

## **My Father – Psalm 68:4-6**

30 years ago I watched our son come into the world, this tiny, wrinkly red creature that started his days crying, which made everyone around him smile! As the nurse handed me that little bundle, and as that scene was replayed two years later when my daughter came into this world, I was overwhelmed with the thought, “Now what do I do?” I was young, and though I had a good father as a role model, it was no my turn to be the father. What was I to do?

Being a father is such a wonderful and huge responsibility. We have the opportunity to help shape and mold a little life. That is a daunting thought. What if we mess it up? None of us attended a class at school called parenting, and until this moment we did not really think about what this meant. But now, I am a father! A very eloquent and familiar prayer rises t the lips of every new father: “HELP!”

When it comes to Father’s Day, we have no end of material to draw on to encourage, challenge and bless the fathers. For Christians we simply look upwards to our Heavenly Father and there we find the image of the perfect Father. Sadly, He is often misrepresented, but that does not change the fact that God is a “good, good Father.”

Scripture is full of references to God as Father. One of the first places we think of is the Lord’s Prayer where Jesus taught his disciples to pray,

**“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”**

What an amazing thought, that the God of the universe is willing to call us his children, and allow us the amazing privilege of calling Him “Our Father.” By doing this God is saying he desires to have a relationship with us. God does not want to be simply a figure head of authority, an image of power that we tremble at but never get to know. The image of a father says that God wants us to know him, to spend time with him, build a relationship with him.

In ancient times people might carve a god out of wood, or chisel one out of stone, or make an image of metal. It would sit on the mantle in your home where you could see it, and be reminded of your deity. But you did not come to know about the god, knowing the god’s likes and dislikes, or character. You could not have a relationship with an idol.

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel and the God revealed perfectly in Jesus Christ, is very different. The one true God wants us to know him, and so He continually is revealing Himself to us. Listen to what scripture says about knowing God:

**I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. Proverbs 8:17**

**“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord,  
As the waters cover the sea.” Habakkuk 2:14**

**We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 1 John 4:16**

If there was any doubt that God wanted us to know him and have a relationship with him, we simply have to look at Jesus and all doubt is erased. Jesus is God come to us, becoming like us, so we might know him intimately. When we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father, Jesus says in John 14:9.

Why am I spending so much time on the fact that we can know God this morning? **Simply put, we all need a Father.** Many people do not have a father in their life. For some, their fathers walked away before they were born. For others, their father was taken by death. Some only had their earthly father for a short time, some grew up never knowing their father. Some fathers were there, but spent no time whatsoever with their children. Some were so bad to their children that the children left, or were taken away. Some fathers worked far away.

Far too many people grew up without a father to love them, guide them, and show them the way. What I am saying this morning, on the authority of God's Word, is that no one needs to be without a father. God himself says, "I will be your Father."

Even when we had great fathers, fathers who loved us and watched over us with care, we also need a Heavenly Father. We need one who can fulfill this promise, **"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the ages..."** Only our Heavenly Father can do that.

This morning, as you reflect on your earthly father, I pray you have good thoughts and memories. Maybe you are young enough that memories are still being made. Make them wonderful memories that will be cherished a lifetime. Time goes by far too quickly to waste even a day.

If the memories of your father are painful, I pray God will allow you to heal, to forgive and to shift your focus to the Heavenly Father who will never disappoint. This morning may we know the God who allows us to call him "Abba, Father" which is the equivalent of saying "Daddy."

This is the God you can know through faith in Jesus.

"I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life," Jesus says. "No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

I pray you know the Father today. I pray you can look heavenward and say, "My Father."

Those of us who have been blessed to be parents, to be a father, are always asking, "What does a good father look like?"

A wonderful ministry called Focus on the Family tries to encourage fathers (and mothers) in their God given roles. In an article titled, "The Father your Kid Needs" they outlined some things we as fathers should know about our task, things we can see in our Heavenly Father and learn from Him.

First, it suggests that fathers should use their words to encourage their children. We know that words can build up, or they can tear down. They can bring life, or pain. Someone said, “The tongue has no bones, but is strong enough to break a heart. ...” How true.

