

Sermon ~ If You Know Me You Know My Father

Scripture: John 8:12-19

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." The Pharisees challenged him, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid." Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me." Then they asked him, "Where is your father?" "You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

Introduction

Today is Father's Day. And like Mother's Day in the life of the church it is only fitting that fathers who set a positive example for their children be recognized. Being a parent nowadays is extremely challenging. To be a good father in the 21st Century requires significant effort. Yet it is hard to recognize a good father, especially when there is so much focus on the negative consequences of absent fathers.

PART I.

Here in the Gospel of John one can see Jesus facing a similar experience. The Pharisees question Jesus on who his father is and where his father is. After the age of twelve there is no mention of Joseph of Arimathea. The man who was known as his earthly father disappears from the written records. Jesus only mentions his Father in heaven.

It would have been strange for a Rabbi to be as well accepted as Jesus was without people knowing his family. Generally, the sons of Rabbis would have become Rabbis. This was the case of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The fact that the Pharisees say they don't know who Jesus' father is would have been a dig at him. It implies he does not come from a family of Rabbis. But Jesus flips the script on them and reveals that his Father in Heaven is the one whom their fathers followed. At the end of this passage concerning Jesus' testimony the Pharisee all agree that the only Father they have is God the Father. Yes, God is the Father of everyone, even to those to whom their earthly fathers are not known.

PART II.

Being a father is an extremely special thing. Not everyone can be a biological father, but anyone who invests in the life of a child can be a father figure or an adopted father. My best friend became a single mother at the age of nineteen. For the first twelve years of my god-daughter's life I did the best I could to be a father figure for her. And when my friend married, I watched my goddaughter's newly adopted father take the role of raising her. And now I get to be the godfather to an amazing woman and her brother. Like I said last week, the Church is a family that shares and cares for one another. Anyone can be a father figure in the similar way anyone can be a mother figure. One only needs to make the time to invest in the life of a child.

Now I have two biological sons. And the title I most prefer out of all the various titles I have is Dad. It is rather enjoyable when I get introduced as Silas's or Levi's dad. People know me through my sons, and that can be either good or bad depending on what they have done. But I am always proud to be their father, even if they get in trouble because they are rather ingenious in the mischief they get into.

PART III.

Without Jesus it would be rather difficult for many of us to know God the Father. It is only through Jesus the Son that we can grasp a glimpse of who God is. Because of Jesus's teachings, compassion, grace, and forgiveness we are able to understand what purpose God had for creation. Only through the Son can we know the Father.

When Jesus testifies to the Pharisees, they first reject his testimony because they don't know who his father is. His name is not part of some long line of great Rabbis. These Rabbis honored themselves because the family name had become more important than the commandments God had given. It was Jesus who reminded them of their duty to honor God the Father.

Conclusion

It is the sixth commandment that says to honor thy father and mother. But the only way a child can do so is if they are taught what honor means. These are challenging times for parents, because there are so many influences that distort what the word honor means. The celebrities our society honors often are not the father figures our children need.

To all the father figures who have fought against the odds to be a positive influence in the life of a child, Happy Father's Day.