



Series Theme: Living Our Faith

Title: The Good Father

Date delivered: June 16, 2019

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Synopsis: Good fathers can follow the example of our heavenly Father in showing love for his children. There are several qualities that God can share with our fathers today: Being protective, Showing love for his children, Giving his children feelings of trust and security, Giving encouragement, Having Patience, Being good providers, By loving their mother, Spending quality time with his children, and Being a good teacher.

THE FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON: Luke 15:11-19

THE SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON: Luke 15:20-27

MEMORY VERSE: “The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.” Proverbs 20:7

Grace to you and peace from the One who is and who was and who is to come.

Today we are celebrating Father’s Day – a day that has been set aside to celebrate fathers ever since the Middle Ages. March 19 was the date chosen since that was St. Joseph’s Day celebrated in the Catholic Church. St. Joseph is in honor of the man who was Jesus’ earthly father. However Father’s Day was not celebrated in America until the early 20th century. It became popular as the celebration of mothers and motherhood became established in 1908.

Today it seems that Mother’s Day is celebrated by sending her flowers and taking her out for dinner and Father’s Day is celebrated by giving him another tie and allowing him to cook the family dinner outside on the grill. Even though it seems, as least to me, that more is made of Mother’s Day than Father’s Day, Father’s Day does have a longer history and should be given at least equal time.

But that doesn’t mean that all people see Father’s Day as more significant than Mother’s Day. Just what is Father’s Day for a little child? One child’s response: It’s just like another Mother’s Day to him, the only difference, however is that you don’t need to spend so much.

Another hint: One evening a little girl and her parents were sitting around the table eating dinner. The little girl said, “Daddy, you’re the boss, aren’t you?” Her father smiled, pleased by the question and so replied that this certainly was the case. Then the little girl continued, “That’s because Mommy put you in charge, right?”

And finally: A company held a contest for kids with the theme: “The Nicest Thing My Father Ever Did for Me.” The answer that got the most attention: “He married my mother.”

Although we can smile at the thought that mothers somehow are honored at Mother’s Day more than fathers at Father’s Day that does not mean that fathers are not as important. In my own family, I was definitely a daddy’s girl. I learned a lot from my mother, but it was my father who gave me the feeling of complete security. Even though my dad was not the mushy sort, not the kind of father who reminded my brother or me of how much he loved us, I knew – just knew – that my dad loved me and would always be there for me. He didn’t tell me in words that he loved me, he showed that love through actions.

Let me tell you a little about my dad’s family. He was the son of a farmer and sometimes coal miner. He had siblings – Paul, Phil, Carl, and Ira were older and Jay, Dean, Lydia (the

only girl) and Dale were younger. A big family eight boys and a single girl. My grandparents had plans for their children. The plan was for them to put the first three boys through college and then those three together would pay for the next boys to be educated. It just didn’t work out that way. The first three did graduate from college and began working as teachers, but they were not able to help their younger brothers. Ira, the next in line went to work in the office of a construction company in Johnstown that was helping rebuild after the great Johnstown flood. And when my father graduated from high school, his parents had decided that he should be the one to carry on the farming business. Although my dad was a lifelong gardener, he did not want to run the family farm. Instead he went to Johnstown to join his brother Ira at the construction site.

My dad went to the construction manager and asked for a job. The man took one look at my dad and decided that he was too young, too small, and just plain not strong enough for the work that needed to be done. Dad went away disappointed – but he came back the next day, and the next, and on the fourth day, the boss finally reluctantly hired him. Dad was a great employee, a good worker, always on the job, and certainly strong enough to do all that was asked.

One of my strongest childhood memories comes from the fact that my father had big hands and big fingers. As I alluded to earlier, he was not a big man, as men go, but his fingers were a different story. When he wanted to hold my small hand – to cross the street for example – I couldn’t hold his big hand with my small one. Instead I wrapped my small fingers around his index finger – a perfect fit.

He could fix almost anything. Very few repairmen ever came to our house; my dad was a fixer. He would help anyone he saw in need of anything he could do; he was gentle and never bragged about what he could do. Education was important to him and even though he never got the chance to go to college, he taught himself much. For example, when the Second World War broke out, he was not able to serve in the military. Instead he worked at a steel plant in Pittsburgh building Liberty Ships. He was both a riveter and a welder – two skills he did not have before working there. And as a good father, he wanted to pass on to me some of his talents and especially his love of fishing. He was successful in teaching me the proper techniques for painting with a brush, but he was never able to convince me that fishing was a relaxing and tension-reducing sport.

I think we all will agree that the best chance for healthy children is for their parents to work together – as a team – each parent bringing special talents and aptitudes into the family. But this morning I would like to focus on qualities that a man can have that make him a

good father. There are many different lists, but I liked this one. It contains nine qualities. They are listed in the bulletin under the sermon title. Underneath these great qualities are scriptures that support each aspect of a great father.

