

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

June 18, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Genesis 21: 1-7

Responsive Reading; Psalm 116: 1-2,12-19

Epistle Reading; Romans 5: 1-8

Gospel Reading; Mathew 9: 35-10:8

Sermon Title: Show Us the Father

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; Do people say that you look like your father? How so?

I was trying to figure out how to start a Father's Day sermon and I was hitting a wall. Then it hit me, why not turn to the greatest preacher of all times and how He started the greatest sermon. So here goes;

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the fatherless: for they shall receive The Father. Blessed are the fatherless: for they shall receive The

Father! Our society celebrates holidays that make us feel all warm and fuzzy and honor some people that certainly are due a whole lot of recognition. That is great for most of us, but what about those who are not blessed with good memories of their father. What about the person whose father was absent and/or abusive? That person who lacks a “good father” sorely needs to inherit “The Good Father”.

The Bible puts a whole lot of stock into the family unit.

In Genesis 2:24 God says, “Man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Psalm 127:3-5 says, “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.” In Genesis 13: 16, God told Abram, “I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.” In Ephesians, Paul emphasizes the importance and responsibility of the husband/father of the family.

Our scriptures today reflect this theme. In our Old Testament Reading God brings about a miracle family starting with a father who is 100 years old and his wife who is about 80. If this is to be the start of God’s chosen people it had to be the product of a holy union between husband and wife. The child of Abram by

His wife's handmaiden could start a nation, but not God's chosen nation i.e. God's family.

The name Isaac means laughter, or a sign of joy. Think about how joyful it is to finally have a child after years of waiting and then try to imagine the joy after waiting decades and then seeing your faithful hope come to fruition.

Our Psalm credits God for answered prayers and declares what we should be willing to do to show our appreciation.

Next, we come to our Epistle. Paul shows us how God, or a Godly father prepares His children for the real world. A father like a coach or a drill instructor in the military, must get his team or troops ready to deal with whatever comes at them. We do not like to encourage tribulation because it is uncomfortable. Uncomfortable but necessary. Running laps or doing pull ups hurts but it strengthens us. It gives us perseverance. We cannot expect to be able to run a marathon if we never ran one in practice. Perseverance builds character and character facilitates hope, and hope, at least hope in the Lord does not disappoint.

This brings up a point. Just as we can not become physically fit without training, we also cannot become spiritually fit without spiritual training. We will touch on that in the gospel.

Have you ever taught your child to drive a car? You don't just take them to the road test, toss them the keys and wish them luck. No. You spend hours with them teaching them and observing their actions, correcting as needed.

Jesus knew that He was going to turn over the reins to his disciples but He did not just throw them to the wolves.

First, He showed them what to do. "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease among the people."

Next, He gave them a trial run under His watchful eye. "And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease." Jesus told them not to go to just anyone, but stick to "family" i.e. the Jewish people who would have a basic understanding of an all-powerful, monotheistic God.

The final sentence in those directions cannot be over emphasized. "Freely you have received, freely give." This is the Christian principal in a nut-shell. This is the spiritual training that we freely receive and are expected to freely give.

Now, finally we come to the sermon title and our assignment.

“Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” These are the words of the disciple Philip just following the “My Father’s house has many mansions” reading from John 14.

The response of Jesus is epic. Jesus says, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.”

This was the perfect answer for Philip, but if Jesus had chosen to, He could have brought us into the equation. Jesus could have also said, “Philip, as I have shown the Father in me to you, you now have the father in you also. Therefore, go and do likewise and show the Father to the world, and in turn instruct them to then show the Father to the next generation and so on for all of eternity. By doing this all the nations can be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” OK, Jesus did not say that (as far as we know) but is it so far off from the message God has been giving us from the start.

Through Jesus Christ, God has made us part of His family. Can we live up to the family name? Can we be a chip off the old block? Can we live in such a way that people will see the Father in us? Christ said, “Let your light so shine before men that they

will see your good works and glorify the Father who is in heaven.” If you choose to, you can show the Father in you, and the Father will be with you, the Father will guide you and the Father will ordain you to be His ambassadors. Go forth and show them the Father! Hallelujah and Amen!