

## **Our Heavenly Father's Good Gifts**

Rev. Taek Kim

Scripture Reading: Matthew 7:9-11

<sup>9</sup>Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? <sup>11</sup>If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

On this first Sunday back in church for worship, and before I begin today's message, I wanted say a few things. First of all, I thank God for watching over us and our church during these challenging and trying times, with so many things going on.

It was on March 15, just over 3 months ago, that we began the journey of online and virtual services, fellowship, and all we do as a church.

Many have helped keep things going smoothly during these times. I do thank God again for all who helped in preparing for this worship service today. Much planning and preparing took place with the Church Council members' help. There were many individuals who helped prepare this sanctuary for today that included getting needed materials such as the tape many helped in sectioning off our seating, creating helpful a seating chart for the ushers to use, the masks generously donated for those who need, making sure we have everything to make sure our church is sanitized, the band recording songs to be played during our services, and more.

And as I have said before, I thank God for each of you, those of you watching from home and all who are here today. I give thanks for your prayers, your support, your gifts and faithful giving, your calls, your cards and letters, emails and texts as you support each other as a church family, the Body of Christ, especially during these times. I am truly blessed and proud to be your pastor.

Now let us pray. Gracious and loving God, we know your love is beyond our full comprehension. Yet you have made your love known to us in so many ways, such as with a mother's love, a father's love, a friend's love, a stranger's love, and all the various ways in which we experience love. We thank you for we know you are Love. And you showed us your love in sending us your Son, Jesus Christ, so that through his life, death and resurrection we may have life eternal and life abundant here on earth. Move in us to see all the good gifts you have given to us so that we may never forget your love, which calls us to share your saving love with everyone you put in our paths. Amen.

Today we celebrate Father's Day! And as we remembered on Mother's Day that God's love is like that of a motherly love, today we also remember how our Heavenly Parent has shown us a fatherly love.

And with some gracious help from some of our church members and their families, I have some words from the children of some of the fathers of our church. I will read some now and some near the end of my message.

The first comes from Elyssa, Tom and Joanne Northey's daughter. She wrote:

"I've always loved spending time with my dad. Many of my memories with him growing up are of having fun together and playing games. He taught me to play soccer and softball, checkers and chess (well, tried to at least). He's always up for a board game, anything from Pretty Pretty Princess when I was younger to Trivial Pursuit and more complicated and offbeat board games today. He gave me a love for bad puns and dad jokes, which are still more likely to procure a laugh than a groan out of me. Now that I've got kids of my own, I see him starting to do the same activities with them and I'm so excited to watch that relationship grow. "

From Tim and Kim Bodenmiller's daughter, Avery. She wrote:

"Our dad emulates the qualities of our Heavenly Father. Slow to anger, disciplines when needed, compassionate, and forgiving. He has a servant's heart, is always willing to lend a hand, and has been a great example for us as we begin our journeys as parents."

And from their son, Cale:

"I would like to echo what Avery has said. What I would like to say to my dad is Thank you. Thank you for being the prime example of what a father should be. He has taught me numerous lessons that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. On top of that my dad is just flat out fun. He has always found fun and creative ways to make us laugh, which has carried over now to his grandkids. I have been truly blessed to be able to call my dad...dad"

This one is from Lanette Carmack, daughter of Al and Ruth Smith:

It is with great pride that I get to honor my dad, my HERO...

**H**ardworking in every job he encounters for anyone that asks from friends to family. He is always willing to lend a hand.

**E**xcellent handyman ...there isn't a task he can't fix!

**R**eally caring, loving and a wonderful protector and provider for his family.

**O**utstanding role model of what a father should be for his kids and grandkids in how he lives his life.

If you didn't catch that, Lanette called her dad her hero, which then she began each sentence with each of the letters that spell hero.

I loved reading those personal words from children about their dads. Again, I have a few more that I'll read at the end of my message.

Now, we also read words that tell us more about our Heavenly Parent in the Bible. We learn more of the traits of God that reveal to us that God is like a father.

We read in Psalm 103:13, "The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him."

In Proverbs 3:11-12, "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in."

1 John 3:1 – "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."

I love to read about the ways God is like a father. For God is our Heavenly Parent as described in the Bible. Though God is beyond human, God loves us in ways that we can experience as humans, God's creation.

And with the 3 additional Bible verses I just read, we understand that God is like a father in being tender, compassionate, and of course loving. And God's love expresses care for us, as well as warns us and even disciplines us for our good and the good of others.

