

“Abba, Father”

Date: June 19, 2016

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: Galatians 4:1-7; Mark 14:32-36 Occasion: Fathers' Day

Theme: Fathers, God the Father

Being a Father is not an easy job; nor is being a Mother. Parents, whenever your kids are out of control, you can take comfort in knowing that even God's omnipotence didn't extend to God's kids. After creating heaven and earth, God created Adam and Eve.

And the first thing he said was: “Don't.”

“Don't what?” Adam replied.

“Don't eat the forbidden fruit,” God said.

“Forbidden fruit? We got forbidden fruit? Hey Eve, we got forbidden fruit!”

“No way!”

“Yes, way!”

“Don't eat that fruit!” implored God.

“Why?”

“Because I'm your Father and I said so!” said God, wondering why He hadn't stopped after making elephants.

A few minutes later God saw the kids having an apple break and was He angry!

“Didn't I tell you not to eat the fruit?” the First Parent asked.

“Uh huh,” Adam replied.

“They why did you?”

“I dunno,” Eve answered.

“She started it! Adam said. “Did not!” “Did too!” “Did NOT!”

Having had it with the two of them, God's punishment was that Adam and Even should have children of their own. And thus, the pattern was set, and it has never been changed. (Rev. Morgan Murray) It's good to laugh, isn't it?

Father's Day is not, technically, a religious holiday; it is a secular day. But, it is not, for that reason, any less appropriate for us to recognize it. And we're not just celebrating Father's Day this morning because we paid homage to mothers a month ago.

We want to recognize Dads for another, very important reason. The message that seems to be going out today, to much of society, is that fathers are simply not needed. There are some women who actually choose to be single parents, for a variety of reasons.

On the other hand, there are far too many men in America today who father children that they have no intention of raising. The church, therefore, needs to send out the message loud and clear, that fathers play a critical role in the life of the family. A critical role.

Some years ago, South Africa's game managers had to figure out what to do about the elephant herd at Kruger National Park. The herd was growing well beyond the ability of the park to sustain it. And so they decided to transport some of the herd to a nearby game park.

A dozen years later, however, several of the young male elephants (now teenagers) that had been transported to the game park began attacking the park's herd of white rhinos, an endangered species. They used their trunks to throw sticks at the rhinos, chased them over long hours and great distances, and then stomped them to

death. A tenth of the rhinos were killed, all for no discernable reason.

Park managers decided they had no other options but to kill some of the worst of the juvenile offenders. They had killed five of them when someone came up with another bright idea. They brought in some of the mature male elephants still residing in Kruger Park and hoped that the bigger, stronger males could bring the adolescents under control. To the delight of the park officials, it worked.

The big bulls quickly established the natural hierarchy and reduced the violent behavior of the younger bulls. “The new discipline it turned out was not just a matter of size intimidation,” said the park manager. “The young bulls actually started following the Big Daddies around, yielding to their authority and learning from them proper elephant conduct. The assaults on the white rhinos ended abruptly.”

The point is that young males, whether they are wild animals or human beings, need Dads. And so do young females – daughters need Father figures in their lives. Dads do matter. Dads do make a difference. Dads, you are important, and don't forget it.

According to Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, a father's involvement with a child increases the child's IQ, the child's motivation to learn, and the child's self-confidence. In addition, children with involved dads are more likely to develop a sense of humor as well as an inner excitement.” (Victor Parachin, “The Fine Art of Good Fathering.”)

Dads matter. You see, Dads are the window through which children look to see God. Now I need to say this right away. God is

the pattern of all real fatherhood, and not the other way around. Which is to say, we look to God to see what it means to be a father.

One of the most common names for God is Father. Now, in the Bible there are many different names used to describe God. All of those names are important in many ways. However, the name *Abba Father* is one of the most significant names of God, in helping us to understand how God relates to people.

Abba is an Aramaic word that would most closely be translated as “Daddy.” It was a common term that young children would use to address their fathers. It signifies the close, intimate relationship of a father to his child, as well as the childlike trust that a young child puts in his “daddy.”

However, the New Testament writers were careful to avoid too great a familiarity in speaking to God. Instead of using the name *Abba* alone, it was used in conjunction with the word Father – *Abba Father*. Father is the translation of *Abba*, but by putting the two together, the address to God is both personalized and kept in the proper tone of respect. The double title has both intimacy and dignity.

By his nature as the Son of God, Jesus had the right to address God in this most intimate way. When we see him in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus struggled with the cup of suffering He was to drink, he cried out to *Abba, Father*.

We see the intimacy Jesus shared with God. Christ’s obedience to the Father’s will is clearly seen when he prays, “Not my will, but yours be done.” Jesus proved the depth of His love for the Father by doing this most difficult thing asked of Him.

Abba Father is an intimate expression Christians have for speaking to God. We have that right by virtue of our baptism, when we were adopted into God's family. By union with Jesus Christ, the believer receives the Spirit of adoption and cries, *Abba Father*. Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.

What a special privilege it is to have this kind of intimacy with the Creator of the Universe. Our sin is cancelled and our status in the universe is transformed. Christ was the Son of God by virtue of his very nature. We receive that legal relationship by virtue of adoption, which we receive by faith.

We are now sons and daughters of God, and thus heirs with Christ. Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. What a special relationship we have with God. The benefits of being adopted children of God are many.

Becoming a child of God is the highest privilege and honor that can be imagined. Because of it we have a new relationship with God and a new standing with Him. He deals with his children differently than he deals with the rest of the world.

Being a child of God, adopted through faith in Jesus Christ, is the source of our hope, the security of our future, and the motivation to "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called." (Eph. 4:1) Being children of the King of kings and Lord of lords calls us to a higher standard, a different way of life and a greater hope.

God desires that we call him "Daddy." It is amazing that a holy and righteous God, who created and sustains all things, who is the only all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present God, would allow us sinful humans to call him "Daddy."

As we come to understand just how holy and righteous God is, and how sinful and broken we are, it takes on a whole new meaning to be able to call God "*Abba Father*." His amazing grace becomes all the more amazing. Fathers, wear the title carefully, you are representing God by your life. Amen? Amen.