

2026 07 12 / Romans 8:15-17, Mark 14:35-36
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Abba

Last Tuesday, Jenny called me and said, “Hi pastor, three missionaries are here with me in the church. They need a sleeping place or a ride to Wauwatosa.” I checked the map and decided to give them a ride. Three missionaries were without any purse, without any food, without a phone, without anything, only with a Bible to deliver the Good News to the people. They were in a Catholic retreat together; it was a part of their retreat. They were together like the disciples in the gospel that Jesus sent two by two.

On the way, they shared their stories about how God was good in their lives. They shared God stories about their life in the format: **before, encounter, and after**. Didn’t I say this two weeks ago? Please submit the stories. One of the ladies said God provided food constantly to their family when their father had no job for one year. They were immigrants. Many miracles that happened in their life like that; food boxes were outside of the door! Another lady, who searched for only parties and pleasures of life. Life was empty and meaningless! She was thirsty for the life that she didn’t know. Somebody talked to her that God forgives all, and God loves her. And she turned to the Lord! It was beautiful to hear such stories. The simple word of God is powerful enough to change somebody’s life!



They were like fresh, fragrant bread taken out from the oven. Today we want to talk about the goodness of God who performs miracles in our lives, opens a way out of no way, our delightfully loving Father full of grace and mercy through the Lord’s Prayer.

Abba is the first word of the Lord’s Prayer. *Abba* is the Aramaic name for God that Jesus used to teach the disciples to pray. It means a very intimate word like Daddy. To use this intimate term was a radical one in Jesus’ day. Jewish people were very reverential to the divine name so much that they would not say it out loud. Instead of the name, Yahweh, they simply said, Adonai, Lord, skipping the real name reverentially.



However, Jesus brought us closer to the heart of God. Jesus taught us that our faith should be a personal and relational faith. When we lose the intimate relationship with God, it becomes a dry, legalistic husk that loses the real beauty and joy of relationship. We should be so close with the Divine as a parent and child. Jesus had it, showed it, and talked to us. God is our Daddy! It was a radical revelation in the ancient world.

At the time of Jesus and in the centuries after, Greek was the language of the educated and informed. Books were written in Greek; history was recorded in Greek. But in a few places in these stories about Jesus, Aramaic words snuck in.

Aramaic was the common language of folks like Jesus and his family, the working poor, the underclass, and the ordinary ones. *Abba* couldn’t be easily translated into Greek. The word *Abba* is about intimacy. A little child calls Father Abba.

Imagine the father and a little child. A child runs to the father calling *Abba*! The Daddy widely opens his arms and holds the child with joy and kisses the child. The child gives all the love and trust; the Daddy receives it, gives it back to the child. By calling *Daddy*, the children get all the rights of the father, and the father bears all the obligation and responsibility. I had that relationship with my Daddy. The word carries you straight into a memory of safety, of being adored, of arms that always caught you. If that’s you this morning — good. Let the delightfully loving Father wash over you exactly as tenderly as he means to.

However, for somebody who was abused by the father, this word might bring a strikingly wrong perception about God. With the word “Father”, their heart will beat with tension and fear and be choked with all the past pains and abuses. The word “father” carries a weight that isn't warm at all; absence, or harshness, or a silence that never got explained, or a wound that hasn't finished healing. I know many grown men who have such pain. So, hear this clearly: God is bigger than any single name, even the tender ones Jesus gave us. Scripture itself hands us more than one door into his heart. I will bring some more names at the end of the sermon.

We witness that the vast mystery of the Divine becomes a presence as near to us as our closest kin, Abba. Jesus teaches us how God is loving and good! Once people taste this goodness and love, they are changed forever and have new lives like the three ladies whom I gave a ride to Wauwatosa.



There is one more scripture. When Jesus was in Gethsemane before crucifixion, his first prayer word was Abba. Imagine, we're in the garden of Gethsemane, the night before the cross. After his last meal with his disciples, he took Peter, James, and John a little further in, and fell to the ground, sorrow crushing his soul to the point of death. And in that moment, before anything else, one word comes out of him first: Abba. A cry. Abba. Daddy.

Sit with that word for a second. In the middle of sweat like drops of blood, in the middle of knowing exactly what crucifixion would do to his body, Jesus calls, Abba. The word of a child crawling into his father's lap in the worst night of his life. Suffering drove him straight into it. He got closer. He got smaller, more childlike, more unguarded. He called out Daddy.

Whatever your own Gethsemane is this morning — the diagnosis, the grief, the collapse of what you built your life on — you do not need to compose yourself before you come near. Jesus didn't. He came to his loving Father exactly as he was, crushed, afraid, and sweating in the dark. And the word that met that darkness was Abba.

What does the word Abba mean to us? Paul explains it in **Romans 8:15-17, “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”**

Paul says the Spirit of God now whispers onto our own lips. The Spirit rises up within you and joins your spirit in crying, “Beloved Father! Abba! Daddy!” Because you are joined to Christ, and everything that is his — his inheritance, his closeness with the Father, his place as beloved Son now belongs to you, too. You are covered by Jesus' righteousness in the relationship with God. God treats you as God treats Jesus. What an amazing grace and gift we have!

God is God. Cannot be expressed all by the word Abba. God has many names. God is bigger than any single name, even the tender ones Jesus gave us. Scripture itself hands us more than one name.

Listen to **Isaiah 66:13 — God says, “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.”** If mother-love feels closer to home for you than father-love, that image is every bit as biblical, and it is yours to hold. God revealed God's name to me as Papa and Mama.

Or **Psalm 46:1 — “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”** Maybe what you need this morning isn't a parent's embrace at all, but a shelter — a safe place to simply be hidden and held for a while.

Or **Exodus 34:6 and Psalm 103 — “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness... as a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him; he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.”**
Compassion for the fragile. Tenderness for the weary.

Or **Psalm 23 — “The Lord is my shepherd.”** Not distant royalty, but someone who walks the path ahead of you, who knows your name among the flock, who leads you beside still waters when you don't have the strength left to find them yourself.

This morning's invitation isn't that you must use the word Abba if it carries pain for you. The invitation is that God is near enough, tender enough, and varied enough in his own self-revealing grace to meet you exactly where you are — with whatever name lets you feel, even for a moment, that you are treasured, and that you are not standing alone.

Whichever name is yours this morning — Father, Daddy, Mother, Refuge, Shepherd, Merciful One — the truth underneath every one of them is the same: you are not an orphan. You are delighted in. You are wanted. And the arms, whatever image they take, are already open for you.

So let's pray together now — not just with my voice, but with all of ours. I'm going to speak a name for God, and after each one, I invite you to respond together with these words: “You are with me.” Let's practice it once. Abba, delightfully loving Father — (You are with me.)

Abba, Daddy — (You are with me.)

Mother who comforts — (You are with me.)

Refuge and strength — (You are with me.)

Merciful and gracious God — (You are with me.)

Good Shepherd — (You are with me.)

Healer God — (You are with me.)

Provider God — (You are with me.)

Let's just stay here for a moment.

Whatever name met you this morning, let that be true right now, in this room, in this quiet.

Let's sit in that together, in silence, for just a moment.

Imagine you are held by God's infinite love.

Amen.