

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Isaiah 64:8-9 & Selected Texts

I. Intro

I.A. Welcome everyone! So glad to see everybody again.

I.A.1. This Sunday is a special Sunday because it is Father's Day, so happy father's day to all you dads out there, or dads soon to be! It is a wonderful blessing and honor to become a father and to pass on our lives to our little ones. I know that for some, this day is fun and exciting, getting together with family and celebrating the relationships we have with them. For others this day might bring up bad or painful memories, and is a day filled with confusing or difficult emotions. And this is because we know how important fathers are in our lives, how crucial they are to our formation as people. How our fathers were when we were children had immense implications in forming a "me", for good and for bad.

I.A.2. How we related to our fathers in childhood has a direct one to one bearing on how we will relate with God as our Father.

I.A.3. Sometimes this is a good thing, and sometimes we need to unlearn some unhealthy patterns and habits of relating, or see some areas of woundedness be healed before we relate to God as Father.

I.A.4. By God's grace and goodness in our lives, He is a perfect Father who never leaves His kids, nor hurts them, nor withholds His provision for them, but always loves them with all of Himself, He always welcomes us into His arms of grace, He always provides and protects us the best way, and He sets us up on a high place with Himself that we might partake of His own glory.

I.A.5. The truest mark of a father is not seen in his career accomplishments, but in his quality of relationship to his children. I want to exhort all of us, myself included, to take seriously the role and calling to be the kinds of earthly fathers which make it easy for our kids to run to our Heavenly Father with joy, delight, trust, and love.

I.A.6. So fathers, thank you for all you do, and who you are. You seen, known, and loved by our Heavenly Father. May He continue to give of His Spirit to live out His character in the lives of your children.

I.A.7. My goal today is to help us take a look at God as our Father, to see Him as a father and let that be our template for relating with Him.

I.A.7.a) For those of us who had good dads, God is the perfection of all those qualities

I.A.7.b) For those of us who had not so great dads, God is the redeemer of that relationship. He gives us an alternate and more perfect and divine vision and understanding of fathers, and just as importantly, of us as children.

I.A.8. I don't want to forget the moms out there either! Mother's day I was out of town and didn't get a chance to enjoy it with you all, so I have a few hopefully encouraging words to say to and about motherhood as well.

I.B. Read the text, declare, thank, pray

II. God: Isaiah 64:8-9

II.A. Whenever we approach theology, or the study of God, we must start from the top and work our way down to our experiences. Too often it is too easy to use our experiences and begin to paint God with those colors, yet that can also lead us astray in the real person of God. We end up believing in a God who is different than He has revealed Himself to be in His Scriptures. This is why we use God's Word to inform us about God and His ways, then we take them down to our level.

II.B. This is true for God as a Father. We see in our passage in Isaiah that God is being called our Father. In our study through the book of Exodus a couple years ago, early on God refers to Himself as a Father with Israel being His firstborn son. It is important that we meditate on God's character as a father so that we might better relate to Him as His children, and reflect Him in the family manner. So, what can we learn about God as a Father from His word that will help us to know how we should relate to Him as children?

II.B.1. He is Sovereign

II.B.1.a)Our text already shows us the sovereignty of God. He is the One who is in ultimate control of all things. He is the true and final authority to whom we must look in our lives. We can trust Him in all things and with all things. This means that I can relax knowing that God is in control. That does not mean I am exempt from making decisions and wise ones, but that means that His plans will always prevail in my life and they are always good!

II.B.1.b)*"He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords" - 1 Timothy 6:5*

II.B.2.He is Intimate

II.B.2.a)Notice the language that the prophet uses to describe God: He is the One who fashions and molds like a potter. We have a few people in our church who are gifted potters, and they know very well how dirty your hands get fashioning clay. It is extremely intimate work, because you are literally using your hands to mold something. I can't think of any passage more clear to describe God's intimacy in our lives in how He fashions us in our personalities, our stories, everything about us has been intentionally, fearfully and wonderfully made! There is nothing in our lives which scares God away, nor causes His to reject us as His children. We must remember this as we engage with one another and especially with our own children.

II.B.3.He is Beautiful

II.B.3.a)The pattern or form in which He is shaping us is the image of His Son Jesus. We were created in His image, but that image has been defaced and marred because of our sin. We cannot heal ourselves, nor can we nip and tuck ourselves back into the beauty which was ours, but we can be transformed into a new image, a redeemed and more glorious image. The image of God the Son!

