

# Father's Day

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[ 0 : 0 0 ] And for our scripture reading this morning, I would ask you to turn to the Gospel according to Matthew, where we'll be reading from three different portions in this first book in the New Testament.

And our first has to do with Matthew's Gospel, chapter 3. And we will simply read two verses, verse 16 and 17.

And I would ask that you pay particular attention to the concept of the pleasing of the Father. Matthew's Gospel, chapter 3, and verse 16.

We read, and Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him.

And he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him. And, lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

[ 1 : 1 1 ] And then, in Matthew, chapter 12, and verse 9. And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue.

And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal in the Sabbath days, that they might accuse him?

And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep? And if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out?

How much, then, is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore, it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand.

And he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole like the others. Then the Pharisees went out and held a council against him, that they might destroy him.

[ 2 : 2 9 ] But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence, and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all, and charged them that they should not make him known, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Behold, my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased.

I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

And then one more in chapter 17 of Matthew, and verse 1. And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them.

And his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him.

[ 4 : 0 4 ] Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias.

While he yet spake, behold, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them. And behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

Hear ye him. In all of these instances, we have the father bearing testimony as to how he has been pleased by the son.

And, although we will not turn to it, there are references in John's gospel where Jesus makes it very clear that my meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me.

For I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And then he said, I do always those things that please him.

[ 5 : 16 ] Do you realize that all of the conflict that takes place in the world, all of the sadness, all of the heartache, all of the difficulty, all of the crime, all of the violence, all of these things rolled up into one, can all be boiled down to just one basic concept, and that is this.

Men do not do things that please their fathers. Daughters do not do things that please their fathers.

How is this the key to everything? Well, if you stop and think about it, I believe it makes a lot of sense, although we don't generally think of it along this vein.

But behavior is the problem in the world today, isn't it? Someone has said the only thing wrong with the world is the way people treat each other.

And I think that's true. And why do people treat each other the way they do? And how is it that this is so key to pleasing the Father? Well, in the first place, if we're talking about the fatherhood of God, if everybody were concerned about and devoted to pleasing God, our Father, the world would be revolutionized within the next 60 minutes, wouldn't it?

[ 6 : 48 ] Of course it would. But we all know that isn't reality. That's not the world that we live in. And why is it that we find it so difficult to please our fathers?

And I'm using this not only because it's Father's Day, but because it's very germane to human existence. And it goes back to the whole concept of the reproduction of ourselves in the next generation.

We beget sons and daughters. That perpetuates the human cycle. That's the way it has always been. We beget sons and daughters.

daughters. And the scriptures make it quite clear that one of the greatest objectives that a son or a daughter can have is pleasing their father.

Not only their heavenly father, but their earthly father. And stop and think back to the times of your childhood, and perhaps it continues even into adulthood, and I suspect that it should.

[ 7 : 58 ] Is there not within the heart of a child, whether a boy or girl, to want to gain the approval and the affirmation of their father?

And don't they feel that way toward their mother also? Yes, they do, but that's different. And I'll tell you why it is different. There is something that is peculiarly unique about motherhood that does not exist in fatherhood.

And I realize that there are always exceptions to what I am saying, but in the main, I think this is true. A child does not have to strive for approval and affirmation from their mother like they do from their father.

Why is that? I think I know. It's because you already have moms. That's a given.

That's a given. mothers exude affirmation and acceptance and love and nurturing to their children.

[ 9 : 24 ] It's just part of motherhood. It's just the way mothers are. We are dealing today in our culture with some very extraordinary countermeasures to what we would call the natural affection of mothers.

And we see these horror stories. They are blazoned across TV in national trials that gain all kinds of audiences and all kinds of reactions.

And one gets the impression that some, albeit a minority, thank God for that, but there is a minority of mothers and fathers in our culture of whom it can be said they are parents without natural affection.

I believe Paul wrote that either to Timothy or Titus. I'm not sure which, but it might have been Titus. But at any rate, he expressed that as an abnormality.

Parents who do not have natural affection, the kind that you could just accept as a given and it isn't there.

[ 10 : 59 ] And I'm not talking about Christians per se. I'm just talking about human beings in general, living any place in the world under any culture, there is just an ingrained natural tendency for mothers to be nurturing and loving and caring and protecting and fathers too.

but there are some unhappy instances where it just isn't present. And that's so sad.

And maybe maybe these mothers and fathers who exhibit no natural affection, maybe they came from parents who exhibited no natural affection.

But I'll just say this, if you have grown up in or are growing up in a home where you were demonstrably valued and loved and appreciated and cared for and protected, you don't know how blessed you are, how fortunate you are, because it isn't always that way.

