

**OUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

Matthew 6:1-15

**Intro:** Today is Father's Day. The merchants of the world have made this a day for making money. Whether it's Mother's Day, or Father's Day, we are reminded weeks in advance of these occasions, and advised from all directions of gifts that our mothers and fathers would enjoy. And all of this has tended to obscure the purposes that the people had who are responsible for setting aside a day in which to honor our mothers, and then a month later, our fathers.

Honoring our parents is very Biblical, as I reminded you on our previous Mother's Day. But when God gave the Law to Moses, He did not have in mind a single day (although there is certainly nothing wrong with that), but He had in mind the way we should live all of our days. Children were taught to honor their parents by being obedient to them. And parents were to guide their children according to the Word of God. (As I emphasized with our with our men yesterday at our prayer meeting, Deuteronomy chapter 6 stressed the fact that parents are to love the Lord with all of their hearts, souls, and minds, and they were to keep the Word of God in their hearts, which meant that the parents were to be guided in their lives by the Word of God. Then they were to teach their children.) And as their children grew up and had children of their own, they were to teach their children. And so it was to be generation after generation. The teaching of the Word, and living by the Word, were to be the guiding lights of every family in Israel.

Today most parents wouldn't know what you were talking about if you mentioned Deuteronomy. They might think it was a math class that they neglected to take in high school or college. I don't think that family life is very important in most homes today. Home has become a place where the family eats and sleeps, and often they don't eat together or even sleep at the same time. Parents today have little if anything to draw upon from their own childhood, and so people are struggling with their families, and often glad to see their children move out when the time comes, but there is little concern about what they do. Perhaps you have noticed that parents today often encourage their unmarried children to live together with someone else of the opposite sex. Just at this graduation time I heard of parents who were sending their unmarried children, young men and young women, unchaperoned to spend a week in Hawaii. I even

heard of a mother who invited her daughter's boy friend to live with her daughter in their family home. It seems like anything goes these days, and stupid parents are often responsible for encouraging a lifestyle for their children that is certain to be disastrous. Of course, in such situations mistakes in living have been going on for a long time in the lives of the children involved.

We as Christians have our problems, too, but at least we know the Lord, and we have God's Word as a lamp to our feet and a lamp to our paths. See Psalm 119:105. And we know that we can pray, asking the Lord to open the hearts of our children to the Gospel, and then to the teaching of Scripture as to what <sup>they</sup> we are to be, and what <sup>they</sup> we are to do and not do. No parent can go wrong by guiding his child by the teachings of God's Word.

But I would like to propose something different for Father's Day this year. I would like to propose that this be a day when we as parents and grandparents measure our lives by what Moses told the parents to do in connection with raising their children. He didn't give them primarily a lot of methods to follow in dealing with their children, or do's and don'ts as to what they were to teach their children. That came later. But when Moses spoke on behalf of the Lord to the fathers of Israel long ago, actually some thirty-five hundred years ago, he mentioned two things that are just as important for us in this year A.D. 2000. And these two things I have already mentioned. They had to do with the parents. You will find these two points in Deuteronomy 6:5 and 6. This is what these verses say:

5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

Now if He is "the Lord thy God," this means that you *know* Him. It means that you have faced that which is the greatest need in your life, your sin, and have put your trust in Jesus Christ Who by His atoning death on the Cross has forgiven you, and given you a new life. Your heart has been changed, and now you love the Lord your God because of what He has done for you. I'm not talking about going to church, or becoming a member of a church, or trying to do better, *I am talking about knowing God and His Son Jesus Christ. I am talking about loving God and loving His Son Jesus Christ.* Now if you can honestly say that you are a Christian, then the next question is, a question which all of us who

are fathers need to answer: Do we love the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind? Do you love Him so much that our children can see that pleasing Him is the one thing in our lives that we are most concerned about?

In order to do that, we need verse 6 in Deuteronomy 5 which tells us that the Word of God must be in our hearts. It is when the Word gets into our hearts that changes can be seen in our lives, changes which our children need to be able to see. Fathers, our task is not just *telling* our children what they ought to do, but it is *showing* them by our lives what happens when we know the Lord and love the Lord and have His Word in our hearts.

Tonight we are going to observe the Lord's Supper after Tom Matthews speaks to us, and we are supposed to examine our hearts to make sure that things are right between us and the Lord before we eat the bread and drink from the cup. But every day we need to be asking the Lord to search our hearts to make sure that we are the kind of fathers the Lord wants us to be. And only He can make us the fathers that we need to be.

When our children grow up and get married, we don't tell them what to do with their children. Then we move on to spend more time in doing what we have been doing when we had our children with us. I am talking about *praying!* All of our efforts will not be enough unless the Lord is working in us and through us and in the lives of our children – and that calls for prayer. Regardless of how many other people we pray for, our children, and grandchildren, and great grandchildren, must always remain on our hearts for prayer.

But now let us think about the word, *Father*. And the first thing that I want to point out is that:

### **I. "FATHER" IS A FAMILY NAME.**

When Lucille and I were married, I became a husband. When our first child, Dwight, Jr., was born, I became a father, and Lucille became a mother. Our children had not choice about who was going to be either their father or their mother. I didn't either. Nor did any of you. But let me remind all of us of something that we may have overlooked. It is this: *God had everything to do with it! He gave us our children, and He*

*appointed us to be their parents.*

— And one thing I personally think ought to be done by all of us on Father's Day, and many other times during the year, is to thank God for the father he gave us, and for the mother He gave us. As I look back on my own childhood from the age I am now, I wouldn't change my parents for any other parents I have ever known – and I have known some very godly parents. What a difference it makes when we know the Lord! God is good in every way, and one of the most important was in His choice of our parents. Don't forget to thank Him today for that. There is only one man in all of time whom you can rightly address as your father.

