

“Honoring Our Fathers and God as Father Too”

LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian

Father's Day 2022

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Scriptures

Isaiah 55:6-12

Luke 15:11-32

Hymns/Songs

"This Is My Father's World"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2_dDe2qZNE

"Fill My Cup, Lord"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4l2yY2r95g>

"Faith of Our Father's" 151

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RziT4wJMrGQ>

Isaiah 55:6-12

⁶ "Seek the LORD while he may be found;

call upon him while he is near;

⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,

and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,

and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,

neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are my ways higher than your ways

and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven

and do not return there but water the earth,

making it bring forth and sprout,

giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;

it shall not return to me empty,

but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,

and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹² "For you shall go out in joy

and be led forth in peace;

the mountains and the hills before you

shall break forth into singing,

and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Luke 15:11-32

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

¹¹ And He said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Insight for Worship

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SERMON: "Honoring Our Fathers and God as Father Too"

I'd like to begin by confessing to you that on the 3rd Sunday in June I always feel torn inside regarding whether to focus my sermon on one of the three extremely

important holy days involved on or near June 19th. I could focus with you on the great theme of the Emancipation Proclamation signed into law by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, as he courageously kept trying to stitch together our country mired in the very bloody Civil War, which killed 620,000 men or 2% of our U.S. population—which in today's terms would be 6 million soldiers. 620,000 fatalities is the largest death toll of any war in our history.

In our announcements this morning I gave you the glorious primary history of another amazing event that took place on June 19, 1770, which gives all those who embrace the Lord's New Christianity espoused by the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg, which centered in celebrating that on June 19th back then God gave our world the fullness of revelation that opened up God's Holy Word, and that humanity's spiritual freedom had risen to its greatest heights, granting us more spiritual potential since thousands of years ago. If any of you wish, later today I can send you more great words on the significance of New Church Day.

But today, I feel led by the Lord to focus my message on Father's Day, which acknowledges and celebrates the contribution of fathers to their own families and to society at large. Today, children have a wonderful opportunity to appreciate their fathers and father figures—all the people who have played a vital role in their lives as men, which can be emotionally, mentally, spiritually or even financially. Father's Day can be a deeply important day for children, helping them to understand the immense importance of their fathers in their lives. This helps in strengthening the father-child bond and relationship, which also therefore has a positive impact upon the emotional development of our children. It is therefore very important for all of us to honor and foster our children's love for their fathers, in their mutual relationship of love.

Now certainly, not all fathers are really good at being a very significant influence on their children's lives—and for all those today who feel deep emotional wounds as they think about their own dads, we can pray that our highest father figure of all, who is the Lord, will continue to touch and gradually heal those wounds in the eternal Love that God is.

But there are many millions of good fathers on Earth whose role and relationship with their children deserves high praise and recognition. Some of the very good changes in today's generations of fathers show us that men having children nowadays play a more active role in parenting than they did long ago. Fathers today do not just play the role of provider, protector and disciplinarian in the family. Today, the role of fathers has evolved greatly, which means that many fathers today take on a whole new

load of new skills and values. Recently a study was done in the U.S., which asked primary school children to describe what makes a good dad good, and they responded saying:

- “A good dad makes you feel safe”
- “A good dad can protect his children from getting hurt”
- “A good dad knows how to keep the bad guys away”
- “A good dad always listens to Mum”

Now, I’m not so sure about the last comment! However, it is true that protection and safety emerge as important abilities for today’s fathers. This same research study added further information about how our children of today perceive their fathers as:

- Safe
- Strong
- Comforting
- Protecting
- Their hero
- Teacher
- Wise and knowledgeable

Researchers have discovered 10 qualities overall that are proving to be significant for children’s development into becoming resilient, healthy and well adjusted into adulthood. Some of these out of the 10 are:

1. Dependability

Being there through thick and thin. This is not just being present and correct. It’s about being consistently available for our kids through good times and bad.

2. Involvement

Being personally engaged in our kids’ lives, interests, hopes and dreams on a daily basis. Being curious and attentive requires us to put our distractions to one side.

7. Being human

To own mistakes, be open to feedback, and teach that growth is a lifelong endeavor. So, dad (and mom) get it wrong, sometimes. Teaching our kids to be human means we have to show our own humanity, as often as possible.

9. Playfulness

Showing delight in our children through fun and play. The benefits of dads playing has been researched, particularly the rough and tumble play. It teaches our kids to regulate their feelings and accept limits and boundaries.

As one writer said in his thoughts about American fatherhood, there can be a tendency for people to focus on the negatives about our dads, for certainly there are those elements in them as well. But, like the patriarchs we find in scripture, many fathers have great skills and qualities that are important to honor too. For example, Moses helps us to learn:

- With God all things are possible.
- Sometimes we must delegate tasks to be a good leader.
- God desires intimate fellowship with every believer.
- No one can follow God's laws perfectly. We all need a Savior.

All of the fatherly patriarchs in the Hebrew Scriptures emulate very important qualities. One of their highest is their ways of seeing and celebrating God as their Divine Father. Throughout the Bible we can recognize many saving aspects of the Lord, such as:

Lessons to Learn From God the Father

- God is constant; he never changes. We can depend on Him.
- God is faithful.
- God is pure, Divine Love and Wisdom in One.
- Our heavenly Father is an example for earthly fathers to emulate.

In *Isaiah 55* we hear the echo of God's being dependable for everyone in verses 10-11, helping us to recognize that for all generations the Lord's Holy Word gives us all of the knowledge we need to live a good life in partnership with God, as He saves us gradually every day: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose...." I invite today at home to sit down and write out some of the crucial ways that the Lord has been dependable in your life.

And lastly, the Lord gave us His amazing parable of the prodigal son, in part, to show us how deeply dependable He is in loving us, especially when we have chosen to betray God's truth and commandments and squander the spiritual riches and the freedom we are given, indulging in selfish attitudes and actions. There is no condemnation, but a welcome return. Also, I appreciate how the father in that parable allowed the younger son to fully experience the results of his bad choices. We see also how God's role, in part, was in triggering that young man's conscience, helping him realize life was better in his father's household. The Lord's influence also helped the younger son to be able to condemn his own sins and move into penitence and humility. For, all who would be saved must be willing to confess our sins before God, to know what evils we have engaged in and to see them within ourselves, to allow ourselves to feel guilty and remorse, and then repent—which means to turn toward a new and better way of life within the precepts of charity, kindness and faith.

May the Lord inspire us today to enjoy and honor our earthly fathers and father figures, and to more deeply honor the Lord as our Divine Father in eternity, He who is always dependable, merciful and wise. Amen.