

“Fathers with Heart”
Pentecost 3(A) – *Recognition of Fathers’ Day*

Texts: Genesis 10:1, 6-20
Colossians 3:21

Preached: 6/18/17

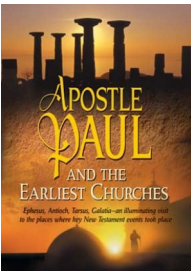


Last night I drove by Janes Methodist Church in Creighton. I always look at their sign, which is rarely blank as it is in the picture. Currently, they have posted a brief scripture from Proverbs 15:20 -- A wise child brings joy to his father.

I’m not familiar with that scripture – I had to look it up when I got home. I suppose it is akin to the commandment “Honor your father and mother,” with which we are all familiar.



Our brief New Testament text takes a different tact. It rather flips the proverb around, so that it might read “A wise father brings joy to his child.” Today is a day that we should honor our fathers. But I want to talk about the kind of fathers who deserve to be honored...the kind of fathers who not only bring joy to their children, but bring joy to God. I’m talking about “Fathers with Heart.”



Fathers

*do not provoke your children,
lest they become discouraged.*

Colossians 3: 21

The Apostle Paul is big on instruction. He wrote letters to his Christian friends in churches across a wide swath of his travels, teaching them, rebuking them, guiding them, mentoring them. Much of his advice could be characterized as spiritual, some of it very practical. He wrote to the faithful at Colossae –

Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.

“Fathers with Heart” encourage their children. They help their kids discover and live up to their God-given potential. “Fathers with Heart” exhibit patience and compassion. Above all, “Fathers with Heart” are full of love.



We sing a simple little song at our Faithful Followers service about what love is and what love does. When I think about it – it describes the characteristics of “Fathers with Heart.”

The words of the song come directly from scripture.

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily-angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

The song ends with: “Follow the way of love. Follow the way of love.”

“Fathers with Heart” follow the way of love.



I can't help but think of my own father – he taught me the value of hard work and self-sacrifice. He was a father with heart – because he honored my own heart's longings. My father took me fishing and then fishing again – and when it turned out that I liked fishing more than him, instead of doing other things that he might have wanted, he kept taking me fishing...early and often.

My father wasn't much into camping or wilderness survival, but I was, so he got me into Boy Scouts and Explorer Scouts and sacrificed many an evening, weekend or even week serving as a parent chaperone at Scout Camp...



One memory stands out – at the end of one summer's week the entire camp was gathered at the waterfront for a week-end Olympics. The last event, which I was not anticipating, was the adult canoe race.

This usually pitted scoutmasters against each other, but on this week our scoutmaster had left mid-week and the only adults left in our group were my father and a young adult guy named Todd Carey.

Todd was 22 and buff. My father was older than all the other fathers in camp, and not nearly as athletic. I'd never seen my father in a canoe. I expected my troop would not field a team, until I heard my father say, "C'mon, Todd, let's give it a try." I prepared myself to be embarrassed, as my father and Todd stepped forward and were given life jackets.

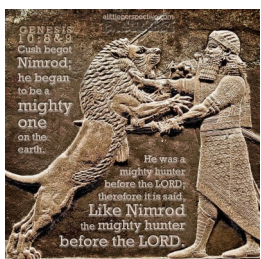
At the half-way point of the race, Todd and my father were in last place by several canoe lengths. They were the last ones to round the far buoy and head for the beach finish line. I hung my head, but glancing up I noticed that rather than slipping farther behind, somehow my father dug deep and yelled encouragement to Todd. While the rest of the canoes seemed to slow down, my father's canoe clearly was gaining momentum! My nerdy electrical engineer father found a rhythm with Todd and they cruised through the fray and up onto the beach, winning by half-a-length!

My father made me proud that day, not just because he won a canoe race, but because he was there for me, because he exerted himself on my behalf, because he surprised me by, yet again, stepping out of his comfort zone for me.



Fathers have influence beyond what they know. "Fathers with Heart" make a difference in profound ways even down through the generations. Such was the case with the biblical character and father Ham. You probably don't immediately recognize the name, but Ham was one of the three sons of Noah – you remember Noah, the builder of the Ark. Ham's brothers were Shem and Japheth – children were born to these three brothers.

Now Noah's family was not the perfect family – they had their problems and their conflicts – as we all do. We are told absolutely nothing about the parenting style or the personal character of Ham. But we do know he had four sons – Cush, Egypt, Put and Canaan. And these sons went on to have more children – and in this way the earth was re-peopled after the flood. I speculate that Ham was a "Father with Heart."



We are told that Ham's grandson, Nimrod, was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior...and Nimrod's name became synonymous with prowess in hunting. This Nimrod also must have been quite the architect because he is given credit for building great cities, including Ninevah. I like to think that Ham's behavior as a father, his heart, contributed to the success of his descendants, including Nimrod. I trust that Ham did not provoke his children and they did not lose heart...but were encouraged so that they went on to do great things.



There are all sorts of examples of “Fathers with Heart” in the Bible. One of my favorites comes from Jesus’ Parable of the Prodigal Son. You might remember that the son takes his inheritance early and leaves his father and his family and squanders all that he has. The prodigal becomes so desperately hungry and despondent that he decides to return to his home and his father and offer to work as a slave.

But when the son gets in sight of his old homestead, as he is going over his confession speech – here comes his father sprinting out very undignified-like and catches him in a big bear hug. So overjoyed to see his son again the father welcomes him with open arms and will not hear any confession, but insists on throwing a party for him, to publically rejoice that his son has returned! Jesus tells the parable in Luke 15.



Some scholars assert that Jesus’ parable really talks about God. It’s God who is overjoyed to see us. God who welcomes us with open arms. God who throws a party for us, rejoices when we return to him.

Fathers with Heart are fathers who take after God himself. May we all strive for that. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

