

Father's Day Sermon 2023
Sermon Title: Fatherhood is Special - Ken King
Scriptures: Exodus 20:1-17, Colossians 3:18-21, Luke 15:11-32

Today is Father's Day. A day of neckties, gift cards, hugs, long-distance telephone calls, Hallmark cards and maybe even that special container of dark chocolate sea salt caramels from Costco.

Now I looked up the word "father" in the dictionary, shows up just after the word, "fathead" just before the word "fatigue." Now I am not sure but it might just be a subtle way of putting father in perspective somewhere between fathead and fatigue.

Now the word father can be used as a noun meaning "a male parent" and as a verb meaning "to be the founder, producer, or author of" OR "to accept responsibility for". There was also a note that if Father is capitalized it means GOD - the first person of the Trinity.

Fathers and mothers enter the child-rearing business at two different times. A mother carries a baby for nine months, giving her an opportunity to grow content with the decision to parent a new family member.

Fathers just go about their daily routine, pretty much unaffected by what's going on inside the womb.

Oh, we might be supportive, go to birthing class, maybe even feel the baby kick, but we are still only an observer. Until delivery time. Then our world takes on whole new meaning. We hold that bundle of joy for the first time. We come to the realization that I am a father. At that point we start realizing the responsibilities of being a father and the head of the family.

Today's scriptures give us some insight into what God expects of us as fathers.

First, we heard the Ten Commandments (they were commandments and not the ten suggestions).

Second, we heard Paul's insight in to the family and our responsibilities. And last and not least the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Now when we hear the parable about the prodigal son the focus is usually on the prodigal son. But today I would like to focus on the father.

In the parable Jesus used the father to illustrate our heavenly Father, but it does illustrate the characteristics of a good earthly father as well. And we should note that the father had two sons, not just one.

So, what can we learn from the Father? What characteristics was Jesus was trying to pointing out. And to be fair, we can all learn, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters from this parable about the qualities of a good family.

First of all, the father was approachable and the boys were comfortable in talking with him. Twice the younger son was able to approach and talk to his father: 1) when he asked for his share and 2) when he humbly returned home. The second and older son was able to approach his father and 1) asked for an explanation of why the feast and 2) when he was able to share his frustration with his father. His father pulled him aside and explained the situation and reason for rejoicing.

Now to better put this in perspective we need to know that at this time the Jewish custom was to divide the estate of the father after his death. And the oldest would get the bigger share usually two thirds of the estate and the younger would have gotten one-third.

Now the when the younger son asked for his inheritance, he was actually being disrespectful to his father. But his father complied. The remainder of the estate, everything would go to the older son.

Second, the father cared about and valued his family. He had nurtured each of the boys to maturity. He was patient. He was willing to give the youngest son the freedom to live his life as his son wished.

Probably much to his disappointment. He also provided for the older son and was proud of him.

Third, by his actions the father showed he was affectionate, loving and forgiving despite failures of each of the boys.

Lastly, he was always there. Both sons could go to the father with their concerns and talk it out.

These qualities were the qualities of not just a father, but of a dad

There is a saying: “Any man can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a Dad”. As a father we think about discipline and providing for the family’s physical needs.

Dad is a term of affection. Dads are more fun loving, experience growing, educating, forgiving, supportive, emotional and can be a friend. A dad values his time with his children.

A dad may or may not be the biological father. He may be the adoptive father, the step-father, or just a nurturing male figure in the child’s life, possibly a grandfather, big brother, or family friend.

Dads get involved in their kids’ lives. They make themselves available and interested in what interests the kids: baseball, basketball, soccer, reading, school, and Sunday School. They teach them to ride a bike, drive a car and give them away at their marriage. Dads play and hug their kids and do not feel weak for doing it. They show love in many forms: gestures, attentiveness, and verbal affection and sometimes just sitting back and listening. They work at ensuring that their children know that they are loved. They laugh together and share happy times that kids won’t forget.

He makes them aware that if they ever needed him. He would be there. He treasures the moments together, the joys, and experiences that neither will forget. He would do almost anything for them.

Good dads are often loaded with great advice. A lot of dads have advice because of how well they know their children. After listening to them and being fully present in their lives, dads better understand their children’s personalities and strengths.

Good dads teach their children how to be self-sufficient, basic life skills like how to change a tire, or how to mow the grass. Dads make sure their kids do not have to rely on other people to do everyday tasks.

Dads are good listeners when their children speak. It doesn’t matter if they are two years old and babbling about nothing or 17 and dealing with their first heartbreak; a dad will listen to every word. Dads are the one who is there for the child, when they need them, in good times and bad. Dad is who you can talk to when no one else will listen.

What an incredible responsibility, the task of molding and shaping little children. Our children not only see and hear more than we think they do, they replay the behavior they see in us. As fathers and dads we must decide what kind of role models we will be.

What kind of example should we be striving to be. Like the father/dad in the parable: approachable, willing to communicate and listen, nonjudgmental, open to change, patient, willing to forgive, being a good example. And loving his children unconditionally. We have to decide what kind of example we want to be.

I remember hearing a story: There was a grandfather who would take his three-year-old grandson along when he went golfing. The boy had been learning the game by watching.

Then one day the grandfather brought his grandson a set of play golf clubs of his own. A week past and during a family cookout in the backyard—the little guy was asked what he had learned about golf from his. The little boy said, “Watch me!”

