

Victory of the Lamb – Called – Father’s – Deuteronomy 6:4-9
June 20, 2021 – Pastor Bill Limmer

What is one of your all-time favorite dad jokes? Since I’m a dad, I know a few. “Why do dads take an extra pair of socks long when they go golfing? In case they get a hole in one!” “Singing in the shower is fun until you get soap in your mouth. Then it’s a soap opera.” “What do the the Eiffel Tower and a tick have in common?” “They’re both Paris sites.” “If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?” “Pilgrims.” “I thought the dryer was shrinking my clothes. Turns out it was the refrigerator all along.”

Today we are concluding our series entitled Called. And we are going to be looking at God’s calling for fathers. Now today, I don’t want to beat up on fathers; after all, I am one. But I do want to encourage you with the love and direction God has given us: **What do great fathers do?**

What kind of father is God? This is important because some of us have had no fathers in our life, some of us had fathers who were evil and did unspeakable things, some of us have fathers who were present in body but not in emotion, and some of us have had great fathers who still made mistakes because, well they are sinful just like all of us.

God our Father is a compassionate father. Jesus taught us to pray this way: Our Father. Our Father God is compassionate God. He sees our struggles, our stumbles, our failures and instead of ignoring us or letting us get what we deserve he has compassion on us. Our Father God is a caring God. He knows our deepest longings and pain and he understands. The scriptures say of him: 1 Peter 5:7 **Cast all of your anxiety on him because he cares for you.** He adopted us into his family without question through the blood of Jesus.

Our Father God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. You have everything good thing that you have from God who provides. From clothing to skills to abilities to food. It all comes from his gracious hand. You may have worked hard for it but God gave you the ability to work hard for it and the opportunity to work hard for it.

God is faithful. He never goes back on his word. His promises are always true in Jesus and he never changes his mind. Nothing catches him off guard. I saw this tweet last week from Jon Tyson, a pastor in NYC, which said: “Just a reminder today that in spite of all that is happening in the media, the kingdom of God is doing quite well and advancing around the world.”

God is all-powerful. He does far more that we can dream of. God is God who has the big picture in mind and is not confused by all the twists and turns that distract us.

God is not far away. As we have seen through this series, He reveals Himself through our various callings and he is present in Word and Sacrament.

And it is through these truths of God the Father that we learn of God’s calling for earthly fathers. A lot of us grew up with parents who wanted our life to be better than theirs and subsequently we want our kids’ lives to be better than ours. And we often think of providing them with more and better material possessions, better education etc., We get sidetracked and think this is all about earthly stuff that is going to perish. We think about what we didn’t get and how we want to provide that for our children

out of love for them but sometimes that leads us to not teaching self-control which is actually a huge blessing. There is anger because of a lack of self-control. There is robbery because a lack of self-control. There is adultery because of a lack of self-control. Dads don't get confused on what is a better life. How many of us when we think of wanting our kids to have a better life than ours do think about fostering an even greater relationship with the Lord than we have?

Deuteronomy 6:-**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.**^[a] ⁵ **Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.** ⁶ **These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.** ⁷ **Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** ⁸ **Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.** ⁹ **Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.** If there is one phrase that I would say that these verses tell us is that extraordinary parenting happens in the ordinary moments of life.

Proverbs 22:6 **Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.** We are training human beings who are made in the image of God. We need to treat these blessings with the greatest of care. Extraordinary parenting happens in the ordinary moments. Your kids aren't going to just jump on the couch and say, "Daddy I can't wait for you to open up God's Word for me and teach me."

Here are some ordinary parenting moments where the extraordinary happens: When your children are small read to them from a children's Bible story book and be prepared to learn as well. When you select and work through YouVersion Bible plans with your children. When they are older and you have all this car time whether that is going to school a game, a concert, that is a great opportunity to ask questions, tell them what you are thinking about God. My kids are older right now, and I love asking them questions about how they see the world and guiding them to see what God says, not necessarily how Christians act. I love directing them to a podcast and getting their feedback.

