

2nd Sunday after Pentecost
June 19th, 2022, Father's Day
Christ Lutheran Church, West Covina

Isaiah 65:1-9
Psalm 22:19-28
Galatians 3:23-29
Luke 8:26-39

Sermon

“For in Christ you are ALL children of God through faith, there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

Let us pray...

I confess I love Father's Day for three reasons: The first, of course is that I am grateful for being a father and I get to see and spend time with my adult kids, who usually are so busy with their own lives, I don't get to see them as much as I would like to.

Secondly, it is good to remember and give thanks for my father's love and example. I was blessed by having a father who lived out his faith and made it clear he loved the Lord and put God first in all things.

The last, and probably the best reason of all is that Father's Day is a wonderful opportunity to thank our heavenly Father for all his love, and affirm, like we did through the baptismal promises we made a moment ago, that we are indeed God's beloved children. He created us and we belong to Him, and nothing can separate us from his love.

Growing up and on into my own family traditions, the hymn “Children of the Heavenly Father” was very important to us! It was like our family anthem probably because it is a favorite Swedish hymn written by Carolina (a.k.a. Lina) Sandell Berg, the beloved daughter of a Swedish Lutheran minister. She also wrote the hymn, “Day by Day.”

My father was Swedish. This hymn, “Children of the Heavenly Father”, was sung at my children's baptisms; and yes, it was sung in Swedish by my uncle, who was a pastor, and my two aunts. The words are so powerful and worth repeating again and again; “Children of the Heavenly Father, safely in his bosom gather; nestling bird nor star in heaven such a refuge ne'er was given.”

Lina wrote this hymn not long after she witnessed her own father being swept overboard in a storm. Even in her grief she wanted to share her faith in a heavenly father who is always there to comfort us and promises to forever hold us close in his arms no matter what. As the second verse says so profoundly, “God his own doth tend and nourish, in His holy courts they flourish, from all evil things He spares them, in His mighty arms He bears them.” I can't tell you how many funerals for which we have sung this song, including my father's and my mother's service.

The third verse is my favorite because of the hope it proclaims in the face of death and sorrow; “Neither life nor death shall ever from the Lord his children sever; Unto them His grace He showeth, and all their sorrows all He knoweth.” I can't think of a better song for Father's Day....Well... “This is my Father's World” is pretty good too!

I have no problem thinking or relating to God as Father or Mother. It's like I said, I have been fortunate to have experienced loving parents who demonstrated the love of God to me through their love. I know that isn't the case for all of us. I realize that for some, Father's Day or Mother's Day might not be the most pleasant experience as it can potentially bring up painful memories. I suppose that is why it is so important for all you fathers and mothers out there to draw strength from your baptism and the promises of God; to be the best and most loving parent you can be, yes even when it isn't easy, because as we all know, children are not always easy. In fact, being a faithful and loving parent is probably the hardest job on the planet. This is why we need to call upon our Heavenly Father again and again.

As today's Psalm declares, "when we cry out to the Lord, He will hear us." Isn't this exactly what Jesus teaches us as He calls upon His heavenly Father again and again; in the garden, on the cross and even as he commits his disciples over to His care? God not only listens but acts on our behalf.

It took some time for Paul to get it, but finally, as He called upon God the Father, He realized that we are ALL His children. No one is excluded because of race or gender or economic status. We all share the same Heavenly Father, and we all can sing our praises to Him together. So may our Heavenly Father bless all the fathers out there everyday and may we all declare our praises to our heavenly Father for all that He has done for us. Amen