He said a no-no word and threw his golf club up into the pear tree. Many times, our actions speak louder than our words.

My Dad passed away 12 years ago. He was one of the best fathers you could ever have. Of course, I am biased. Even though he's gone, his presence is very near—especially today. I miss him and unfortunately, I appreciate him more today than when he was here. I wish we would have had more time together. I miss just talking to him, his laughter, his humor, his wisdom and his example.

He taught me how to catch a baseball, how to fish, how to shave, how to pick blueberries, how to ride a bike, and how to pray. He helped me memorize verses for Sunday school and taught me that wrong should be punished and that doing the right thing is its own reward. He taught me to be thankful for what I have been blessed with and the joy of helping others. He modeled the importance of getting up early, working with a passion that you believe in and why staying out of debt is important.

He was always close by. Always available. Always was willing to share some of his knowledge and wisdom. His words were kind and understanding. He believed in God. He taught me that my Heavenly

Father was always there. All I needed to do was call out his name.

Fathers play a role in how their children grow up. They impact a child's behavior, psychologically, physically and emotionally. Fatherhood is an important and wonderful vocation. God gives earthly fathers great responsibility. He asks that fathers provide for and protect their children, discipline them, be good examples, and most important, instruct them in the Lord's saving Word.

Being a father and dad seems to only last a short while. The children grow up and soon are gone. We watching them grow and become little men and little women and just being proud of their accomplishments as they're growing from point A to point B.

Thankful that I was able to guide them and be a better person for them. Learning what love really is.

They teach them to drive a car and give them away at their marriage.

Then you become granddads and can have the fun without the headaches! I think we have all joked about babysitting, giving the grandchildren the sugar treats we didn't give our kids, get them hyped up and send them home to their mom and dad.

We get to call God "dad" and with His love we live our lives. We struggle with our sin, we make mistakes in raising our kids. Recognizing our sins is good. Confessing our sins is better.

We do not have to earn God's love. We do not have to try to earn HIS forgiveness! Leave here knowing that regardless of what may have happened in the past, regardless of what may or may not happen in the future, you have a father who loves you with an unconditional and eternal love. You have a Father who is God, but because of Jesus Christ and through His Spirit, you can call Him, Dad.

A father's love is never conditional, Dads don't love their children every now and then but always.

You can't be a good father if you aren't a good husband - No matter the relationship between mom and dad, a good dad always treats their mother with respect. Dads teach their children how a partner should be treated and how they should expect to be treated.

You can't be a good father if you aren't a good son if you don't respect your father, what does that say about you. You may have a broken relationship, like the lost son that came home, but you have to take the steps to mend that relationship.

GOD is not only Father. He is also our dad. We are able to approach him at any time, any place, about anything. And He listens. He is approachable, forgiving, and will listen. GOD is always there.

Fathers and Grandfathers, none of us know just how much time we have left with our children because they soon grow up and they seem to grow so quickly these days. But can we in the time we have with our children be like God in our love, our devotion, our faith, our wise ways? Can we be encouraging our families at every opportunity; setting an example; providing for their needs?

I would like to share a little poem with you.

Poem: Walk A Little Plainer, Daddy

"Walk a little plainer, Daddy,"

said a little boy so frail.

"I'm following in your footsteps

And I don't want to fail.

Sometimes your steps are very plain,

Sometimes they're hard to see.

So walk a little plainer, Daddy,

For you are leading me.

I know that you once walked this way

Many years ago.

And what you did along the way

I'd really like to know.

For sometimes when I'm tempted

I don't know what to do.

So, walk a little plainer, Daddy,

For I must follow you.

Someday when I am grown up,

You are like I want to be,

Then I will have a little boy,

Who will want to follow me.

And I would want to lead him right

And help him to be true.

So, walk a little plainer, Daddy,

For we must follow you.

Fathers and Dads, hug your wife, children and grandchildren today. Let them know you love them. Let them know that God loves them. Wives, hug your husband. Let them know you love them. Let them know that God loves them. Sons and daughters hug you fathers (and your mother) and let them know you love them. Let them know that God loves them.

God has given you the choice of what to do with your life. He cares for you. When, like the prodigal son, you come to your senses, He will rejoice in you coming to HIM. He doesn't care what you have done, if you have had to deal with the trials of alcohol, drugs, or some other addiction. He doesn't care if your family life was messed up. If you want to fix it he will be there. He is there when no one else will listen. He will rejoice if you come to know HIM as Dad. AND if you are like the son that stayed at home and worked and sometimes the world, just doesn't seem to be fair. Remember, God the Father is there for you also. He loves you just as much as everyone else. And you can talk to Him.

Prayer: Dear Lord, God our Father and Dad, we reach out to you in love. Please give us fathers and dads the wisdom, patience, dedication and the strength to persevere when our children bring tears as well as laughter, anxiety as well as hope, pain as well as pleasure.

We pray for your continued guidance when faced with the challenges of fatherhood, being a father, dad, grandfather, mentor, provider, and example to our children that you give us the ability to witness and the ability to cope with the fears facing us and them. Let us share love and caring with our family, spouses, sons, daughters and grandchildren in getting to know you and your grace.

We ask this all in your name, and for your glory. Amen.

HAPPY FATHERS' DAY.