

St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Tallebudgera

6th September 2020 – Father’s Day

EXODUS 12:1-14

THE LOVE OF THE FATHER

For each of us, when we stop on a day like Father’s Day to think about our fathers, we have lots of different memories. Most of them will be positive, and we also need to acknowledge that for some people there may be some negative ones also. Some thoughts that may come straight to mind for us are things like; dad jokes, daggy dads, the times they seemed to go out of their way to deliberately embarrass us; maybe advice we were given that we didn’t want to listen to at the time; perhaps discipline given out which, at the time at least, we thought was unfair.

But also, on the whole something we can hopefully look back on and see coming from our fathers is, love. They may not have said it so much, particularly in times past, but it was there, and it came through in many of the things they did and said. We may have memories of them often being at work, but they were normally there so they could provide the best they could for you, their family. The time they put in doing things for us, even little things which we might not have fully appreciated at the time. The things they taught us without our even realising it. How they often either gave up for us or shared with us their own hobbies or interests. How they made sure we were safe at home, or when we were travelling. How they ensured we had a good education, good holidays, and that we grew up in a way which would prepare us in the best way they could for our future. Fathers are human, they aren’t perfect, and when I became a father I quickly learnt that it was important to be able to say ‘sorry’ to my kids for the times when I didn’t do it right. But for the most part they try hard to care for and raise their children in love, both enjoying the relationship they have with them and doing the best they can for them. And perhaps sometimes its only when we get older, maybe even when they are no longer with us, that we look back and truly see and appreciate all they did for us and the love they showed.

As we celebrate Father's Day today, and thank God for our fathers, it's a good time to reflect also on what it means for us that God is our Heavenly Father, who shows His love and care for us also. We know God loves and cares for us in many ways, and one of those ways is by giving us these people, like our fathers and others, to look after us in this world.

We could name many of these people both from our lives and from the Bible, but the one we have in our Old Testament reading for today is; Moses. In the story of Moses, we see how much God the Father shows His love for His people. The way Moses was not only protected when he was born but was enabled to grow up in Pharaoh's household. When, as an adult, Moses fled to a foreign land, God didn't forget him but called him back to Egypt. God had heard the cries of His people in their slavery, and he was ready to use Moses as part of His plan to bring them back to their own land.

And then, the story we have here today, the story of the Passover. After all the plagues God had sent upon the Egyptians, Pharaoh still wouldn't let the Israelites go. So now, the ultimate show of God's power against the Egyptians and their gods; the killing of the first-born sons. God's people are given instructions about not only the meal they are to prepare, but also the blood they are to put around their doors. They are told they are to do this as a sign for God to know who His people are, but for all the other plagues God already knew this? Really, we have to think, this sign they showed, which has become so important for not only the Jewish faith but also for our own Christian faith, it's much more about reminding the people that their Father is with them and protecting them, than it is about showing God who belongs to Him.

As a loving Father, a Father who cares about His children and shows that in everything He does for them; God freed His people just as He promised. Even though they didn't always respond to this in a loyal and loving way, He kept on loving them. Over the next few thousand years, as they kept on getting themselves into trouble by trying to do things their own way, God kept on not only kept forgiving them, but promising that one day He would send someone to save them; a Saviour.

And when that happened, that's when we really got to see the Father's love for His children, which now includes us all. Because now He didn't just send anyone to help and lead them as He had done so many times before, but this time the One He sent was His Son, and He sent Him to die. Just stop and really think about that: God the Father loves us so much, that He sent His Son to die for us all. And the Bible is full of reminders to us that this didn't happen when we were His perfect, loving, and obedient children, no. This great and loving sacrifice was made for us while we were still in rebellion against God, not believing or following Him. The love of the Father saw Him do whatever He could do to save His children, even when they didn't really want to be saved.

Back in Egypt the Israelites were told to put the blood of the pure and innocent lamb around their doors so that they had an assurance that God would spare them from His punishment against the Egyptians. From then on, as God commanded, the Jewish people celebrated this special meal every year to remember what God had done for them. Jesus would have done this each year just as His ancestors had done for thousands of years. But, on the night before He died, knowing that He was now to become that perfect, innocent Passover lamb sacrificed to save God's people, Jesus changed this meal. Now, taking the bread, He said, 'take and eat, this is *my body*, given for you'. And then, taking the cup, He said, 'drink of it all of you, this is *my blood*, shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins'. A reminder, like that given back in Egypt, that God's love and forgiveness are there for all people who belong to Him. A reminder not for God, but for us.

Now, we have this meal so that whenever we come forward to receive the body and blood of Jesus with the bread and wine we receive the assurance the He died to free us also; to free us from guilt, to free us from sin, to free us from everything which comes between us and God. In our Baptism we became God's children; a bond and a relationship with us God that promises He will never break. Now, in Holy Communion, we receive the ongoing assurance we need that we are loved, we are forgiven. Holy Communion is our assurance that we always do live in the love of the Father.

Father's Day means many different things for us all, but for most of us it is a time to thank our fathers for who they are and what they do in a way we perhaps don't do every other day, and also to thank God for giving us these people who care for us in our lives. It's a time also to thank God for being our Father, the One who does always show perfect love for us. Just as the Father led His people out of Egypt, He hears us and cares for us each day also. And in Jesus, the Son He sent to die for us, we see how great His love for us really is. In the same way we can often take the love our human fathers for granted, we can take God's love for granted also. God help us to appreciate our fathers and other special people who care for us in our lives, and to heal any relationships which need healing. God also help us to both remember and to respond to the great love He shows to us as our Heavenly Father. Amen.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

The Father's In Our Lives

We have different levels of relationships with our fathers; some good, some not so good, some bad. For some their 'father' who they wish to focus on maybe isn't their biological father, but someone else who took on the father role in their life.

Reflect on your relationship with your father:

- If it is good, thank God for that and continue to work on it.
- If not so good or bad, ask God to show you how you can work on that.
- If your father is no longer with us, try to reflect on blessings which came from your relationship.

Our Heavenly Father

The Bible mentions 265 times that God is our Heavenly Father.

- What does it mean for you that God is your Heavenly Father?
- What blessings come from this?
- Do you always remember and thank God for these blessings? How can you show your thanks and gratitude?

A Meal of Love and Assurance

In the same way that the Israelites were told to put the blood of a spotless lamb onto their door posts to remind them of God's care over them, in Holy Communion we also have this assurance that we share the body and blood of Jesus.

- What does coming to Holy Communion to receive this special meal mean to you? If you can share these thoughts with your family.
- How does Holy Communion give you strength and confidence to now go out and live as one of God's children?