

June 16, 2019

2019 Father's Day

Fatherhood is...

Luke 8:40-42, 49-56

Opening words: The history of Father's Day can be traced back to ancient Babylon 4,000 years ago. However, the story of America's Father's Day is not quite so old. It can be traced back to 1909. For it was on Mother's Day of that year, Sonora Louise Smart Dodd sat in church with her father. It must have been a difficult sermon to hear because her mother died years earlier during childbirth. She and her five siblings were raised with love and care by their father, William Jackson Smart, a Civil War veteran. The 27-year-old Dodd wondered why there wasn't a Father's Day. She began a crusade to establish one. She began by enlisting the support of the Spokane Ministerial Association and the YMCA. They declared the first Father's Day to be June 19, 1910. It was a big success. Soon, other communities and states began to recognize Father's Day. President Woodrow Wilson supported the idea of a national Father's Day in 1916 and President Calvin Coolidge did the same in 1924. Some things don't change. Nothing happened in Washington DC for decades. It took Lyndon Johnson in 1966 to sign a presidential proclamation making the third Sunday in June Father's Day. Six years later, in 1972, 58 years after the establishment of Mother's Day, Richard Nixon signed a law making Father's Day a national holiday.

Our scripture lesson for today is about a father and daughter. As with all of Luke's stories, it is masterfully told. You wouldn't want to change a single word. This story is unique because it comes in two sections. The first section is about the father. The second section is about Jesus. What I want you to hear is the love this father has for his daughter. There is a world of difference between being a sperm donor and being a father. Our scripture lesson for today is Luke 8:40-42, 49-56. Let me call this message *Fatherhood is...*

Luke 8:40-42, 49-56 Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹ Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴² because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

⁴⁹ While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore." ⁵⁰ Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." ⁵¹ When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother.

⁵² Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." ⁵³ They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

⁵⁴ But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" ⁵⁵ Her spirit returned, and

at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

George Herbert (1593-1633) was a Welsh-born poet, orator and priest in the Church of England. He once said, "*One father is worth more than a hundred schoolmasters.*" I can't disagree with that quote. If you find some truth in that quote, say, "**Amen!**"

I love this old preaching story. In Spain, a father and son had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read:

Dear Paco,

Meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you.

Your Father.

On Saturday, 800 Paco's showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers. Don't tell me the relationship between a father and their children isn't important! With this story in mind, let us look at this morning's scripture lesson.

We find ourselves in the eighth chapter of Luke. Jesus and the disciples are in Galilee. That fact is important because the Master was extremely popular there. The crowds followed him everywhere. One of the people in the crowd on that day was a man by the name of Jairus. In his little corner of the world, he was a significant man. Luke tells us he was a ruler in the local synagogue. What does that mean? Not being a member of the clergy, his position was not liturgical in nature. He acted more as an administrator or trustee. Sometimes, the position was paid. Sometimes, it was volunteer. Regardless, the position was always held by a respected, good man in the congregation. Jairus was a good man, yet hardship does not discriminate. This good man was facing his greatest nightmare. His only daughter, twelve years old, was dying. Emotionally and physically exhausted, Jairus fights his way through the crowd to ask Jesus for a miracle. Jesus is his only hope.

I read verses 40-42 countless times this week. With every reading, I was more moved by the emotions of the father. It isn't just Jairus' nightmare. It is every parent's nightmare: the death of their children. I do not know how you can read this story and not be moved. She was twelve years old and her life was just beginning. However, the story is not so much about death. In the end, the girl lives. It is a story about parenting. There is no other way to say it: This story reminds us that parenting is hard. If you want to be a good father, then you had better be prepared to give more than your sperm. You'd better be prepared to give your life. This story gives us three divine truths about fatherhood. They are as true today as they were in his day. If you are ready to look at the first one, say, "**Amen!**"

Important

There is an old story about a young man standing in front of a judge. He was about to hear his sentence. It was an awkward moment for the judge, because he had known the young man since childhood, for he was well acquainted with his father - a famous legal scholar and the author of an exhaustive study entitled, "The Law of Trusts." "Do you remember your father?" asked the magistrate. "I remember him well, your honor," came the reply. Then, trying to probe the offender's conscience, the judge said, "As you are about to be sentenced and as you think of your wonderful dad, what do you remember most clearly about him?" There was a pause. Then the judge received an answer he had not expected. "I remember when I went to him for advice. He looked up at me from the book he was writing and said, 'Run along, boy; I'm busy!' When I went to him for companionship, he turned me away, saying 'Run along, son; this book must be finished!' Your honor, you remember him as a great lawyer. I remember him as a lost friend." The magistrate muttered to himself, "Alas! Finished the book, but lost the boy!"

First, fatherhood is important. In other words, your children must be the top priority in your life. Fathers do much more than pay the bills. Mothers may love their children unconditionally, but fathers add a sense of security and stability to the home. That is extremely important. A father's presence makes a great difference in the life of a child. These statistics are a few years old, but they still ring true. They come from the U. S. Department of Justice.

