

**Father's Day Children's Message based on Ephesians 4:4-5
and Sermon based on Romans 8:14-17, David Jahnke, 6/21/20**

1. Boys and girls, on this very special holiday which happens to be one of my favorites for very selfish reasons...I want to talk to you about three different kinds of fathers to you:
2. One I talked about last week -- churchmen are a kind of father to all of you. We call them Godfathers. We are here for you and will care for you always as well.
3. The Father you know very well is your dad. I hope you have done something very special for him today or that you will do so...
4. The Bible says you should honor your father and mother...and that means that you should listen to us and do what we ask because we love you more than you can imagine. And we only want what is best for you.
5. Let's all thank our fathers today and regularly for all of the love, wisdom and care they provide.
6. And all of us fathers need to remember God's word to not exasperate and frustrate our children and instead be patient, humble and kind.
7. Finally, every human has a father who is most important of all, our Father in heaven...
8. And he loves and cares for all of us equally. No matter what we do or do not do, his love will never end.
9. And God is the Father we must honor above all things. So listen to his Words to you in prayer and scripture. And wherever you see or hear truth or goodness or beauty, pay attention and follow that path.

Sermon

On this Father's Day, I want to start with an illustration of my dad. My little sister Laura was darling when we were growing up but she was also big. And in 5th grade, everyone had to run in track which included a public track meet. And when it was time for her 400 yard race, I remember feeling distraught that she had to do it. The gun went off and she was immediately in last and the gap just kept growing. But my dad was cheering her on the whole time and when she finished, he ran up to her and hugged her and told her what an amazing job she had done.

This did not make her want to stick with track in middle or high school. But when she went to college, she started running. And now she has run many marathons, a 50 K and even a 50 miler. And I could not be more proud of her.

My father's praise helped her know that she was loved no matter what and that first or last place did not matter but rather doing her best. His encouragement helped her to persevere and taught her an important lesson in that regard. And if she had stopped or fallen down injured, he would have run to her with water or gotten her the care she needed.

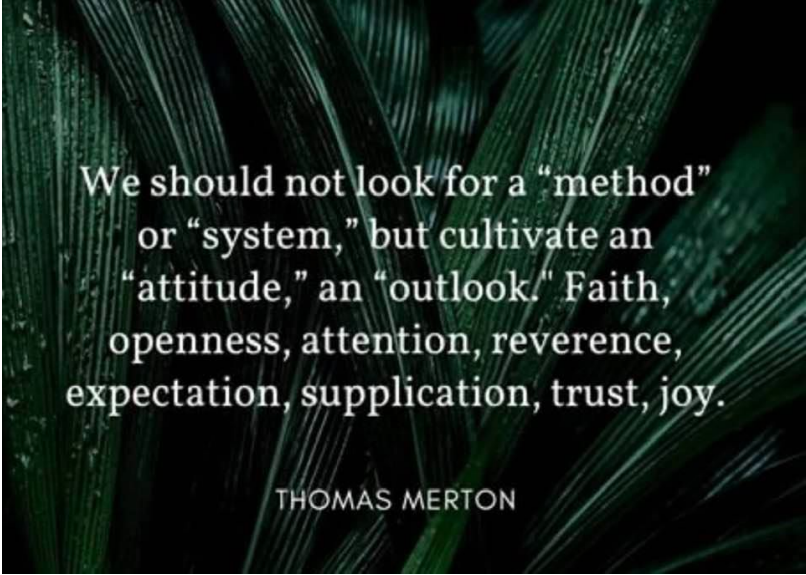
This is the kind of God who is a Good Father to every single one of us. A Father who rejoices in our hard work and perseverance; one who constantly encourages us to do our best; and who will run to us both when we are broken and weary and when we cross the finish line of some project in first or last place.

The apostle Paul came to know this God intimately through the revelation of Jesus. Paul had known God formally through the Law and the Bible. He knew what was good and right and was able to do it to a certain extent. In fact, he was so zealous about what was right, that he started persecuting his sisters and brothers who had different ideas about that.

And then there would be times late at night where he sensed that maybe he was not as good as he thought; times when he wondered whether his ideas were right and public actions in accord with God's will. Doubt and guilt bore down upon him...as he realized, "I do not do the good I want, and instead I sometimes do the evil I do not want. Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

And then Jesus revealed himself and did just that. And instead of thinking it all came down to the Law, he realized it was all about grace. As Paul despaired about not being able to make himself or his family or friends or his society right by either the force of his own will or by way of the Law, Jesus came to him and let him know that what he could not do, God could. And Paul's heart shifted and was filled with compassion instead of wrath toward those who were lost. His mind shifted and was filled with understanding instead of condemnation toward those who were different.

And all of this drove out the demons of fear and guilt and replaced them with a "peace which passes understanding" as Paul himself described it. A wise colleague posted a Thomas Merton quote which I will let you read:



We should not look for a “method”
or “system,” but cultivate an
“attitude,” an “outlook.” Faith,
openness, attention, reverence,
expectation, supplication, trust, joy.

THOMAS MERTON

These are the things of God that are going to make you and the world around you right.

1. Trusting in God, being 2. open, 3. attentive and 4. expectant. In place of a political, religious or philosophical system that you are convinced must be believed and which must govern everything you and others do, let yourself be governed by the Spirit of God and that is a gift that comes by way of faith and is intuitive. Let our Father’s love and grace come first in your dealings with yourself and others. Be humble and hopeful and graceful and you will see the justice-making of God come to life more and more within and around you.