This is why scripture says much about the use of the tongue.

**Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity. Proverbs 21:23**

**Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends. Proverbs 17:9**

**Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. James 3:5**

Note how God addresses people in scripture: my beloved, my son (or daughter), my child, my people. No matter how messed up people get, God still speaks to us in love.

You say, Pastor, does not God speak about our sinfulness, the ways we can have wicked intents and desires and do terrible things. Yes, that is true, but God points out that there is sin in our lives, and that can be dealt with through faith in Jesus. That part can be fixed. God does not call us sinners, we are people who sin. We are created in the image of God. We are his delight and his people. He will even call those who put their trust in him saints – holy ones. Sadly saints can sin, but we are not sinners, or at least that is not how God defines us.

Children remember the words spoken to them. They remember when we say, “I love you!” “I am proud of you!” “I am glad you are my son/daughter.” They will also remember the terrible things we say, so make sure they hear the good words that build up and do not tear down.

The article goes on to say we should model what we want our kids to become. As the saying goes, more is caught than is taught. We can talk all we like, but that does not mean the message is getting through. What our children see in our lives is what will truly shape who they become.

Our Heavenly Father does this so well. We see how He loves, how he gives, how he delights in his family, how he cherishes those he loves, and we have a great example to shape our lives. When we ask, “What is love?” we could read 1 Corinthians 13 and find a splendid message on love, or we can look to the Heavenly Father and discover what love looks like. As 1 John 4:10-11 says:

**<sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

I learned early that loving God, and putting him first in your life was of extreme importance. How did I learn this? Did my father sit me down and give me the father-son lecture? No, my father lived that kind of life. He was at church every Sunday, usually twice, at Bible study and

volunteering to help with the boys club at the church. He read his Bible daily and prayed. He showed me that God came first in his life – and I learned from him. I am so grateful for this.

Model the person you want your children to become, as your heavenly Father has done. By the way, it is never too late to start doing this with God's help. Even if the children are grown and moved away, keep modeling what you desire them to become. It is never too late.

Though there were several other suggestions, the last I will share this morning is that fathers need to become better fathers. In other words, keep learning and growing. It is never too late to learn to forgive, or how to love better. Talk to your children, and ask them how they are doing, if you have done anything that has hurt them, and ask them to forgive you. That can go both ways. If you love your children, let them know when you are grieved by their actions as well.

Our Heavenly Father is perfect. He has nothing to learn in his role as Father, but He certainly communicates with His children so we can know His heart. Through scripture we learn that God can be grieved by our actions, even angered. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday and saw how the people he desired to call his children behaved, he wept. God does not need to show us his heart, but he does, because he wants us to really know him. And the more we get to know him, the more we realize we have much to learn about being loving people.

This is why the promise of the Holy Spirit is so precious to all believers, but this morning it is a special blessing to the fathers who say, "I want to be a better father." God has promised to pour his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 5:4) If we yield ourselves to God he will shape us and mold us and make us into the people – the fathers – we should be. We are not left to our own devices, praise God. As we yield ourselves to God, and the work of his Spirit within us, we will be shaped into the image of Jesus – our lives will look more and more like the life of Jesus. How good is that?

This Father's Day we again look upwards to our Heavenly Father and say, "Thank you!" We are worshipping today because our loving Heavenly Father has drawn us to Himself. You are hearing this message because God wanted you to hear of his love for you today, and receive that love for yourself.

This morning we are invited to be sure God is our Heavenly Father, for until we repent of our sin and seek his forgiveness, we are outside the family. But in that moment we receive Jesus into our lives, believing that he died for our sin and he alone is the way to God, we are born again into the family of God. In that moment God becomes our Heavenly Father.

I pray that you are celebrating two fathers today. Your earthly father and your Heavenly Father. Fathers, we are blessed to be able to look to God and learn from him what it means to be a good father. May you seek him with all of your heart, because when you do, you will know that you have chosen the right path for your life. Happy father's day!