I can remember as young as four or five years of age wanting to please my father. I didn't realize it at the time that he wasn't even my father, he was my stepfather, and I didn't know that, but I regarded him as my father, and my desire was to please him, to make him proud, to honor him in such a way that he would respond by affirming me.

[ 12 : 57 ] And I have, I'm happy to report that I never lacked for that. and like I said, from my mom, it was automatic.

You just had it. You didn't strive to gain points with your mom because they were just there. But it doesn't come that way so easily for fathers.

And sometimes fathers are reluctant to really demonstrate their affirmation or show their approval.

And it may be because they didn't get it from their fathers. Because we tend to reproduce whatever we grew up with, and we tend to imitate the role model that was before us, whether it was a good one or a bad one.

That's the only one we know. And growing up, if you have a father who is kind, and attentive, and caring, and providing, and protecting, and all of those good things, you just automatically think that's what it means to be a dad.

[ 14 : 11 ] And that's my example, and that's what I want to be. Because in households that we would call normal, boys and girls want to grow up to be like their moms and dads.

And a little girl will put on something of her mother's wardrobe and clunk around in her mother's high-heeled shoes or something, and she's playing grown-up, and she wants to be just like her mom.

And of course, little boy, same way about his dad, he wants to wear his ball cap the way his dad wears his ball cap, and he wants to do this the way his dad does.

And there is that mutual admiration society that is going on there within the family, and that's the way it's supposed to be.

That's the norm. So, what is it that makes it so difficult for sons and daughters to please their parents, to please their father?

[ 15 : 20 ] Because lots of sons and daughters don't. Why is it so difficult? And the answer is very simple, and it goes back to being the problem that's wrong with the world today, and that is, sons and daughters have real difficulty pleasing their fathers because they want to please themselves.

Now, how's that for simplicity? That's the problem. And the problem always comes back to me. Herein is the problem.

If you recognize this, you are fortified and prepared more than 99% of the world's population. If you come to appreciate and understand that you and you alone and nobody else are your own worst enemy.

That is priceless wisdom, and it's supported throughout Scripture. We are all our own worst enemy. Because of our fallenness, we are self-centered and self-seeking and self-serving, and that is just the human condition the way it is.

And Scripture recognizes this. Full well recognizes this. That the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? So it takes a real concentrated effort on the part of the boy or girl to please their father rather than pleasing themselves.

[ 17 : 04 ] Because the natural thing in our fallenness is to look out for number one and make sure that you please you above everybody else. And when you get a whole world operating like that, you get what we've got, which is a grand worldwide mess.

That's what we've got. And sometimes it's difficult for a son or daughter to please the father because the father is unreasonably demanding in what it takes to please him.

Some fathers operate in such a way and set standards and goals in such a way for their sons and daughters that there is no way in the world they're going to meet them.

They never measure up. They never fulfill his expectations. They never quite make it with dad God because dad has set the bar so high after a while they just give up trying.

And it's a lot easier and a lot more appealing to try to please yourself than it is to please him anyway. And fathers who are overly demanding unreasonable expectations can build up a powerful resentment in their son or daughter.

[ 18 : 53 ] And it may result years down the road in a sad isolationism where the kids never come around.

They never visit. Why is that? Adult children don't want to be with their parents.

And maybe with their father in particular because they have in their psyche this whole string of bad memories and disappointments and a dad who was never there for them never affirmed them never gave them an attaboy never respected their wishes always bullying or imposing or demanding or something and it drives people away and they get more and more isolated more and more detached and after a while they start thinking I don't care if I ever see them again that is so sad and it's all related to this dynamic of father and child and dads and for a lot of you you're like me it's too late to change a whole lot of things and you just cannot go back and do it over again but sometimes sometimes

I wish I really would wish I could someone said it's a real shame that you can't take your first born and run them through again because they're the ones that you make all the mistakes on and by the time you start getting it down why they're the older one but that's just part of the perils of parenthood I guess we all experience some of that the dynamic that is involved though is found all throughout scripture and it's reflected in incidents like the prodigal son who left the home left the father and went away to make it on his own lost everything and just engaged in profigate living and lifestyle and then finally came home bruised and beaten but happily repentant and the father welcomed him back with open arms and killed the fatted calf and all those good things that went with it coming from a position of authority as a parent does and a father in particular coupled with provision and care and protection and nourishment these are great assets and they build trust and devotion love and respect but if these assets are not in place then it automatically tends to build all of those things that are opposite to the positive virtues that we just mentioned and potential assets are transformed into painful liabilities fathers need to make it easy for their sons and daughters to obey them and honor them how can they not and by making it easy for them to obey and honor you