But let me take this a step further.

Those of us who are saved know that:

## **II. GOD IS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.**

GOD IS THE ONE GIVES  
DEFINITION TO THE  
TITLE, FATHER

In the first chapter of John's Gospel we read these familiar words. The Apostle John was speaking of our Lord Jesus when he wrote:

— 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God (τέκνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι), even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).

We are born into God's family. We have become more than we were when we were born into the family of our parents. We have been born into the family of God, and so God is our heavenly Father. Listen to what the Apostle John wrote in his first epistle, chapter 3, verses 1 and the first part of verse 2:

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God (τέκνα Θεοῦ): therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God . . . (1 John 3:1-2a).

— And verse 2 indicates that *we are and we are going to continue to be the born children of God!*

When I was born my parents had no choice as to what the Lord was

giving them, but when I was born into the family of God, God took me because He had chosen to make me His child. And the same is true of you if you know the Lord as your Savior. We believed on Him because He chose us and gave us the faith to believe. And so with thanksgiving to Him, and for His glory, we can say that we are in the family of God. And we are in the family of God to stay.

Everyone of us who is a father ought to have a special appreciation for this wonderful truth because David said, and we had this verse in our memory work this year,

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him (Psa. 103:13).

I know how I feel about my children, and that helps me to know how the Lord feels about me. You know how you feel about your children, and so you have a good idea of how the Lord feels about you. The Apostle Peter expressed it this way:

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you (1 Peter 5:6-7).

And oh, how faithfully He cares for us, and provides for us, and leads us, and protects us, and often restrains us! He is our Father.

Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord had cast seven demons, loved the Lord with all of her heart. When she went to the tomb early on that resurrection morning where the body of the Lord had been placed, His body was gone, and she was greatly disturbed by it. She went quickly to tell Peter and John. They went to the tomb, saw for themselves that the body of the Lord was gone, but then they left. Mary went back to the tomb and found two angels sitting where the body of the Lord had been. She was weeping. They asked her why she was weeping, and she told them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." At that moment the Lord Himself appeared, and asked her the same question. She thought He was the gardener, and so she told Him what she had told the angels. At that moment He spoke her name, "Mary," and she knew then that it was the Lord. And she must have fallen at His feet, and thrown her arms around His legs, because then He said to her (and I am reading from the NKJV),

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet

ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God' (John 20:17).

Meditate on the wonder of those words. Our Lord's Father is our Father, and our Lord's God is our God. This ought to remind us of those two verses which are so similar and yet convey to us two marvelous truths:

Near, so very near to God, nearer I could not be;  
For in the Person of His Son, I am as near as He.

And then changing one word:

Dear, so very dear to God, dearer I could not be;  
For in the Person of His Son, I am as dear as He.

This is unbelievable grace. And yet it is absolutely true. We will never be equal to our Lord. He will always be the Son of God, while we are those who have been born into the family of God. And yet no angel has the position before God and with God that we have. We are members of His family.

One other thought before I close.

### **III. THE CHASTENING OF THE FAMILY.**

Solomon was the first to mention this. You will find what I am referring to in Proverbs 3:11 and 12:

11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

The writer of the book of Hebrews quoted these two verses, and then he went on to enlarge upon what Solomon had written. I won't read all the verses in Hebrews which apply, but first Heb. 12:9-11:

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Life in this world is not free from trials. But they have a special place in the lives of those of us who know the Lord. But let us remember that nothing touches our lives apart from His sovereign grace and power. And those trials are especially designed by the Lord to bring us back when and if we go astray, but also because God has a very wonderful purpose in saving us. He has saved us to make us like His Son, which means that the Father has saved us to make us holy. As Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 15:49, "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Both outwardly and inwardly we are going to bear the likeness of those who are members of God's family.

So the Lord teaches us, disciplines us, corrects us when we need it, and this means trials. He may do it through sickness. He may do it through a failure of some kind. He may do it through financial reverses. He may do it through the death of a loved one. It may come about through unanswered prayer. The testings of the Lord are to bring us to an end of our own resources to make us realize how much we need the Lord, and that no one else can possibly meet our need.. I often think of those words which Jehoshaphat spoke to the Lord when he faced overwhelming opposition from three great foreign powers. This was how he ended his prayer:

O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee (2 Chron. 20:12).

When we think we are strong, that is when we are weak. But when we recognize our weakness, and cast all of our care upon the Lord, then we learn that we have a source of strength that we never knew that we had. The strongest Christian is the one who is the most dependent upon the Lord, and the Lord designs our trials and uses our trials to make us realize how much we need the Lord.. And it is through our trials that we are being purified from our sins.

**Concl:** On this Father's Day let us all give thanks that God is our heavenly Father, that He orders the circumstances of our lives, and that His purposes are always designed for His own glory and for our eternal good. And let us who are fathers seek by God's grace to deal with our children like our heavenly Father deals with us, and that our children may see in us that same loving concern that is always evident in the ways of the Lord with us.