving thanks to God the father through in the name of our

Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks to God the father for everything why because it's he who daily loads us with blessings and benefits fathers the better you know this father in heaven the better you're prepared you are to be a father to your children he's the ultimate example do they have your ear do they have your eyes do they have your time do they and what do they find when they come to you there's nothing more important than this I might have to say son come back in ten minutes I might have to say that God doesn't say that to me but I might have to say but when they come back what they find is a father who's engaged with them a father who loves them wants to hear he's involved in their life that's to be like your father be imitators of God therefore and dearly love children and live a life of love and if you're lost you need this father you might make it through this life without him you'll never make it through the day of judgment without him as your father and whoever receives

Jesus Christ and believes on his name to him he gives the right to become children of God let's pray oh father we thank you for your word that you wrote down for us just the things you know we need to hear and we need to have ringing in our ears and penetrating our thoughts let the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart be pleasing in your sight take these things and teach us to pray differently because you're our father teach us to deal with worry and fear differently because you're our father and thank you for being such a father whatever kind of father we had here we have the perfect father in heaven thank you for our earthly fathers thank you for the grace the love that we have tasted even at the human level that is simply a dim reflection of yours and so send us on our way rejoicing in such a father and such a privilege and we'll give you thanks in

Jesus name amen number 79 is our concluding song if you want to take your hymnal stand and sing together no troubles assail us we sing about the birds without garner or storehouse are fed from them let us learn to trust God for our bread number 79 dominant dominant dominant dominant dominant dominant dominant dominant