

Father's Day Sermon June 21, 2015

Today nearly 115 years have elapsed since the first Father's Day was celebrated. Fathers of 1900 didn't have it nearly as good as fathers of today; but they did have a few advantages: In 1900, fathers prayed their children would learn English. Today, fathers pray their children will speak English. In 1900, a father's horsepower meant his horses. Today, it's the size of his truck or minivan. In 1900, if a father put a roof over his family's head, he was a success. Today, it takes a roof, deck, pool, and 4-car garage to be a success. And that's just the vacation home. In 1900, a father waited for the doctor to tell him when the baby arrived. Today, a father must wear a smock, know how to breathe, and make sure he has the digital video camera. In 1900, fathers could count on children to join the family business. Today, fathers pray their kids will soon come home from college long enough to teach them how to work the computer, the Ipad and the Smart phone. In 1900, a father came home from work to find his wife and children at the supper table. Today, a father comes home to a note: "Jimmy's at soccer, Cindy's at gymnastics, I'm at Adult Ed, Pizza in fridge." In 1900, fathers and sons would have heart-to-heart conversations while fishing in a stream. Today, fathers pluck the headphones off or grab the IPAD while shouting, "WHEN YOU HAVE A MINUTE. *** A son wrote his dad a note: "Dear Dad, \$chool i\$ really great. I am making lot\$ of friend\$ and \$tudying very hard. With all my \$tuff, I \$imply can't think of anything I need, \$o if you would like, you can ju\$t \$end me a card, a\$ I would love to hear from you. Love, Your \$on." His Dad replied, "Dear Son, I kNOW that astroNOMy, ecoNOMics, and oceaNOgraphy are eNOugh to keep even an hoNOr student busy. Do NOt forget that the pursuit of kNOWledge is a NOble task, and you can never study eNOugh."

With our country plunging into economic ruin, the world around us literally on fire and lawlessness rampant in the streets, it is a very difficult task to be a good dad in a desperate world. And so today we particularly honor our fathers for the blessing that they have been to us. But as we do, I want to introduce you to the greatest dad ever! And what

you will discover is that there is at least one characteristic about this dad that is or was found in your dad - one or more blessings that you can be grateful for today.

The Father I am talking about is beautifully described in Psalm 103 - your Heavenly Father! It is said concerning him: *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits (Psalm 103:1-2).”* As David thinks about God the Father, he is consumed with gratitude. From head to toe he erupts into a song of praise desperately trying to not forget one single blessing that he has received from his Heavenly Dad. And as he does, David counts off on his fingers, as it were, the characteristics of God his Father:

I. He Is a Merciful Father.

1. He forgives all my sins. (103:3a, 12)

He forgives all my sins... He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

Daily Satan stands in the presence of God and says “Let me tell you what he/she has said; let me tell you what he/she has done. Let me describe the secret sin they are involved in.” And Jesus raises his pierced hands toward the Father and together they agree that “All is forgiven! All is forgotten!” He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. Now you know that if you travel east and continue to travel east, there will never be a time when you start to travel west. Our sins are forever gone.

**How wonderful it is when our earthly fathers say to us that all is forgiven and all is forgotten. We know that dad will never bring up the subject again.

2. He has a long fuse and a short memory. (103:8-10)

The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry... He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.

Have you ever had a situation where you thought your dad would be boiling mad and then instead he was quiet and even merciful as he administered the punishment. And then the next day came, and dad was smiling again. Further, even when dad was on the verge of being

hysterical, he did not become historical dredging up every time you had lied, disobeyed, or embarrassed him. And we all know there have been a sufficient number of those times! There were even those times when the normal consequences of our sin were so heavy that they in and of themselves had taught us a lesson. Thank God, dad did not punish us for all of our sins. We would've spent most of our lives being disciplined. He did not deal harshly with us even though we often deserved it. In those ways he modeled his behavior after God's fatherly love for us.

II. He Is a Loving Father.

1. He saves your life. (103:4a, 3b)

He redeems your life from the pit... and heals all my diseases

God saved your life from being destroyed and from going to waste. You and I were headed for the very pit of hell and God sent his Son who went to hell for us. But not only did he save us from something, he saved us to something. Not only has the healing begun, but one day it will be perfected as God heals us from every sickness brought on by sin. All *illnesses* will be gone, all *emotional* turmoil will be in the past, and all *spiritual* struggles will be forever behind us!