II.B.3.b)God is not just redeeming those things which were sin in our lives, but He is literally transforming us into a divine image.

(II.B.3.b.1)*"For surely if the Son of God by nature became son of man by mercy for the sake of the sons of men...how much easier it is to believe that the sons of men by nature can become the sons of God by grace and dwell in God; for it is in him alone and thanks to him alone that they can be happy, by sharing in his immortality; it was to persuade us of this that the Son of God came to share in our mortality." - St. Augustine (On the Trinity)*

II.B.3.c)This is the good and glorious work of our good heavenly Father in our lives. This means that He is doing the hard work in our souls to continue speaking the truth that we are beautiful to Him, that we are loved beyond understanding, and that He is working out the old man from our lives.

II.B.3.d)"We are lovely because He loves us"—Jesus Storybook Bible

II.B.4.He is Patient

II.B.4.a)He patiently endures us in our sin and rebellion. Patiently drawing us to Himself, not treating us as our sins deserve, but forgiving us, and treating us with grace upon grace. He does not ignore our sins, but He does not deal with us as our sins deserve.

II.B.4.b)*"He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities." - Psalm 103:10*

II.B.5.He is Kind

II.B.5.a)The kindness of God wins our hearts and leads us to repentance.. Kindness goes much further than anger or wrath.

II.B.5.b)"God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance" - Romans 2:4

III.Parents: 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12

III.A.*"For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory" - 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12*

III.A.1.Paul appealed to their own experiences of him as a father to them, both in authority as well as in affection.

III.B.Fathers

III.B.1. There is much to be said about being fathers. The first thing I will say, is the importance of example. As I have mentioned earlier, how our fathers acted and treated us sets the template for how we will act and treat others in our lives. Sometimes those things are obvious, and sometimes they are not so obvious until later. When we are given children, there is the common tendency to say "I don't want to be like my parents" and then you work really hard to be different. Sometimes you pendulum swing the opposite way. However, inevitably what happens is that we tend to start sounding and acting like our dads without even really realizing it.

III.B.1.a) Example of my dad wearing a bright orange hat when hiking so we could see him...
now I have my own silly hat that I wear all the time at family outings so my family will see me

III.B.1.b) We model

III.B.1.c) We instruct

(III.B.1.c.1) This is what the word "exhort" means, instructions as well as admonition. Fathers are called to teach and instruct our children. This means we must be masters at knowing God, so that we can instruct our children in the person and ways of God

(III.B.1.c.1.a) *"Hear, my son, your father's instruction" - Proverbs 1:8*

III.B.1.d) We comfort

(III.B.1.d.1) The word "encourage" means to pour courage and to comfort when downhearted. Specific and individual comfort or courage....be students of our children...

III.B.1.e) We charge

(III.B.1.e.1) This is the same idea that Paul gives when speaking of "charging" the believers. He is calling them, like judge would a witness, to be witnesses of Christ in the world. As fathers we must call our children to faith and love in Christ, calling them because we have first been called

III.B.2. The call to fatherhood is a grand and glorious call, yet it is challenging. Not only is it for our kids, but also for us, for we know that being a father transforms us in ways we never would have imagined. Not always bad, just surprising. I never knew how nurturing I could be until my daughter was born. It was surprising to me.

III.B.3. The reality is that we will all fail as dads, for there is only one perfect Father: God. Yet, this doesn't mean that we give up, but that we ask forgiveness from our kids when we do them wrong, we seek to repent when needed, and we continue to feed on the grace that is found in Jesus Christ. Only by feeding on His grace will we grow in grace and will be a better father to our kids and grandkids

III.C. Mothers: 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

III.C.1. *"But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us." - 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8*

III.C.2. I don't want to forget mothers in all of this! Mothers are the other side of the coin of parenthood, and in every way more crucial than we think. It is not an accident that God, in His design for how to set up the family, made two parents, one male, one female, with different yet complementary qualities and roles. Let's take a look at what Paul says about mothers in our passage in 1 Thessalonians...

III.C.3. Paul is describing the manner in which he and his church planting team interacted with the believers at Thessalonica; like a nursing mother with her children. This is a very poignant and interesting description of his interactions with them. What can we learn from this?

III.C.3.a) Gentle: gentleness is not always the primary quality of all mothers, yet gentleness is associated with the motherly instincts here. Gentleness is extremely important for healthy formation in children, and the same goes for spiritual formation as well.

