Springfield Presbyterian Church

June 16th, 2024

Our Ancestorial Fathers

1. A Holy Father’s Day

This morning, my sermon will follow the same pattern as our Mother’s Day sermon, except that today we get to celebrate the fathers amongst us. Similarly, it’s a day where we joyfully come together to honor the fathers among us – those who taught us by their faith how to live, those who shared with us the beauty of relationships, and those who shouted on the sidelines of games and playoffs, reminding us of our own power within. It can also be a difficult day though too, for those who have lost their fathers, by death or by estrangement. It can be a painful reminder of a husband’s death and their physical presence gone. Today comes with a handful of emotions – positive, negative, neutral, and everything in between. Wherever you are today, know that you are held and called beloved, and that your feelings are welcome before God and this community.

1. Song

On Mother’s Day, I had a helpful song about our ancestorial mothers of the Bible, but this morning I didn’t have such luck. Yet, I still want to travel through Scripture with you and highlight some of our most incredible and memorable ancestorial fathers whose stories have guided generations. Today, I’d like to highlight Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Moses, Joseph – the stepfather of Jesus, Solomon, King David, Noah, and the Prodigal Dad.

Abraham is considered the father of three religions – Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. He is an example of humble obedience, and was good, kind, and noble. He taught his children about God. You may ask yourself – but this is the same man who almost sacrificed his son – how can he be a good dad? Well, yes – as hard as the story is to hear, we see Abraham’s rejoicing as God calls him to not sacrifice his beloved Issac. In this act, we learn how far Abraham is willing to go to serve God, and Isaac, as we come to see, is faithful from his father’s example.

The story often goes that Issac was a young boy when the sacrifice was going to happen, but many scholars say he was probably well into his 30s. He saw God’s power and he was committed to evening prayer, as seen in his story in Genesis 24. He was the father of Esau and Jacob. Isaac would become known as “the son of promise” from Abraham and “the father of the faithful” because of his faithful descendants.

Jacob started his journey by deceiving his father to gain his birthright, but through visions and blessings, he would reconcile with his brother Esau at the end of his life. Jacob shares his many visions – like Jacob’s ladder, where he saw a ladder going to heaven and heard God’s voice. He would have 12 sons and would become known as Israel – so these 12 sons are the “sons of Israel.” His sense of fatherhood was so strong that he was buried in Abraham’s plot – called the “Cave of the Patriarchs.”

Moses – Moses is one of my favorites. He was a prophet, leader, and teacher. He did not want to be in the spotlight, but the Spirit kept nudging him. Before he became the father to the Hebrews in the wilderness, he had two birth sons whom he loved. His father’s heart would help lead the people to the Promised Land, though he did not get to see it himself.

Joseph, is the stepfather to Jesus. Though we could give him a hard time for his initial reaction to the news of Jesus’ in his virgin girlfriend’s womb – who could blame him for such a response? But he gets there, he works through it, and becomes a wonderful human father for Jesus. We presume he taught Jesus how to be a carpenter, which was Joseph’s trade, and guided him faithfully as any human father of the Divine ever could.

We have Solomon, who is the son of King David, and he built the first temple in Jerusalem and he dedicated it to God. He is well-known for his wisdom – and was thought to write or greatly influence Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs. He is associated with the “golden age” of peace in the independent kingdom of Israel.

His father, King David, started from lowly beginnings. He was a shepherd, a harpist, and is known for the Psalms of David. He is credited for bringing the Ark of the Covenant into the kingdom. His sons benefited from his wisdom, in particular, Solomon.

Noah has a wonderful father who saved his family from a flood that consumed the earth. He was faithful and brave in following God’s call – as he crafted the ark and called his family and animals to safety. His three sons would be blessed and his family line would continue.

And finally, we have the Prodigal Dad. Often, we talk about the Prodigal Son, so I am simply referring to his father here. Think about this beautiful father, who despite the many reasons for finding his son at fault for splurging his inheritance, welcomes his son home with great love. A feast is prepared, joy is met at the gate, and love is found around the table of celebration. He is one of our best examples of a faithful father, and regardless of our gender, his response is one that we can all be changed by and seek to live out in our lives.

1. What now

So, that was my swift brushstrokes of some of the great fathers that you can find in Scripture. You’ll note that I never said any one of them was perfect. Neither were the mother’s that I spoke about last month. It is important to remember that mothers and fathers are human.

I think there are stages in all of our lives, but I’ll speak for myself – when I came into this world, I thought my parents were infallible beacons who could never be wrong, by the time I hit puberty, I thought they were just didn’t get it (sorry dad) and that maybe I knew better, by the time I hit my mid-twenties, I had that realization that they were right most of the time, and I imagine when I become a parent someday, I will hear myself utter ‘dad was right…’ Yet, this is the natural course, from generation to generation. Parents are human, from the Biblical ones we hear from today, to our own biological parents. Yes, some fumble more than others, but to be a father is a great honor and responsibility, and today I give thanks for those who have stepped up to that tremendous plate.

The Biblical fathers can also teach us through their stories – they teach us what it means to be faithful in really hard circumstances, they show us what bravery looks like in the face of adversity, and they give us wisdom, like the wisdom of Solomon, that will guide us throughout our lives.

1. Silly note

Now, to end on a somewhat silly note, because I’ve led you

through a quick Bible study and some philosophical application of the lessons – you get something that dads seem to love. I’m not sure what the genetic tie is here, but all dads seem to love dad jokes. While I’m not a dad – here’s some for the dads out there, with a bit of a biblical lens. I promise, no more than three, and feel free to give the important ‘ugh’ at the end of each.

How does Moses make his tea? He-brews it. (ugh)

The ark was built in three stories. The top one had a window to let in the light – how did the bottom two stories get light? They used…floodlights. (ugh.)

And…

How do we know Peter was a rich fisherman? By his…net income. (ugh)

So, friends, I hope, again, wherever you are today in your journey, that some part of this sermon has touched your heart. Perhaps it’s time to dig in and take a look at one of these Biblical fathers and learn more about their story. Perhaps you lovingly let your husband or dad or mentor tell you dad jokes today and try not to say ‘ugh’ too loudly. Whatever your path may be, may we celebrate the fathers amongst us, those who are faithful, loving, and gracious, and may we give thanks especially for them today. Happy Father’s day. Alleluia and amen.