When I think about dads and what we appreciate them, I think of these things:

- In loving us, they want what is best for us.
- They want us to grow in faith, in our walk with Christ and in our love for God in all things.
- They want us to have what we need to live well and be independent, yet still closely connected to them.
- They want us to know how to argue well, not only winning but also for the benefit of everyone as far as it is possible to live at peace with each other.
- They desire that we know how to handle challenges, trials and disappointments.
- They hope we learn to make good friendships by also being a good friend to others.
- They want us to be happy.
- They want us to have a good future, knowing we'll be able to take care of ourselves and those God placed in our lives.
- They entrust us in God's hands, the Heavenly Parent who is like a mother and a father, who cares perfectly for us in life and in the life after this one is finished, the one that begins in heaven.

There are so many other things they want for us, more than I can list. Yet those are some of the main ones.

What is strange is that at times we actually may not feel like they want those things for us, depending on what is happening, what stages we are in life, or something else.

And different from God our Heavenly Father, we of course know our fathers are human. Though no human father is perfect, they strive to perfectly love us in spite of challenges, trials and things out of their control.

When I think about my own dad, who still teaches about life and faith while living in Florida, he showed me:

- how to use tools;
- mow the lawn which I know he was glad that I not only learned but loved to do, turning into my own first business as a youth;
- how to read the Bible and how to pray;
- how to put aside with joy and thankfulness 10% of my earnings to put in the offering plate as my tithe and more when I was able to which was additional offerings, knowing God had blessed me so that I am able to earn and have all I do;
- he showed me not only when it was appropriate to be angry and show it, but also manage it and even apologize when I am wrong;
- how to forgive even when the other person doesn't ask for it or refuses to apologize or forgive in return;
- he taught me to be more understanding;
- he taught me to place my faith in God as I take care of my family, the church God placed in my care, and everything God blessed with me.

I could go on and on with that list too. But I want to share one more thing. My dad gave me gifts over time that I not only wanted, like my first brand new bike which I will never forget, but also gifts that were useful for life and for my future as a father too.

And all fathers are able to give gifts, whether they are in the form of lessons, tools for life or for the home or garage, simple words of encouragement, pride and love in and for you, or something else like words of advice about life choices and relationships.

But no doubt the greatest gifts we receive are those of their actions of faith and love.

We are created to learn and imitate the behaviors of others. If you spend enough time with someone, they will surely influence you in one way or another, whether you like it or not. A father knows and understands this. That doesn't mean dads can always manage their behaviors or words as they want, but they always strive to be the examples they need to be so that the life they live is a gift to their children.

From Matthew 7:9-11 we learn that just as dads know how to give good gifts, so of course God, who is our perfectly loving Heavenly Father, knows how to give us good gifts.

When we truly think about it, even before we were even born, God was preparing for us a life and all we needed in order to live, grow and have the lives we have now. Even when there were trials, challenges, ups and downs, and things that you wished you didn't experience, when you consider not only what you wished and asked for, but the things you had and have that you never asked or couldn't even imagine asking for, you cannot help but see how amazingly good God is and what amazing gifts God has given to you!

God is able to do that which a human father cannot. God was and is able to plan even before time began with you in mind. God was and is able to plan into the future with you in mind.

So realize how God has been and is still working in your life with a Heavenly Father's care and love, with gifts you've asked for as well as many more He's graciously, freely and lovingly given you without you asking. Of course, that includes your dad.

I know my dad is the gifts of my Heavenly Father. And my father showed me more about God's love that relates to this verse. I had asked him for things throughout my young life, and most of the time he gave what I asked in one way or another. And sometimes he surprised me with gifts that I asked for but didn't think I'd get. And the gifts were not only trivial things, but those that would last with me for life and help me be a better father.

So ask your Heavenly Father knowing that He wants to give you good things. In fact, He is not only waiting but wanting you to ask.

Does that mean you'll get everything you ask for? Of course not. Just as our earthly dads wouldn't give us everything we wanted, even if they could give it to us. I truly thank my dad for not giving me things that could have altered my life for the worse without me understanding, or spoil me permanently, or make me appreciate things less, maybe not work as hard for things, give up when it was too hard but so close, and so many other reasons. I thank my dad for giving me what he thought was timely and that would be truly appreciated.

Sure, you may feel disappointed at times. However, remember it was our Heavenly Father who gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to live, die and rise again so that we would have the most important gift of all. And the gift of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ is not one we take and put in the closet until we die. It is one we open daily, as we daily take up our cross and follow Jesus with joy, excitement, love, perseverance, and a desire to share with everyone we can through every way we can.

