

June 21, 2020

Father's Day 2020
What Dads Deserve
Genesis 22:1-12

Opening words: Our scripture reading for today comes from the Pentateuch, the first five books in the Bible. Tradition tells us they were written by Moses, the Great Law Giver. The first of the five books is Genesis. Which means "Beginning." Genesis can be broken down into two sections. Prehistorical history can be found in the first eleven chapters. Those chapters contain some great stories, creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, and the Tower of Babel. We may look at those stories next summer. I am going to call that sermon series *In the Beginning*. Chapters twelve through fifty contain Patriarchal History. They contain the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Our reading for today comes from the Patriarchal section, the story of Abraham's great test. Our scripture reading on this Father's Day is Genesis 22:1-12. Let me call this message *What Dads Deserve*.

Genesis 22:1-12 Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. ² Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you. ³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." ⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. ⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. ¹² "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.

Today, we are in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis. This story does not stand in isolation. It is just one in a series of stories about Abraham. Do you remember what has happened to Abraham to this point? When we are first introduced to him, his name is Abram. That name means "the father of many." Of all the people on the face of the

earth, Abram caught God's eye. Not because of his sinless nature or his good looks. Instead, he caught God's eye because of his character. In other words, he was a man who simply wanted to please God. In one of the great stories in the Bible, God promised Abram that he would someday be a father of a great nation. In time, his name is changed from Abram, the father of many, to Abraham, the father of the multitude. Everything sounds great except for one glaring fact. It is as true today as it was then; God does things in God's time. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, welcome their first-born into the world at the age of ninety-nine and ninety-eight. That birth not only ruined their retirement plans, but it demonstrated the power of God. They named their long-awaited son Isaac. All of this is necessary to understand this morning's scripture lesson.

When Isaac was twelve years old, God decided to test Abraham. God must be number one in your life. The father-son team head off to make a sacrifice. Isaac does not know until the last second that he is the sacrifice. In the end, the life of a goat was taken, and the boy is spared. It is a cruel story in many ways. However, what I love about the story is it illustrates for us Abraham was a good father. It has been said, *it is much easier to become a father, than to be a father*. Let us look at three things dads deserve. Each one is illustrated in our story for today.

Dads deserve to be respected!

First, dads deserve to be respected. In the Genesis story, Isaac respected his father. He even let him tie him up and lay him on the altar. Let me say this clearly. Respect should never be given blindly. Respect must be earned. Fatherhood is not simply a biological act. Fatherhood is a relationship. What are you doing with your life to earn your children's respect? Dads deserve to be respected. If you can agree with that statement, say, "**Amen!**" Do you, did you, respect your father?

Dads deserve to be trusted!

Second, dads deserve to be trusted. It really is quite a scene. Abraham and Isaac travel to a remote location. When the time comes for the sacrifice the father bounds the son. Abraham draws his knife to slay his son. At the last second God stops the killing. All these years later it is still shocking. Yet, there is no sign in the story Isaac stops trusting his father. Dads deserve to be trusted. If you can agree with that statement, say, "**Amen!**" Do you, did you, trust your father?

Dads deserve grace!

Third, dads deserve grace. Isaac must have needed some serious counseling after that day. He must have had a million questions and he must have had some sleepless nights. Yet, the relationship between Abraham and Isaac moved on. He forgave his father. I have never known a perfect father. However, I have known countless fathers who made mistakes and who needed to be forgiven. I have known fathers who have experienced grace. Maybe it is time you forgave your father? Dads deserve grace. If

you can agree with that statement, say, "**Amen!**" Have you shown you father grace? If not, it is not too late.

My father, Ronald Adams, was born in Ashtabula, Ohio in 1920. His father, my grandfather, Roger Adams, had a variety of jobs during the Great Depression. Growing up I never heard the word poverty, but money was tight. My father was just a child during the depression, but the poverty of those years never left him. I have worked with many who lived through the Great Depression. They reacted to the Depression in one of two ways. Either, they rejected the poverty and became very generous. Or, they feared poverty and became very frugal. My sister, Susan, is a much kinder person than me. She says our father was frugal. I say our father was cheap. He would not even buy new socks. He held the old ones up with rubber bands. He never handled money easily. Saving money was one of his great preoccupations. Through my eyes he was cheap.

