

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

Sermon Title: "Child of God"

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Throughout the season of Lent, we will be spending time with the Lord's Prayer, looking at different pieces of it each week as we journey toward Easter. This morning, as we read from the Gospel of Luke and find the makings of this important prayer, we begin with the first phrase – "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." And as we prepare to dive into our sermon and consider that phrase a little bit more this morning, let us first take a moment to simply ponder these words for ourselves, as the choir now sings these words and as we reflect upon them. (CHOIR SINGS)

When was the first time that you felt like you were part of a family? Whether we are talking about your biological family, an extended family, a church family, or another form of chosen family, when were you conscious of being part of it? When did you have that thought or realization that this, whatever this may be for you, is family? Even as I ask that question this week, I still find myself contemplating it. After all, there are many reminders that arise throughout our lives of being a part of something beyond ourselves, but trying to recall that first moment of feeling like you belonged to a part of community, of a family, can be a little tricky. Now, on the other hand, some are easy – for my in-laws, for example, when I was asked to be a part of building their new dining room table so that there would be adequate room for the expanding family including me, that was the moment that I realized that I was part of that family. Another one that comes to mind is my home church back in Pennsylvania. When I was first attending church regularly with my brother around the age of 13, the first moment of feeling a part of it came when my brother and I were asked to run their sound system. This system, which sat up on the balcony, it recorded their services, and you controlled 6 or so different microphones in the sanctuary and when you are given power over when the Pastor's microphone is on or off as a teen, that felt important, but also, it felt like we were valued and I felt like I was a part of something. Often times, there is a moment in

which that feeling of belong begins followed by many reminders, of feeling welcomed just as you are, of feeling valued, of feeling cared for and loved, that tell you that you belong to something bigger than yourself, something beyond your being – you are a part of a family.

I wonder when that first moment happened for the disciples of Jesus? When did they realize that they were a part of a new family? In our scripture reading this morning, I believe we certainly see a moment when they are reminded of their connection, of their commitment to being together, of their call to be one, and perhaps it was the first time they thought of their connection, of their life together as that of a family. In the 11th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is responding to a deep need of the disciples when one of them approaches and ask him to, “teach them to pray.” They saw him praying and they wanted to be like Jesus, they wanted to strengthen that connection with their God, and so the request naturally came, “teach us to pray.” And as he was going to give them some pointers for prayer, he too, I believe, had a lesson for them about the importance of community. Jesus began with “Our Father”, and goes on to use the word “us” throughout his teaching. This may seem small but in it is a big lesson. With the words “our” and “us”, Jesus was calling them to remember community and he was calling them to pray together. Right there was a lesson on its own – don’t just have that personal prayer life but pray together as the people of God for that togetherness is a holy act. And then by addressing God as Our Father, a word which recalls God as Creator and being a Divine Parent, in that word, I see Jesus calling the disciples to acknowledge a connection that is beyond a common mission, it is beyond us as individuals or even as community – it is a connection like that of a family.

You know, I think we all have those moments where we realize that we are a part of a family – those moments where we feel connected, and like I said earlier, those moments where we feel welcomed, valued, and loved. Still today, I believe Jesus wants us to remember something else about being a part of the family of God. Our connection is not

because of something we have done or because of what others have done, but it all starts from what God has done – of creating and claiming us as beloved children.

As a community of faith here in Wiscasset, we strive to be a welcoming place, that is a core part of who we are. It is part of our goal to let everyone know who comes through our doors that they are welcomed, valued, and loved. We unite around certain missions which can bring a sense of connection as we strive to live out faith. We don't do this without fault of course – there are times when we need to work on our welcome, when we need to work on how we value and how we love each other but, we still have a commitment to learning and growing, all along this journey together. And that is good and important work – that we strive to welcome, value, and love each other. Yet, I believe we are called to also remember what else unites us and calls us together. For it is not something that you, I, or we do. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he reminded them and still reminds us today, that it is God who welcomes us, values us, loves us – and us here is definitely referring to all who bless our community. It is our Creator God, our Heavenly Father, our Divine Parent, an imagery that Jesus reminds us of today, it is Our God, who calls us beloved children and calls us into the family. Today, I see Jesus' words remind us of that. And this all makes me wonder, can you think of the moment when you first realized that you were welcomed by God, not just by the community but by God, as part of the family?

Beloved People of God, I personally value the imagery of the church as a family because it speaks of a connection that is beyond you or I. It is about acknowledging that we are part of something greater which is beyond us, as it also shapes how we treat one another in the church and beyond – as a people gathered because of Our Father, Our Divine Parent. We may not always agree, we will have differences of opinions, and still, as part of being in this family of faith called together by God, we strive to welcome, value, and love each other and remind each other of the welcome, value, and love that God has for us. As we do this work, these acts of care may then be among the moments on which others look back and say, at that time I was reminded that I belong here. In

that moment, I knew that I was loved by God and that I was truly accepted as a child of God. So may we make every attempt in our life together, to affirm our connection with one another, giving those memories of belonging, as we live together as the children of God. So be it and may it be so. Amen.