*** So many times my dad saved my life like when he forbid me to go canoeing again at 5 o'clock in the morning all by myself down the rapids, or swimming in the Canadian Lake where I had come up covered with leeches, or jumping off the roof of the house. He was there through my three day measles, my German measles, my chickenpox, my double hernia operation, my lifelong struggle with assurance of my salvation... In many cases he provided the medicines, the emotional support, and the spiritual direction that brought healing to all my diseases.

2. He makes you feel like a king on the throne. (103:4b, 13)

Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy... The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.

The Lord, tenderly and compassionately, lavishes so many blessings upon us that he makes us feel like a king on the day of his enthronement. And there are so many more to come! In fact there will come a day when he will literally enthrone us.

***How often our dad made us feel like a king on a throne when he bought us our first bike, our first fishing pole, our first basketball or

football, our first rifle, our first iPad, etc. We were so happy when we looked out and saw him at our first play, our first concert, and flipping burgers at our first job.

3. His love never fails. (103:8b, 11, 17a)

filled with unfailing love... For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth... But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him...

There is no end to God's love, no end to his "doting on us." He'll stay the same through the ages and his love never changes! As great and endless as the universe around us is, so is the greatness and never ending character of God's love. As the old hymn says, "he changes not, his compassions they fail not!"

***How great is dad's love! Many of us have had or have known of dad's whose love never faded or diminished even when their children were engaged in the most destructive behaviors. A teary mist would come to dad's eye, but he never stopped loving us. "You will always have a home here," he said, as his son or daughter walked away.

4. He provides for your every need. (103:5)

He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's.

There is no end to what God provides for the believer. He provides food, clothing, security, happiness, peace, the feeling of being loved, a sense of purpose, an electrifying future and the list goes on. God satisfies the very soul of a person so that even in old age we are renewed as if we are forever young. Just as the eagle flies through the heavens seemingly to be eternal, and molts its feathers so that it appears forever young so are our days here on earth only the beginning of an endless life - a life filled with good things.

***We are reminded of the great care that our earthly dad took in providing good things for us and not just things but security, the laughter of building a snowman, the surprise of a train set at Christmas, the doll, the dresses, the toys... The list goes on! And even as we grow older his smile and belly laugh makes us feel forever young.

III. He Is a Righteous Father

1. We praise his holy name. (103:1b)

I will praise his holy name.

God is forever separated from the caustic and deadly effects of sin. He is pure and free from defilement of every kind. He will never lie to us, never deceive us, never abuse us, and never have anything but our best in mind.

***Although no earthly father is absolutely holy, many of our dads want or wanted the best for us and desire to tell us the truth, to discipline us properly, and to walk the talk, to live to the same standards that they were asking from us. In this way they modeled for us a life free from the physical pain, the broken relationships, and the misery that slavery to sin brings.

2. His knowledge of you causes him to do what is right by you.
(103:6, 14)

The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly... For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.

All of us want to be treated fairly and rightly. God does that! Even when others are abusing us, misjudging us, marginalizing us, we have the absolute guarantee that he will avenge us and make things right in the future. He is also ever mindful of our earthly limitations. He doesn't expect us to become a follower of him and then immediately be perfect. He understands our humanness and our fallenness.

***One thing many of us could expect from dad was to be treated fairly. If he gave one child a toy, he gave all of us a toy. If we were truly mistreated by another child or another parent, dad would go to bat for us.

Conclusion

Esquire magazine posed the following question to fifty famous men: "Who made you the man you are today?" Washington Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III relates how "God put a lot of people in my life that have helped me ... My dad sacrificed a lot for our family. He didn't have shoes when he was growing up, so he couldn't play basketball, and he made sure I had as many shoes as I needed to play sports." Senator Marco Rubio learned from his grandfather "to dream and aspire." Karen Boyer says that Dad "never looks for praises, He's

never one to boast. He just goes on quietly working for those he loves the most “ But let me leave you with Joanna Fuchs’ poem:

You may have thought I didn't see,
Or that I hadn't heard,
Life lessons that you taught to me,
But I got every word.

Perhaps you thought I missed it all,
And that we'd grow apart,
But Dad, I picked up everything,
It's written on my heart.

Without you, Dad, I wouldn't be
The person I am today;
You built a strong foundation
No one can take away.

I've grown up with your values,
And I'm very glad I did;
So here's to you, dear father,
From your forever grateful kid.

If you can't say this about your earthly dad, you surely can say it about your heavenly dad! Happy Father's Day!