So among the things we can ask besides for things we desire, which God wants us to ask, take time to ask God such things as:

- help with raising a child to follow Jesus as Jesus would want them to;
- pray for help in having the power of the Holy Spirit in greater measure so you can be a better witness to those who need to hear the good and saving news of Jesus through your life, your example, your care, your love and your words; pray for help in learning to give good gifts as God the Father does so that others will not only be thankful for the gifts but thankful to God for you whom God has placed in their lives;
- pray for our world, our country, our state, our towns, our neighborhoods, our church, and for our family and friends;
- and pray of course for yourself as you seek to be a faithful and fruit-producing disciple of Christ.

And when you pray, remember all that you've learned about God through the Bible, through Sunday School classes, through messages and other means, as well as through the life and examples of people in your life, including your dad and those who were godly dad figures in your life.

As I end today's message, and as I said I would, here are a few more words from those who want to appreciate their dads on this Father's Day.

From Angie VanWashenova, Jim and Cheryl Marlow's daughter:

"My dad is so many things to me: he's an understanding ear and heart, a source of strength and support be it little or small, a lending hand when you don't even know you need it, a guiding light when it gets dark, and a laugh & fun time all of the time! Most importantly, he's not just this incredible person in my life...but in my children's life too! How blessed we all are! Happy Father's Day, dad!"

This next one is from Aaron Vallie:

"Dad I cannot put in words how I feel about you and how appreciated you are! You have shown me and taught me so many things over the years. You have been there for me in the high points and celebrations and the low points and the painful days of my life and whenever I have needed you and even when we were having a rough day, you still were always there for me. The advice you have given me over the years and the lessons I have learned from you have made me of the man I am today. Thank you so much for everything. You have played such an important role in my life and there have been so many great memories and moments together. I can't imagine my life without you in it. Happy Father's Day to a great father!! Enjoy your day you so deserve it!! I love you always!!"

And this last one is from Becki Riggs and her siblings Andy and Jen:

My dad, Darrell Riggs, is a pretty cool dad. I want to share some of his children's favorite things about him on this Father's Day today. Growing up with our dad helped us learn that nearly everything can be insourced in by DIYing it before DIY was a cool thing to do. We have all become creative, resourceful adults coming up with ways we can fix it ourselves and possibly even do it better than the pros. He built the house we grew up in from the ground up, working every evening after he put in a full day at his day job to get the house finished, he'd start after dinner and work on it over the weekends too. It was pretty convenient, since it was right next to the house we lived in at the time! It was great to play at the worksite as a kid too! We even made a mountain bike course and mini golf business on the huge mountains of dirt in our yard, charging the neighbor kids to use them! Again, learning to be resourceful I guess!

We have all found a love for fitness in some way or another, and you can bet that stems from our dad's love of running throughout our childhood years. Running so, so many marathons and showing us what it takes to pursue a true passion. We have also learned the skill to "just go with it" from our dad. When he heard from his cardiologist that he could no longer run his beloved marathons, he went out and got a road bike, going on

long bike rides to maintain his physical and mental health. Even now, during this pandemic, he is going for long, brisk walks every other day with my mom.

As adults, we have really enjoyed watching our dad continue with his passions, finding a love for competitive sailing and building yet another large structure from the ground up. This time it's his own workshop. He takes pride in his work, and it shows. His workshop is really coming together and there will be amazing pieces of work created in there, along with many more fix it up and DIY projects I'm sure.

My brother, Andy and I, have taken after our dad in the saving department also. Saving not as in saving money necessarily, but more like saving everything "just in case we need it again later." Some people call this hoarding, some would call it smart now that there is a global pandemic.

My dad raised three good hearted, creative and resourceful children and he is working on the next generation now. Spending time with his grandkids whenever he can. We love you so much dad and hope you have a great Father's Day!

I thank those who shared to help make this Father's Day a special one as we remember our Heavenly Father's good gifts, which includes our dads.

May we all be examples of God's love as we live a life of thankfulness to God for all the good gifts we have received from Him.

Now let us pray once more. Heavenly Father, we thank you for all the fathers who have shown us more of what your love is like, allowing us to experience more of your love through how they love and loved us. Bless the men in our lives that have been like father figures to us too, who through their examples have shown us your love in a parental way. Help us to see that we too can show your love to all in so many ways, allowing them to experience your love, grace, peace, joy, hope and message of salvation through each of us. On this day, renew our experience of your love for us as our Heavenly Father as we give thanks for all dads. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.