



Introduction

Invitation

Call to Worship:

We worship together today as we remember the fathers and father figures in our lives who inspired, taught, and loved us. We remember that we experience God's parental love through them, and we praise God for their presence in our lives. Let us worship our loving God!

Hymn: "This is My Father's World"

Reading the Word: Luke 15:11-32

Message: "The Amazing Father"

Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

Prayer:

Thank you, Gracious God, for your care and love given to us through those who have been fathers to us. We are grateful for their presence, example, and love that led us to know you better and to then share that love with others. We are also grateful for those men who have witnessed their faith to us through the way they lived their lives. May we honor our fathers and those who have been like fathers to us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn: "Faith of our Fathers"

Blessing

Luke 15:11-32

The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”



SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

Message “The Amazing Father”

Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

“... while he was still far off, his father saw [his younger son] and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him ... ‘this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate. ... Then the father said to [the older son], ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’” Luke 15:20, 24, 31-32 (NRSV)

We often name this “The Prodigal Son” parable. The youngest son in the family asked his father for his share of the inheritance so he could go off on his own and live his own life. He squandered the inheritance and ended up working as a servant who cared for a pig farmer. When he finally realized that he could return to his father’s house and work there as a servant in better conditions, he returned home, bedraggled, probably very thin, dirty, and remorseful.

The father, who was an elder in his village, did something that no respectable man in his time would have done, he ran; he joyfully greeted his son who had written himself out of the will; and he embraced him. Imagine the son’s relief and maybe even confusion from his father welcoming him with such happiness and restoring him to the family!

On the other hand, the oldest son was not happy. He refused to celebrate and resented not only his selfish brother but also his father for welcoming him back with such a lavish celebration. Yet, the father’s response to the oldest son was that everything his father had was already his, but his brother had been lost and was now found; he was home again. It is a remarkable story of a father’s love and acceptance of a son who had hurt him, as well as teaching the oldest son to see what he already had.

This is Father’s Day. What a great parable to share on this day when we recognize the men (and maybe even some women) who have been fathers to us! We have to admit that not all fathers have been present in our lives. Years ago, we might hear the term “dead-beat dads” used for those fathers who abandoned the love and care of their children. If there was a divorce, those women who raised the children alone, became both father and mother, and we can see that it sometimes happened in reverse when fathers are the sole parent.

In addition, we know that there are men in our lives who have helped to raise us and be like fathers to us: step-fathers, grandfathers, godfathers, uncles, family friends, big brothers, coaches, Sunday school teachers, pastors, and teachers. So today, we celebrate the fathers and father-figures in our lives.

These are the men who have lived so that we might know what love, acceptance, care, and companionship are. They may be people who have inspired us in their faith journey and helped us to know God's love for us. Of course, they weren't flawless, but then none of us are perfect. We learn to accept them, and ourselves, for all of who they are, and we learned from them about a father who is involved in our lives and who cares about us.

One of my best friends often talked about the absence of a father figure in her life. Her biological father left when she was only two years old and had nothing to do with her or her mother after that. When she was eight, her mother re-married, and her step-father adopted her. After a few years, he also left, and she never heard from him again. Then, her mother married again, and her new step-father was kind and caring, but unfortunately, her mother died of cancer, so she went to live with her grandmother and didn't see him again.

I asked her how it felt to call God "Father," and her answer was that she liked calling God "Father" because she knew that was the Father who would never abandon her. Her faith and trust in God was strong, and when she died at the age of 52, she believed that God was with her and was carrying her.

Many of us have had wonderful experiences with our fathers or father-figures. I invite you today to remember the father in the parable of the two sons - the prodigal and the son who stayed home. Remember this father's welcome and joy that his son had come home. Remember the love your own father or father-figure had with you and appreciate the gifts they have given you. If they are still living, I hope you will let them know how much they mean to you. If they have passed away, say a little prayer of thanks and celebrate the life they shared with you.

We give thanks to God for giving us fathers and father-figures in our lives. Amen.