

Our Father's Love

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our heart be acceptable in thy sight of God, our strength and our redeemer? Amen

Good morning, I would like to wish everyone a Happy Father's Day.

I felt compelled to construct my sermon around Father's Day, so I researched the holiday. According to snopes.com a "fact checking website", they state,

According to Hallmark "Father's Day is the fourth-largest card-sending occasion with nearly 95 million Father's Day cards expected to be given this year [2006] in the United States." Yet another statistic related to the day that is more impressive: While Mother's Day is the biggest holiday for phone calls, Father's Day is the busiest for collect calls. (snopes.com, 2016)

That is just one of the main differences between Mother's Day and Father's Day. Mother's Day is traditionally celebrated as a happy day with dinner, flowers, and family. Fathers get power tools and weed whackers so they can cut more grass or fix more things that are broken around the house.

The role of a father is very different from that of a mother. Society and tradition dictates Fathers should be providers or partners in creation, protectors, role models, and supporters, there are many roles that a father plays in his children's lives. Not a very nurturing person.

Sometimes fathers are hairdresser or pretend to have their hair washed by their daughters.

A parent is willing to sacrifice his or her life for their child. Let me give you an example, I really like the people here at Holy Comforter, given my past life experiences I would most likely run into a burning building to save you if need be. However, there is no way in the world, anyone could stop me if any of my children were in that burning building, I would gladly sacrifice my life for theirs, as I am positive most of the fathers here today would.

Sadly, as fathers were not perfect, we have flaws, after all, we are a product of a fallen world and of flawed parents. I believe most of us try our best. However, an earthly father's love is not perfect.

Ok, Fathers are not perfect.....

When I was younger, I thought my dad was always wrong, I thought he didn't know jack. However, he got wiser, as I got older.

He would tell me that I could have anything I wanted in the world, that he had given me the world; all I had to do was work for it.

At the time I did not know what he was talking about, we were not rich, how could this possibly be true. I wish that were true for all people but his advice was from his heart he was trying to reinforce his German work ethic. Moreover, because of his gift of the world, I have an optimistic view, about the possibilities of life.

At 90 years old, he is now very wise; I am still learning what it means to be a good father, to live without regret, to be a good man, just from his example. Thank you Dad.

Ok, Not all Fathers are wise.....

I am not going to compare and contrast earthly Fathers and God today. However, our perception of God's love is shaped by our perception of our earthly fathers and stepfather's. I hope we perceive God as loving, caring, and supportive.

Unfortunately, that is not always the case; some have a perception of God as persecutor, a judge, a raging God. Some feel God thinks they are unwanted, worthless, unlovable, or anything else that fosters negative self-esteem.

But all of that is simply wrong, God loves us all equally. ALL (with big capital letters). All races, all religions, all nationalities'. The Killers and the Victims alike.

I am not saying that I fully understand the dimensions of God's love, (Not that anyone can), but it was not until I had adult children I began to comprehend God's immeasurable love for us, his children.

When children are young like that beautiful baby in the back. His father's only concern is for the health and welfare of a child and his wife. To keep them safe, warm, and healthy.

As children get older, a fathers concern shifts to teaching them stuff, skills to make them strong, reliable, and compassionate. How to ride a bike. When they fall and scraped their knees a Father's job is to patch them up, dry their tears, and get them back onto the bike so that they can experience the thrill of success in life.

However when they are fully-grown, when you can no longer say do this; or don't do that. When you cannot guide them anymore. With all the training and knowledge that you have tried to teach them, they still make HUGH mistakes.

You can see the dangers and mistakes they are heading for. But you are powerless to prevent them from making those mistakes. You still love them. It does not matter how bonehead of a mistake it is, they are still your children. You still want to pick them up, dust them off, and whip away their tears, because you will ALWAYS love them.

I could not say this last week; because I was so angry, but I am sure today that a Father of a murderer, still unconditionally loves his son.

That is the kind of love that God shows us every day.

If you look at the Old Testament. God's children screwed up regularly and yet God forgave them repeatedly. In addition, in the New Testament, Jesus did not run into a burning building but he did sacrificed his life to give us to save us.

I have read being a father is like being a tool hanging in a woodshed waiting to be needed.

I think I just called father's tools.

But, we do sometimes sit on the sidelines waiting to be needed by our children. Jesus does not wait to be needed. He goes out into the world and fixes what is broken.

In today's Gospel Jesus, goes into the Gentile world looking to fix what is broken. He finds a man cursed, isolated, crazy, naked, and afraid. He was an outcast from his community.

This man was tortured by demons, so much so that the people of the town shackled him to prevent him from doing harm to himself or to others. The gospel writer calls these demons Legion. A strange name but one familiar to the Jews of the time. A legion is approximately six thousand soldiers. Six thousand people that torment and persecuted the Jews every day, making them miserable all the time.

So imagine six thousand demons that can make you miserable all the time stuck in your head. We all have demons but Six thousand. This poor man cannot think, he is going crazy, but Jesus has a way to make him whole, to fix what is broken.

The naked is now clothed, the crazed is now calm, the chained and shackled is now free to sit calmly at the feet of Jesus. With love and compassion, the broken has been fixed through Jesus.

Therefore, in summary God's love for us, all is perfect, God is wise. I ask you to think about forgiveness and love this Father's Day.

Fathers forgive yourself for not being perfect, you are just human, but do better.

Sons and daughters forgive your father, he is just human.

Forgiveness can open the floodgates of grace in our life; resentment can only obstruct the floodgates and shut off god's grace from your life.

So even though you may think 6000 demons and demonic pigs hurling themselves into the water is a bit farfetched, even for the most believing in the group. It is nonetheless the clear metaphor that no matter how many problems you have they in your life. All can be fixed through the love of God and with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

I would like you to reflect on these words as we say the "Our Father" today. Really, ask God to "Forgive us our trespassers as we forgive those who trespass against us".

Now, I realize that some of you might not have a father in your home or in your life, but you have a Heavenly Father who loves you unconditionally.

After all, that is whom we earthly fathers use as our example!

Dear Lord, we thank you for our fathers. Help us this day to show our love and appreciation to our fathers, and may we always remember to thank you, our heavenly Father.

Amen