

Matthew 6.7-15

Rev Kristina Andreasson for St Peter De Beauvoir Town

Today, on International Women's day we get to hear Jesus teaching us how to pray. It actually made me smile a bit. Because sometimes when you bring women's matters, or a slightly feminist perspective into church, one of the things you might get to hear is: *-Oh, are we not allowed to say 'Our Father' anymore, does the prayer need to be changed? Should we say 'Our Mother' instead?*

As much as I understand the reaction, those questions overshadow what is really important. What is really important is that Jesus spoke to **all** of us, the Bible is for **all** of us – men and women, whoever we are, wherever we are. And when it comes to how we address God, God is always more, more than male, more than female. Some might prefer 'she' about God some might say 'he', because every relationship with God is unique. Just have a look and try to count all the different images of God we are given in the bible. A female perspective simply says that; we should treasure the image of God as a mother comforting her child in Isaiah 66, just as much as the image of God as King.

Not that one is more right than the other, but to widen the images of God who is always more than we can describe. That can be a way for more people to find a closer personal relationship with God. Where one image is blocking, another one might not.

The Lord's prayer however, unites us. It is prayed all over the world. I remember how it felt important to me when I first moved to London. In a church in London, I was praying with same words as my family in Sweden, around the same time. Our Lord's prayer, a prayer that unites throughout time and place. The prayer unites us with other churches, as there is hardly any service without it. But it is also more than that. I wonder if our Lord's prayer may be prayed even more outside churches, - in hospitals, on airports, in homes. Because sometimes we lack words when we turn to God. But many of us know the prayer Jesus taught us. It can be especially hard to find the words when we turn to God for comfort and help, when we are hurt or are scared. The Lord's prayer – a prayer that easily is said in hard and difficult times, in darkness and despair. It is being prayed right now, in Ukraine, and in other parts of this broken world that suffers from war and terror.

And the prayer, is also being prayed, right now, as we speak, by girls and women, turning to God, in a world of rape and violence, in a world where victims are silenced, where so much pain and suffering are hidden from others.

We are gathered here in church, on International Women's Day. It is not about changing the word Father in our Lord's prayer. It is not about ignoring men and boys who are suffering, who are lonely and scared. It is about this: for one day, unite with those women and girls who turn to God with our Lord's prayer in despair and sadness over what men and this world with its structures have done them, simply because of the fact that they are women and girls. And as we are united in our prayer with them, it opens up to acknowledge all women and girls, no

matter faith or nonbelief, who are hurt, who are scared. As we just a few days ago marked one year since Sarah Everard's murder, we know that our world with its structures still needs to change.

The Lord's prayer. A prayer that unites us, all over the world, and today especially with all girls and women who say: Me too.

So, let us continue to pray as our Saviour has taught us, and may it give us strength to make God's kingdom known on earth as it is in heaven. Amen