

Building on Biblical Foundations

“The Love of A Father”

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Genesis 21:1-7

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Every one of the songs we sang this morning speak of the Father’s Love. But not just any father – our heavenly father. Today is Father’s day – and it is appropro that we should continue our journey through Genesis with the account of Abraham becoming the father of Isaac... we are skipping past Chapter 20 which is yet another account of Abraham and Sarah concealing their relationship before a powerful ruler, and escaping to tell the story.

We also skip past the story of Lot and his daughters and their desperation to bear children at any cost. I encourage you to go back and read Chapter 19-20 for yourself.

We pick up this morning in Chapter 21 – let’s read.

We continue our story in Genesis Chapter 21:1`-7

SLIDES: Genesis 21:1-7

And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

2For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

3And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

4And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

5And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

6And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.

7And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.

We've been talking about the nature of God ... last week we looked at how he is both just and merciful. This week we celebrate the birth of Isaac, the long awaited son.

God keeps his promises – that is another attribute of our heavenly father.

Consider this for a minute.... Back in the beginning , when God was creating the world, he made some choices. Choices that most of us hardly ever consider. At creation the Lord decided to create the concept of family. A father, a mother and children.

Humans being made in the image of God, are NOT like the rest of creation. We are not a herd of horses, with one stallion, several mares and lots of foals. We are not like cattle... bulls mating with any cow that is in season. We are not like the no-good – dead beat black cat that I chased off this morning, who only comes around looking for action and then slinks back into the woods leaving us to care for his offspring.

God did not just create families, which are awesome! But he created Fathers. He created Father's as another illustration of himself, to help us better understand him.

To help each of us – male and female understand HIM. The attributes of a Good Father reflect our heavenly Father's heart toward us.

What are some of these attributes:

He provides for us
He protects us
He admonishes us
He corrects us
He disciplines us
He rescues us
He comforts us
He covers us
He equips us
He encourages us
He sustains us
He stretches us
He grows us
He delights in us

I challenge you to take this list and search your bible for evidence of these attributes and more. This is what perfection looks like.

Most importantly, **He loves us** like a good father loves his children. How do we know this? The bible tell us so.

STORY of the Prodigal Son

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ **20** So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. **27** ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. **29** But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

31 “My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Jesus told this story to his disciples to illustrate how our heavenly father feels about us. What can we learn?

1. All He has is ours all the time while we are with him
2. If we leave HIM and set off on our own way, squandering his gifts and goodness to us, He will let us go. HE allows us to choose and then respects our choice – even when He knows it is destructive.
3. If, when we come to our senses, we humble ourselves and return to Him seeking his forgiveness and acceptance, He not only receives us once again but HE CELEBRATES OUR RETURN as a father who believed his son was dead and has suddenly discovered he is ALIVE.

What doesn't he do?

1. HE doesn't withhold his goodness and provision while we are with him
2. He doesn't force us to stay.
3. He doesn't manipulate or guilt us into doing His Will.
4. He doesn't chase us and beg us to return.
5. He doesn't leave us to our destruction when we truly repent.
6. He doesn't chastise us or humiliate us when we discover our wrongdoing.
7. He does not withhold the expression of his love.

That is the illustration that Jesus gave us of a GOOD, GOOD, FATHER. And He should know, for that is the nature of His Father.

God gave us fathers to show us how to love the way he loves. But that image has been tarnished, damaged by the fall. That was never his intension, but the consequences that sin wrought.

The wages of sin are death and in this instance it was the death of the perfect image of Fatherhood. Much has been distorted and destroyed in the wake, and we have ALL suffered from it – even if you were blessed with an amazing Father. The fallout from the war against fathers touches everyone, even if it comes to indirectly.

CALL TO ACTION:

Father's Day can be wrought with many emotions – some pleasant, some sorrowful, some angry, some regretful. On earth we all fall short. We live less than perfect lives with less than perfect people. The best wisdom we can apply when dealing with these imperfect people – including ourselves - making imperfect choices, is to FORGIVE.

Jesus said we are to forgive as our Father in heaven forgives us. Forgive your father – if he was less than you hoped for, if was downright hateful, even if he was abusive. Forgive yourself if you find yourself struggling with regret, wishing you had done this or not done that.

We cannot change what has been done – but we can improve today and tomorrow when we forgive.

Why should we forgive?

1. To honor our fathers.

Matthew 15:4

For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curses father or mother, let him die the death.

2. To see our heavenly Father for who he actually is.

3. To see ourselves accurately. . . as beloved children of a loving God.

Forgiving does not right the wrong. Forgiving does not release the other person from consequences or correction. Forgiving does not condone what's been done. **Forgiving SETS YOU FREE.**

Once again . . . Free to do what?

1. To see your heavenly father more accurately, as He actually is. Not a distorted image based on an imperfect earthly father.

When we are stuck with Father issues, we may find it difficult to draw near to a Father figure, to see our heavenly father as perfect, as loving, as kind, as gentle, as generous.

PS . . . if you are still not sure what your heavenly father looks like, there is a sure fire way to find out:

***If we want to see the Father, look at Jesus. If you want to know the Father, know Jesus.
John 8:19***

2. Free to see ourselves the way our loving Father sees us . . . loved, and cherished, and valued.

3. Isaiah 43:1-4

But now, this is what the Lord says—

he who created you, Jacob,

he who formed you, Israel:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

2 When you pass through the waters,

I will be with you;

and when you pass through the rivers,

they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire,

you will not be burned;

the flames will not set you ablaze.

3 For I am the Lord your God,

the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

I give Egypt for your ransom,

Cush[a] and Seba in your stead.

4 Since you are precious and honored in my sight,

and because I love you,

I will give people in exchange for you,

nations in exchange for your life.

In order to rise up and be all that Jesus died for you to be, we must let go of what we think we are and embrace what the Father declares we are. We are precious and honored in HIS sight. He will give nations as a ransom for us. For you. For me.

4. Free to love others as God loves us.

John 13:34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

God loves us with a love so great that he would give anything to bring us home to him. . .

John 3:16

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”**