

Holy Trinity Weekend (RCL/C) & Father's Day  
Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15  
June 15-16, 2019  
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Manasquan, NJ

"Call me anything but late for dinner!" I called my Dad "Dad." From a different generation, my father called his father "Father." Jesus suggested we address **His** Father as "**Our** Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9) or more literally, "Abba," which is a lot closer to "Daddy" than "Father."

In the Old Testament God was cagey about answering Moses, when Moses asked:

"If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, '**I AM WHO I AM**... Thus shall you say to the Israelites, '**I AM** has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14)

(Moses must have been thinking, "Well, that sure clears things up!") Elsewhere in Hebrew Scripture God is known and addressed in many ways, including Adonai ("Lord"), El Shaddai (God of the mountaintops), El Elyon (God Most High), Lord of hosts (a military term), Creator of heaven and earth, Redeemer of Israel, Shepherd of Israel.

**What is your favorite name for God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit, the one you use when you talk to God directly in prayer?**

Jesus Himself taught us lots of our names for Him. We find some of the most beautiful in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, echoing that "I AM" passage from Exodus:

- "**I am** the bread of life." – John 6:35, 41
- "**I am** the light of the world." – John 8:12, 9:5
- "**I am** the good shepherd." – John 10:11, 14
- "**I am** the resurrection and the life." – John 11:25
- "**I am** the way, the truth and the life." – John 14:6
- "**I am** the true vine." – John 15:1, 5

The name “Father” for God doesn’t work for everyone. Some people have **negative** or **no** associations with a father or father-figure. Sadly, some fathers are absent, by design or by circumstance. Even more sadly, some are present but abusive. I am blessed; I had a Dad who was willing to serve as both Dad **and** Mom to Sharon, Sally and me after our mother died. We were blessed, too, that our Dad was strong enough to accept help: from our grandmothers, aunts, neighbors, teachers. The heaviest responsibility lay on him, but he was willing to let family, friends and faith family lighten the load and do their part.

Our first lesson today is from the Book of Proverbs and it’s about wisdom. A father or father-figure’s job includes imparting not just knowledge but wisdom to those in his care. Even when the children grow up and have children and grandchildren of their own, perhaps **especially** then, there is holy wisdom to share! If we will only listen....

My Dad commuted into the City and worked a very long day, but when he got home we all had dinner together and he quizzed me on my homework. On the weekends there were plenty of chores to be done, but there was always time for our Saturday a.m. trip to the Madison Library, where we’d return the books we’d read and borrow a new crop for the following week. The end of the Proverbs passage (8:30) includes this beautiful verse:

*...I was beside him, like a master worker;  
and I was daily his delight....*

I was **no** “master worker” when I was a little kid, and I’d never say I was **always** a delight ☺, but a gift my Dad gave was allowing me to stick to his side as if I were Velcro’d there! That’s where I needed to be to feel secure and he **welcomed** me to help paint the house, rake the leaves, do the grocery shopping (including checking the register tape when we got home to be sure there were no errors and we benefited from all the sales!).

Hopefully we've all had **some** male in our life who has nurtured, protected, taught and mentored us so meaningfully, so faithfully, that their wisdom is in our head and their love is in our heart, **always**, even after they or we have moved on in one way or another. That's the gift that dads, grandpas, Sunday School teachers, Confirmation guides, choir directors, coaches, Scout leaders, military officers give – hopefully.

**Who's one person you think of with a grateful heart this Father's Day weekend? What's one life lesson he's taught you, one gift he's given?**

The second lesson from Romans (4:3-5) mentions a very important truth that special role models teach us:

*...[S]uffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*

That's a mouthful. Here's the paraphrase from *The Message*:

*We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next.*

It's rarely the person who's lived the easiest life who inspires us. It's the one who has taken hard knocks and kept a soft heart, the one who has experienced deep sadness and is joyful anyway, the one who has lost much but gives endlessly.

At JJ's *Bad Girls of the Bible* study last week, we talked about how, when we were kids, the dread of disappointing our parents by disobeying or ignoring them was sometimes greater than the fear of punishment. I remember making a snippy comment about my Dad to my sisters one day. Our oldest sister, Sharon, nipped that bad attitude in the bud. She didn't literally clip me about the ears, but she set me back on my heels and

gave me a lifelong lesson in devotion and gratitude to the father without whom we wouldn't have been born, the one who loved us so deeply and sacrificed so fully for us.

So it is with our Father in heaven, without whom we would not exist, who loved us so deeply He sent the Son to save us and sent the Holy Spirit to make us holy. Heaven knows no father, except the One in heaven, is perfect., no more than any child is perfect. Hopefully when we have angered or disappointed our parents they have forgiven us. Hopefully when they have angered or disappointed us, we have forgiven them. Definitely when our parents, our children, and we have angered or disappointed God, the Holy Trinity forgives us.

Until he was in his 90's my Dad, Lee, knelt beside his bed at night to say his prayers. Among the greatest of the **many** gifts he gave me is his witness of faith, deep trust in God, endless faithfulness in worship and service, slowness to take offense and quickness to forgive. That is a witness that outlives him and will always be rooted in my soul. I thank my earthly father for teaching me about the love of my heavenly Father. There is no more sacred task for a parent, no greater lesson to teach or to learn. Amen

Pastor Mary Virginia Farnham