

“Fathers Are Important”

Date: June 17, 2018

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Matthew 7:7-12

Theme: fathers, godly role model, provider, loving example

Occasion: Father's Day

A certain smart-aleck teenage daughter said to her mother: “Mom, if the stork is supposed to bring babies, and if Santa Claus brings presents, and if the Lord gives us our daily bread, and if Uncle Sam provides us with Social Security, then why do we keep Daddy around?”

The premise of my sermon this morning is simply this. Fathers *are* important. Is it possible to raise children without a father around? Sure, it's possible. There are many single mothers who do it and many who do a superb job of being both a Mom and a Dad.

But dads are important for more than simply fertilizing the female ovum to produce children. Fathers are important in God's plan for nurturing children, guiding them and building them up. A father's job is not finished even when the children leave the nest.

There are many here this morning who find this a very sad day, because their Dad is not alive anymore. How they wish they could sit with him one more time, just to hear his voice, to ask him for advice, or to share their stories of life with him again. A dad's job isn't finished when the kids grow up and leave the home. Fathers are important.

In our first lesson today, from the book of Deuteronomy, we learn it is the role of the parents, BOTH OF THEM, to teach their children about God, the Bible and what God expects of them. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the LORD is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.

Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

Fathers, it is our role to be the spiritual leader of the family. In too many homes we have defaulted to the wife and mother to be the spiritual leader. Men should not give up their role and simply assume their wives will take care of the religious training. It’s part of the job that God has given to men to do.

Fathers – take time to teach your children at home. Read the Bible with them and talk about it. Get some other resources if you don’t feel qualified. Not once in my 32 years of ministry has a single dad ever come to me and said, “Pastor, I want to do a better job of teaching my children about God. Do you have anything to help me?”

My friends, it is foolish to assume that if they had not taken the Lord’s Prayer out of the schools in 1963 that our country would have better values today. Values and the things of God are taught in the family and they’re taught in church and Sunday school classes, not in the class room.

Fathers, take your kids to Church. Expect them to go to Sunday school. And more than that: teach them by your example. Make sure that *you* are going to church. Make sure that you’re in some kind of a Christian study group. Show your kids that the Christian faith matters. If it’s not important to you, they’re going to pick up their values someplace else. If it’s not the church, who do you want teaching values to your children?

The Bible says that Dads are important because they are to teach their children, by word and example, about God. They are to help their family to have a strong connection to the Lord our God.

In our second lesson, in the Gospel of Matthew, we learn that fathers are important because they provide for their family. Jesus is teaching

about prayer and about God and he uses the example of an earthly father. He says, “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you provide good things for your family, how much more will your heavenly Father give to you?”

Jesus introduced to the world the concept of God as a loving Father. He uses an earthly analogy to explain heavenly things. Jesus wasn't saying that God is of the male gender. He's saying that God is like a good, earthly father. Good fathers provide for their families.

Which is not to say that women can't be bread earners, too. In today's world it is much more egalitarian than it's ever been in history, which is kind of the way God wants it to be. But let us not lose sight of this important point. Good fathers do their best to provide for their families.

Fathers know and teach the importance of hard work, and of doing your best. They don't just mouth the words, they teach it by example. In many instances that is not happening. Sometimes the men are indeed lazy.

Often, though, the men have not had good role models, and you can't teach what you haven't learned. We have a societal problem with several generations of families who have not learned good work skills. We need to turn that around. We shouldn't blame people, we should teach them.

But fathers provide more than merely material things for their families. Dads are necessary in the family for their love, their presence, their time. I think younger generations are learning that there's more to life than just a paycheck. And more dads *are* getting involved in their kids' lives. That's a beautiful thing.

Dads, your children need you to be willing to share your wisdom as well as your wallet. Money isn't all they need. Be like our Heavenly Father.

Be available. Share your time. Share your wisdom. Don't force your opinions on your kids, especially as they get older, but don't be afraid to share your experiences and wisdom in life.

Fathers, be a good husband. You will be providing an invaluable lesson and gift to your children. You will teach your sons what it means to be a Christian man and husband. You will teach your daughters what to expect in the man she will eventually hope to marry. Fathers are important when they model a loving relationship with their children's mother.

It doesn't have to be perfect. Don't be afraid to have your arguments; it happens in the best of marriages. But if the kids see you fighting, make sure that they see you forgiving each other, too. You will model what it means *to give and take* in marriage. Show them how to successfully resolve conflict. Husbands: love your wives well. It is a gift to you children.

Finally, there are far too many children who do not have a father or father image in their lives. The role of a father is too important to let that go. Some of you here today are finished raising your kids. They have left the nest. Some of you here today have huge hearts and might be willing to share some of your time with a young boy or girl who needs a father image.

Here are some practical ways that Christian men can have a positive impact on fatherless kids. One: be a mentor to a boy without a father through Big Brother or some other agency. Two: contact your local middle school or high school to tutor a needy child. Three, teach Sunday school. Do you know how powerful it is to have men teaching in the classroom?

Four: become a leader in an organization like Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Pioneer Clubs or Adventure Club. Five: coach Little League or some other sport. Six: volunteer to work with needy kids in an inner city ministry. I'm sure the Refuge would be glad to have some male volunteers.

Seven: hire a potentially “at risk” youth to do some yard work for you, or hire them in your business. Give them a chance. Eight: lead a Bible study in a juvenile detention center or group home.

Just because your kids have grown and left home does not mean that your skills and experience, your love and compassion, cannot help another kid who doesn't have a father in his life.

Fathers are important. Jesus thought so. He gave us one of the most beautiful images we have for understanding who God is: Our Heavenly Father. Happy 'Father's Day' to all of our dads. Amen.