

Proper 22 (Series B)

“Our Father, by Whose Name” (*Lutheran Service Book* #863)

So, who gets to decide what a family really is? Hollywood? The media? Politicians and voters? The courts and judges? You? Me? In this regard, the Gospel reading for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost could be quite controversial in this day and age because it states quite clearly that God, our Creator, defines the family unit.

² And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” ³ He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” ⁴ They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” ⁵ And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Mark 10:2-9

The Hymn of the Day for this Sunday complements this Gospel reading offering a prayer for our earthly families. Rich in theology and Biblical allusions, each stanza is addressed to a different person of the Trinity.

Our Father, by whose name
all fatherhood is known,
who dost in love proclaim
each family thine own,
bless thou all parents, guarding well,
with constant love as sentinel,
the homes in which thy people dwell.

O Christ, thyself a child
within an earthly home,
with heart still undefiled,
thou didst to manhood come;
our children bless in ev’ry place
that they may all behold thy face,
and knowing thee may grow in grace.

O Spirit, who dost bind
our hearts in unity,
who teachest us to find
the love from self set free,
in all our hearts such love increase
that ev’ry home by this release
may be the dwelling place of peace.

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As we sing this hymn and in so doing pray for our earthly families, let us also remember that those who have been baptized into Christ have been adopted by our Heavenly Father into His heavenly family. The Apostle Paul speaks of our Heavenly Father's immeasurable love for us when he tells the Ephesians of the remarkable grace God granted him through his conversion and resulting call to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles:

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-18

Standing in the immeasurable love and grace of Jesus Christ, may our families proclaimers of the faith as well as conduits of Christ's love and may we stand firm with Joshua when he declared:

¹⁵ But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Joshua 24:15

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