Extraordinary parenting happens in the ordinary moments. Sometimes dads and other think there has to be some special time and that you have to raise the bar to be a good dad. *You have to do this, you have to say that.* And when you don't, you tell yourself *I should have done that and I should have said that.* And after a while, we have lowered the bar to dad jokes and resigned ourselves to apathy rather than aspiring to something better.

But you know what? God doesn't resign to apathy or lower the bar. He raises the bar. He says, Matthew 5:48 **Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.** That is what he demands. You know the saying, Like Father, like _____ (Son). Happy Father's Day!

A lot of people, maybe you, think that Christianity is about keeping the rules. The Father does demand perfection but we can't give that but there is one who is perfect. Jesus Christ is perfect. This is why Jesus is so important. I'm not talking about following rules, trying to make up for rules you broke. I'm not talking about following rituals. I'm talking about having a relationship with Jesus.

Only Jesus is perfect. Only Jesus is sinless. Only Jesus is like God the Father. Only Jesus can and did do that. But here is the cool thing there is this word that describes what Jesus did: propitiation. Propitiation means to fulfill the requirement of perfection of holiness. Jesus says in **Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**

We can't possibly be perfect, so Jesus says, "Let me do it for you ok? Trust me. I got this. Follow me." And because Jesus fulfilled the requirement of the law in our place and we get credit for them, when God the Father sees us, he doesn't see our imperfections, our swear words, our fails, in Jesus he sees the perfection of the Son and gives you and me credit for it. He gives credit to you, and to you, and to you.

Romans 3:21-22 says, **But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.** ²² **This righteousness is given through faith in^[a] Jesus Christ to all who believe.** Righteousness not from raising the bar, not from jumping higher, doing better than others but through trusting in Jesus. Have you been living your life like that?

Dads, are you still trying to compare yourselves to others? Are you still trying to raise the bar and clear it by your own strength in your professional life, family life, recreational life, being a better husband, a better father? Do you think it is simply a matter of discipline? Or are you starting to see that being a great dad starts with Jesus?

We all need to start with Jesus. Jesus sets the bar at perfection, which is way too high for us, but he jumps and clears the bar for all of us. He never sinned, not even once. Not a slip of the tongue, or the finger, or a thought. He clears the bar of perfection and then he dies on it. He died on the cross for all the times our tongue ran into vulgarity, all the times our hand hit someone, it used a finger other than the pointer to finger to point out how we feel, and all the times our mind entertained thoughts that were not even close to being godly.

He died on the bar of the cross for us. This is Christianity. Christianity is not about behavior modification. About doing more, jumping higher, running faster, lifting more, those are for our running coaches, performance coaches, and CrossFit coaches. That's not Jesus. Christianity is about life transformation.

Jesus didn't come to make bad people good. Nor to make good people great. He came to make spiritually dead people spiritually alive. This is why Jesus came to take us from death to life. That is why great dads need to start with the perfect Son and keep following him. I know what you are saying, but what if I stumble, what if I fall. Welcome to humanity 101. You can read all about it on the first pages of Scripture. But by God's grace and because of his mercy we get up, follow him and repeat. If it were a shirt it would look this: Start with Jesus, Follow Him, Fall Down, Grace and Mercy, Repeat.

Great dads start with the perfect Son. Great dads start with a personal relationship with Jesus. Here is how you can carry that out starting this week. Identify an ordinary moment in life and commit to purposely reminding yourself and your children about your extraordinary God. Maybe it is story time for your toddler. Maybe it is a YouVersion bible plan. Maybe it is when you are on the way to the baseball game and you ask a question with spiritual implications, or you talk about the song that just played on the radio. Or like I do now with older kids and invite them into a podcast or whatever.

However you do it, use the ordinary moments to start a personal relationship with Jesus because that is extraordinary.