On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese Empire. My father was twenty-one years old. He and his brother, my Uncle Carlisle, volunteered for military service. My father joined the Army. My uncle joined the Navy. My uncle went to the Pacific. My father was in the medical corps and started off in North Africa. In time, he moved up to the boot of Italy as the war progressed. He must have experienced some horrible things. He died with those tales. He never spoke of those experiences. When the war ended in Europe, he prepared to move to Manila. The day before they were to leave, the orders were canceled because the first of the atomic bombs was dropped. When the war itself ended, my father arranged to stay in Europe. He wanted to do some sightseeing. It seemed to be a wise choice. He was in his mid-twenties, single with a high school education, and unemployed. He saw many things that most only see in pictures. Those may have been the happiest days of his life.

When he returned home, he used his G.I. Bill to get an education. He was an interior decorator by trade. He first went to the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, then he went to the New York School of Interior Design. It was while he was in New York that he met my mother. They met at a social gathering at the Marble Collegiate Church. They were married at a Dutch Reformed Church in Brooklyn and had their wedding reception at my grandparent's home around the corner. They spent their wedding night at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Staying in New York was never an option. He wanted always wanted to return to Ohio, his home.

In time, they would move to a magical place called Warren, Ohio. They bought their first home when my twin sisters, Susan, and Janet, were born. I was born seven years later. My mother was a dietitian who worked at Trumbull Memorial Hospital. My father was a buyer for Carlisle-Allen Department Store. As a child, I thought our home was boring. It was not until I became an adult, that I discovered it was exceptional. Our home was always stable, and my parents rarely fought. My parents went to church every Sunday and to work every day. In those days' loyalty was a big deal. My father stayed with the store for over thirty years. On the day he retired, no one noticed,

because no one cared. He gave his life to "the store," and he deserved better. Yet, several years later when "the store" closed, he grieved.

On this Father's Day, can I be honest with you? I never felt close to my father. I really do not know why. I like to think we were both good people. Everybody seemed to like him. He intimidated me. I do not want to sound critical. However, I want to be honest. My father showed very little tolerance with me. I cannot remember a single time standing next to my father not feeling nervous. He never hit me, but I was always ready for his backhand. I was often the brunt of his jokes for his stand-up routine. I think, it is better to be yelled at and taken seriously, then laughed at and be dismissed. I yearned to have a relationship with my father, but it never came. My father died in 1996. I grieved when he died. However, I did not grieve for the relationship we had, because we had no relationship. I grieved for the relationship we never had and never will.

Several years ago, my sister's mother-in-law died. Mrs. Naylor was 92 years old and she was part of my family's life for decades. I attended the service and drove to the cemetery for the committal. It was not my first trip to that mausoleum. It is the same mausoleum that holds the remains of my parents. Ironically, Mr. and Mrs. Naylor are directly across from my parents.

As I stood by my parents' names on the wall, three things struck me. First, time goes fast. My father died almost twenty-five years ago. How could it be almost twenty-five years? How fast will the next twenty-five years go? I wonder where I will be twenty-five years from now. I wonder if I will still be alive. Second, I have a good life. I can trace all the best things in my life back to my parents. My mother made sure our home was filled with love. There was always enough to eat and drink. Our clothes were clean. Our home was warm. My parents gave me what every child really wants and needs - stability. Third, the time has come for me to stop being critical of my father and start remembering him with grace. Time has taught me the best you can do is the best best you can do. Perfection is impossible. I like to think my father did his best with me. It is not easy being a father. It is not easy being a parent. I am doing the best I can with my children. I hope they do not look for perfection. They did not receive it in me. I hope they look at me with grace. I have heard it said, *"It is much easier to become a father than to be one."* And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"** Happy Father's Day!