III.C.3.b) Selfless: a nursing mothers literally gives themselves away to their children. They do not hold back when the child needs to be fed. We must not hold back from our children.

III.C.3.c)**Strong**: moms are some of the toughest people on earth!

III.C.3.d)**Affectionate**: Paul connects the idea of their intense love and devotion to their Christians with the affections of a mother. Again, this is not always universally true for all moms, but generally speaking this tends to play out this way. It is good to be affectionate with our children, and with one another.

III.C.3.e)**Instructive**: mothers are also called to instruct their children. This is not the sole responsibility of fathers, nor mothers alone, but both!

(III.C.3.e.1) "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching"
- Proverbs 6:20

III.C.4. Some encouragement for moms

III.C.4.a) You were created from the beginning of time to be a mom to your kids. God always intended for you to be a mom, there is no one else for your kids, God wanted you, and is well pleased with you!

III.C.4.b) You have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, you have all you need to live a transformed and transforming life, and to love your kids well and to be the best mother you can possibly imagine!

III.C.4.c) You must rest! The garden was always intended to be tended by both Adam and Eve, it is OK for us husbands to help. So husbands, learn to help around the house, and give your wife some rest!

IV.Us: 2 Timothy 2:2

IV.A. The reason that I picked the passage out of 1 Thessalonians is because it shows us a wonderful example of how we can be fathers and mothers to one another, even if we don't have physical children of our own. Paul called himself a father to the Thessalonian church as well as the Corinthian church

IV.A.1. "For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel" - 1 Corinthians 4:15

IV.A.2. The gospel is the seed of God to bear fruit in our lives unto salvation. We, as God's children and workers in His harvest, plant these seeds of the gospel in people's lives. Many times God will cause this fruit to cause someone to be "born again" to a living hope, and now that person is an infant in the gospel. I strongly believe that God desires for us to grow in our personal discipleship with one another: the older and more mature believers becoming like fathers and mothers to one another. This is the idea of spiritual generations. Not all Christians will become physical parents, but all Christians are called to be spiritual parents.

IV.A.3. "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." - 2 Timothy 2:2

IV.A.3.a) Me => faithful people => others

(IV.A.3.a.1) **Intentionality**: calling to witness

(IV.A.3.a.2) **Instruction**: teaching as we are taught

(IV.A.3.a.3) **Integrity**: integrated lives modeling Christlikeness

(IV.A.3.a.4) **Intimacy**: inviting others into the deep places of our souls where Christ is at work

IV.A.3.b) As easy as starting to regularly get coffee or a beer with another person, sharing your stories, listening to one another, reading God's word together, praying together, and doing life together. We do this often in CG's, but one-on-one is the most effective way to pass on your faith to another person. This is how the individual Christian is able to actually get into the work of the ministry without becoming a preacher or worship leader. This is the real work of discipleship.

IV.B. Conclusion

IV.B.1. All of us are called to be sons and daughters first, to learn how to relate to our Heavenly Father as His beloved children. We are called, as God provides, to be physical moms and dads and to raise them up with the kind of steadfast love, compassion, patience, and kindness of our God. We are all called to be spiritual moms and dads to others, planting the seeds of the gospel in the souls of men and women, watering those seeds in prayer and expectation for the warm presence of God's Spirit to cause fruit to be born. We are all called to disciple one another.

IV.B.2. Jesus, as the Perfect Son of God, taught us the proper posture of humility toward our Father as we seek Him in prayer. Let us recite the Lord's Prayer together as we close our service.

IV.B.3. "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

V. Response

V.A. **Confession:** *"Loving heavenly Father, we are all rebellious and ungrateful children. Some of us have actively rebelled against our earthly parents, wishing them out of our lives like the prodigal son or secretly resenting them in our hearts. We who are parents have sinned against our children with our selfish demands, inconsistent discipline, or lack of loving concern for their lives. Forgive us, we pray."*

V.B. **Assurance:** *"Thank You, Father, for Your tender, patient care toward all Your children. Thank You, Jesus, for being the perfect Son that none of us will ever be. Thank You for pursuing us and coming out to meet us where we are at. Thank You, for drinking the bitter cup of wrath that we deserved and uniting us to Your Father forever."*

V.C. Lord's Supper

V.C.1. Here we come to the table as children, with all the rights and privileges of the prince and princesses of heaven. Here we remember the sacrifice that our big brother Jesus made out of His loving obedience to our heavenly Father for the salvation of our souls and the transformation of our lives. May we come in gratitude, joy, and hope today

V.D. Prayer