The first good quality: a good dad is protective. This means that he draws clear boundaries and makes decisions in his children’s best interests. He talks with them. He allows them to experience the consequences of their behaviors, both good and bad. Good fathers encourage character development in their kids.

The second good quality is his love for his children. This affection may be shown in kisses and hugs or in other, more subtle, ways. A good dad lets his children know that they can count on him because they know he cares about them.

Number 3 – Good fathers give their children feelings of trust and security. Children, at least in their preteen years, believe that their father is always right, that he can do no wrong, that he will never lie to them, and never leave them when they need him. That is the trust that a good father builds in his children. That trust gives children a solid sense of security.

Number 4 – Good fathers are encouraging. They want to be their children’s biggest cheerleaders. Such fathers are happiest when their children succeed, and those same fathers are the ones who help their kids improve if they fail. Here words are especially important since words have the power to make or break a child. It has been said that it takes thirteen positive comments to overcome one negative comment. Children want and need to hear honest, positive support from their dads, not negativity or criticism.

Number 5 – Good fathers have the patience to listen to their children. He gives them undivided attention and tries to understand things from their point of view. Listening is one of the greatest gifts one person can give another, and this is especially true when fathers take time out of their busy schedules to listen, really listen, to their kids.

Number 6 – Good fathers are also good providers, giving their children the things they need. That doesn’t mean buying every single toy their children want or the best summer camp experience money can buy or the latest video game or electronic device. Instead this means that good fathers share the responsibility of making a home. A good father can be a family breadwinner or a stay-at-home dad or some combination of roles. The important thing is that dad is a vital part of the family and takes an active role in making a home.

Number 7 – Another thing a good father gives his children is the gift of loving their mother. When the relationship between father and mother is strong, they can work together almost seamlessly. When a man respects his wife, he teaches his children by example to respect their mother as well. When parents respect each other, respecting their children and others comes most easily.

Number 8 – Another good thing a good father does is spend time with his kids – and when this is done well both dad and kids have a good time. He can play games with them, even showing them strategies and techniques, and can introduce them to games and activities they could not learn otherwise. When dads show their children new experiences, especially if those experiences are something special to the dad, their connection will become stronger – cementing a relationship which can grow into shared activities enjoyed by both.

And finally, Number 9 – a good father is the best teacher for their children. He can help with homework and instruct them in topics that are interesting but not covered in class. He can teach them about God. He can also help them manage their emotions, especially when his children experience some failure or disappointment. He can help them dream and plan for the future. He can also teach them how to volunteer, how to help, how to live in a complex world. He can create an environment that allows his children to come to him with questions, and they can feel assured that he will not embarrass them, belittle them, or refuse to answer. Fathers can be most influential in their children’s lives when they are interested and involved in what their children are doing and understand what they are interested in.

That’s quite a list – and obviously all fathers have difficulty measuring up sometimes. But I think we all can agree that these qualities are good ones – and there are lots of good behaviors that could be added to this list. One of the things I found interesting in preparing these thoughts was how these good fatherly qualities are perfect descriptors of our Heavenly Father. God our Father is: protective, loving, trustworthy, encouraging, patient, providing for our needs, loving all our family members, always available to spend time with us, and is the best teacher.

That is no accident. God made us in God’s own image – so that it is our desire to carry on the attributes that God has shared with us. This is especially true in providing Jesus to be our teacher and trainer. The qualities that make men good fathers are good qualities because they reflect the attributes of our Creator God.

God, the Creator of the world, did work – mighty work – creating all that is around us, working tirelessly for six days. God looked at all Creation and called it good. And then he rested on the seventh day. That is what I’m asking all the men today. Follow God’s example. Work hard, do good things, and take time for yourself to rest.

Since today is a special day for men, I’m asking all men to take some time out today, even if it’s only 5-10 minutes. Rest. Relax. Just be. And while you are taking that time for yourself, enjoy the treat that you will be given when you leave the sanctuary this morning. There will be a couple of children waiting for you to give you a little something to say thanks to you for being the kind of role model we all want to follow.

This is the case whether you have children yourself, or show fatherly caring for younger relatives, neighbors, or friends. No matter what your situation or age, please know that God our Father is pleased when the men of today can share with others the very qualities that God has given to each man here today. You are loved, you are valued, you are important. Thank you for being here on this very special Father’s Day. Let us pray.

Father God, thank You for loving us, protecting us, listening to us, teaching us, encouraging us, being trustworthy, being patient with us, and desiring to spend time with us. Each one of these attributes is a gift to us. Help us to appreciate these gifts and then to pass them on to those we meet, whether they be family, friends, neighbors, or even strangers. We know when we show Your love to others, that is just what Jesus would do. So we know this is in Your will. Amen.