I do not want to be misunderstood by thinking that well you just give them what they want to keep them happy that way they'll stay on your side and I'm not talking about that because you can't do that you can't afford to do that financially and you can't afford to do it psychologically and emotionally and spiritually for their own benefit because one of the worst parents that ever was is the parent who labors under the false assumption that their main responsibility as a parent is to just make sure that their child is always happy that's a big mistake sometimes that kid needs to be miserable sometimes he needs to be bored it is not our responsibility as a parent to provide perpetual fun and games so that life is just one big hurrah and excitement and going from one splendid thing to another and that as a good parent you keep your child active and involved in doing everything and anything they want to do that is pure baloney you need to be selective and you need to take their feelings and their considerations into the selections that are made and they need to have a part in it but there has to be a limitation on these things

[ 24 : 00 ] I know of parents and you probably do too of parents who are just run ragged they have a chauffeur service and all they do is chauffeur their kids around it's soccer for this one swimming for that one something else for this one and that one and mom is worn to a frazzle she has a hard time finding time to get groceries for the family because she's busy running all over the place isn't that what a good parent does make sure that your kid is able to participate in everything and anything they want to do nonsense nonsense one of the best things you can learn to say to your child is no can't afford it and the family who refuses to say that is the family who is maxed out on their credit cards trying to keep the house can't make the car payments etc.

because they cannot and will not say no to their kids and we've got the same thing going on on a national level where our government has spent itself silly trying to please the population by doling out all of the goodies over the years and by the way I hope you'll remember my name when it comes time for election because I'm the guy who voted to give you this subsidy or this perk or this benefit folks as a nation we haven't been able to afford this for the last 80 years but we've done it anyway because the government can print money but you can't parenthood is really a tough proposition especially as the world is today it gets more and more complicated more and more difficult more and more challenging and the wisdom and the grace of

God that has always been available for it is just as available today if we will simply square ourselves with what the biblical record says and we cannot find a better model to imitate than the attitude of our Lord said my meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me and if we as parents will adopt that kind of an attitude that the very essence of life for me is to please my heavenly father I cannot help but believe if that is your overriding goal as a mom or as a dad is to be well pleasing to God you've already taken a giant leap toward being a good parent and experiencing your sons and your daughters being well pleasing to you it just works that way this is a biblical model this is for people in the household of faith this will not work in the world in general because if you do not have the spiritual equipment with which to employ this and pursue it it's just like well it's an impossibility and in order to do that of course it begins with a personal relationship with

Jesus Christ through appropriating the forgiveness that he has provided for you and that's the starting point of it all want to close with a passage of scripture in Ephesians very familiar passage one that many have committed to memory I suspect that there are parents who have quoted these verses to their children frequently over the years and I know that Barbara and I did Ephesians 6 children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with promise that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth that's a curious expression longevity of life is linked to obeying your parents and living long on the earth how does that work out well

I think if you multiply this many times over you will get a culture and an environment that is radically different from what it would be otherwise do you realize what an incredible change and impact it would make upon the whole world if today children were intent and willing to obey their parents you see what significant changes would be wrought even before I could finish the next sentence changes that would be made worldwide it would create this is of course assuming that the parents that they are striving to obey are worthy are not making unreasonable demands and are being good parents but for children to obey them would create and constitute an entirely different culture than that which we have now do you realize that if parents were what they ought to be and children sought to obey them the drug problem would end immediately the alcohol problem would end immediately all of the evils that accompany those the robbery the thieving the brutality and everything all of that would it would create a culture that would not be nearly as hazardous or as threatening to your life or to anybody else's it would be a peaceable society now

[ 31 : 11 ] I know I'm talking euphoria paradise I'm talking I'm talking the kingdom conditions and the way it's going to be when things are fixed and are the way they are supposed to be that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth and you fathers provoke not your children to wrath that's the negative how do dads do that by as mentioned earlier by unreasonable demands and unrealistic expectations that kids can't measure up to builds resentment in a child and will reduce the child especially if he's got the given temperament for it will reduce him to anger and rebellion and acting out and that can be the father's responsibility but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the lord that's a tall order as a parent but it is the only order worth pursuing father we are truly grateful for age old principles that you have built into your word that we can benefit from even this day as old as this book is it is just as up to date as it needs to be in principle and in everything that we need and we bless you for it thank you for the high holy privilege of parenthood whether mother or father for awesome tasks that you set before us thank you especially for the wisdom and the grace that you provide for each and every one who will draw upon it pray that you will use today to be one more occasion where loved ones together can build more happy memories we pray in

Christ's name and for his sake amen