- 1. 43% of US children live in fatherless homes.**
- 2. 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes.**
- 3. 80% of rapists come from fatherless homes.**
- 4. 71% of pregnant teenagers come from fatherless homes.**
- 5. 63% of youth suicides come from fatherless homes.**

Don't tell me fathers aren't important. If you want to be a good father, then make your children your top priority. If you can agree with that statement, say, "**Amen!**" Do your children know they are your top priority? Fatherhood is important.

Challenging

Second, fatherhood is challenging. One of the most intimidating things in life is bringing a newborn home from the hospital. Babies don't come with instruction books. The truth is, you just do the best you can. It isn't just true of newborns; it is true at every age. Most of the time that is good enough. The truth is, just when you grow comfortable with newborns, they are no longer newborns. They are toddlers. Just when you get used to toddlers, they become preschoolers. Then, they go to school. Then they start taking all those classes and joining all those teams. Then comes middle school and high school. Then they try to figure out what they are going to do with their lives. Are they going to go to college or a trade school? Then, they get married and you have to learn

how to be an in-law. Then, you must learn how to be a grandparent. All these changes make parenting very challenging. Do you know what I have observed? There are no instruction books for any of those stages of life. You just do the best you can. Can I tell you the truth? I always felt one stage behind.

In the Bible lesson for today, Jairus is trying to help his twelve-year old daughter. I have been the father of a twelve-year old daughter twice and it isn't easy. Enjoy your children at the stage they are right now, but be prepared. It is going to change soon. They will change, so your relationship with them must change. That is so challenging. If that makes you think, say, "**Amen!**" Fatherhood is important. Fatherhood is challenging.

Eternal

Third and finally, fatherhood is eternal. In the story, the twelve-year-old girl dies. Her life ended just as it was about to begin. Her life would have been over, if not for Jesus. He resurrects her. In other words, he brings her back to life. She is one of a select few in the Bible who were resurrected. Do you remember the others who were resurrected in the Bible? There were nine in all; 3 in the Old Testament and 6 in the New Testament. Except for Jesus, do you know what happened to the other eight? They all died again in time. However, their resurrections were just the foreshadowing of eternal life. The girl lived because her father introduced her to Jesus.

Fatherhood is not just paying the bills. Fatherhood is not just being a positive role model. Fatherhood is not just getting the person ready for life. Fatherhood is getting the person ready for eternity. Children have so many wonderful options today. They can take lessons and join teams. They can take advanced classes and go to camp. There is nothing wrong with any of those things. However, none of those things are preparing them for eternity. If you want your child to live for eternity, then be like Jairus. Introduce your children to Jesus. How could you enjoy heaven without them? And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**" Fatherhood is important. Fatherhood is challenging. Fatherhood is eternal.

Fred Craddock (1928-2015) taught homiletics at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. No one has influenced my preaching more than he has. In my opinion, he is one of the greatest preachers of the twentieth century. No one can tell a story like him. This is one example.

One summer Fred and his wife decided to get away for a few days. They went to Gatlinburg, Tennessee. One night they found a quiet little restaurant and looked forward to a private meal—just the two of them. While they were waiting for their meal, they noticed a distinguished looking, white-haired man moving from table to table, visiting guests. Craddock whispered to his wife, "I hope he doesn't come over here." He didn't want the man to intrude on their privacy. But the man did come by his table. "Where are you folks from?" he asked amicably. "Georgia." "Splendid state, I hear,

although I've never been there. What do you do for a living?" "I teach homiletics at a seminary." "Oh, so you teach preachers, do you? Well, I've got a story I want to tell you." And with that he pulled up a chair and sat down at the table with Craddock and his wife. Dr. Craddock said he groaned inwardly: Oh no, here comes another preacher story. It seems everyone has one.

The man stuck out his hand. "I'm Ben Hooper. I was born not far from here across the mountains. My mother wasn't married when I was born, so I had a hard time. At the time, that was shocking. When I started school, my classmates had a name for me, and it wasn't a very nice name. I used to go off by myself at recess and during lunchtime because the taunts of my playmates cut so deeply. What was worse was going downtown on Saturday afternoon and feeling every eye burning a hole through you. They were all wondering just who my real father was."

"When I was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to our church. Because of my past, I would always go in late and slip out early. But one day the preacher said the benediction so fast, I got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. I could feel every eye in church on me. Just about the time I got to the door, I felt a big hand on my shoulder. I looked up and the preacher was looking right at me. 'Who are you, son? Whose boy, are you?' I felt the old weight come down on me. It was like a big black cloud. Even the preacher was putting me down. But as he looked down at me, studying my face, he began to smile a big smile of recognition. 'Wait a minute,' he said, 'I know who you are. I see the family resemblance. You are a son of God. You come from a great legacy. Go and claim it.'" The old man looked across the table at Craddock and said, "That was the most important single sentence ever said to me. Those words changed my life." With that he smiled, shook the hands of Craddock and his wife, and moved on to another table to greet old friends. It was at that moment Craddock remembered something. The good people of Tennessee had elected Ben Hooper, that illegitimate boy, to be their governor.

This is the point: You may have had the greatest dad in the world, or your dad may have been a complete loser. It doesn't really matter, because you come from a great legacy. Never forget it. You are a child of God! Do you remember the quote from George Herbert? He once said, "*One father is worth more than a hundred schoolmasters.*" And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"