

The Second Sunday After Trinity -Father's Day
June 21, 2009

Epistle Reading - 1 John 3:13-24

Gospel Reading - Luke 14:16-24

“Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and truth.” [I John 3:18]

Introduction:

This week's epistle and gospel readings seem to pick up where last week's left off as we continue to try to get a handle on the depth of God's love for us and how we can express it to others.

Epistle-Father's Love:

We heard more about God's love and empathy and how it relates to us in today's reading from John's first epistle. John wrote “but who so hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him: how dwelleth the love of God in him?...**Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth.**” [I John 3:17] This indeed is the essence! The essence of what our love for each other should be and, especially on this Father's Day, the essence of a father's love...a love of deed, rather than word. It's good that the lines between Mom's more demonstrative love of hugs and kisses and Dad's more stoic interactions with his kids have blurred in today's world. It's good to see today's dads taking a more active and nurturing role in raising their children. I enjoy and, I must admit, envy the relationship many younger fathers build with their sons and daughters. They are active participants in their children's lives since day one...something some of us older dads may not have been a part of.

Authoritarian Father:

A role stereotype of the father was that of the authoritarian...the dispenser of punishment who, like the God of the Old Testament, was an individual whose wrath you wanted to avoid. At times, you got glimpses of Father's love...you knew he was a good man who had your best interest at heart...you knew that he loved you because of those times when he did things with you or talked to you. He fathered as he had been fathered and his rule and will were as of iron. Perhaps if your dad was still around when you became an adult, you found him to be quite a different person...an individual with feelings and emotions who really was a good person.

All Knowing Father:

Another role stereotype of father was the all knowing and benevolent head of the household. The ‘Father Knows Best’ Jim Anderson type of dad who shared his fatherly characteristics with the likes of Dr. Marcus Welby, Ozzie Nelson, and Ward Cleaver ...who knew all there was to know and could always be counted upon to get you out of any situation. He never got angry, but always made sure that his kids learned a lesson in life from every problem he helped them solve. I never met this type of dad except on TV.

Bumbling Father:

The bumbling dad was the nominal head of the household, but messed up just about everything he did was another father stereotype. A Dagwood Bumstead type of person who seemed to be well meaning, but inept. The type of dad who could turn tranquility into chaos and back again with the help of his smarter and long suffering wife.

Recalling Our Fathers:

As we think back over the years, we may recall our fathers as a mix of stereotypes with more or less of a sense of humor, who probably smoked too much, ate the wrong stuff, and may have drunk too much or been a teetotaler. Mine was a bit of the authoritarian who wanted his kids to earn their way in the world just as he had done...who was the punisher, yet somewhat of a bumbler who had difficulty mastering the hammer, who was at times hilarious without meaning to be. While he never told me outright, I knew that he loved me...a love that came from deed rather than word.

The Gospel:

We see a prime example of a father's love coming from deed rather than word in today's Gospel Reading from Luke. In this case, the Father is God, who in the parable is that "certain man [who] made a great supper and bade many." [Luke 14:16] The invitation to supper is the invitation to salvation. Just like some of us fathers whose children have rejected them for any number of reasons, the children of God...God's chosen people...came up with a variety of lame excuses to reject Him and His offer of salvation. The love through deed that the parable relates is the offer of salvation to all...not just those who were the first to be invited.

Today's Father's:

Over the years, we've found that the role of Father is so important to the development of his children from the early hours of life through the adolescent years to adulthood. Today's Dad has become so much more than just a provider, punisher, and fun guy of the family. In the ideal, he's the joint decision-maker and joint nurturer of his kids who is in synch with Mom. He may even be the primary child-care provider. In the reality, he's unfamiliar with his role...his models from the past may not hold true for today...he may be confused about what the expectations for fatherhood are...just like all of us who are fathers from past generations were confused about what the expectation for fatherhood were. Yet, we formed our role and, hopefully, did more things right than wrong. While we rejected some of our father's parenting behaviors, at times we found ourselves falling into those patterns we hated as kids and vowed never to do to our kids....but what was done to us and what we did to our kids and what our kids do to their kids is done out of love and out of a father's need to do the best for his children....Just as God, our Heavenly Father, seeks to do for us.

Conclusion:

We honor father's today and reflect upon the role they have played in our lives...our fathers who were and are so much more than that old ditty: "Go on home, your mother's calling, your father got stuck in the garbage can. Go on

home your mother's calling, they've come to collect your old man." We honor our fathers who, in the true sense of the word, taught us through example and played a major part in shaping us into what we are today. Hopefully, the things all of our dads and all of us who are fathers did was done in the spirit of John's words in today's Epistle: "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and truth." [I John 3:18]