

Wesley United Methodist Church

June 18, 2017

“Freely You Have Received, Freely Give!”

Matthew 9:35-10:8

Before we begin, I want to wish all the Dads in the room, “Happy Father’s Day.” Fathers don’t get much respect anymore.

Someone observed once that boys grow up spending hours and hours throwing footballs and going to games with their Dads. And when they make it big on the college scene, before the big bowl game they get interviewed, and the first thing they say is, “Hi Mom!” Fathers don’t get much respect anymore. But the news on Father’s Day isn’t all bad. The National Center for Fathering conducted a Father of the Year Essay Contest in partnership with local schools and over 100,000 school children submitted essays on the topic, “What my Father Means to Me.” Here is a sampling of some of the entries.

A first grader writes, “My Dad is the best Dad ever. I would like to kiss a pig for him.”

Another first grader writes, “My Dad is the Frito-Lay man. That is an important job because Frito-Lay means chips, which is food. That is so important because you could not live without food.”

From a third grader, “The Dad in my life isn’t really my dad. He’s my Grandpa. But he’s been like a Dad to me since before I was born...I hope that as I get older Grandpa will teach me all the stuff he knows about wood, and first-aid, and everything else he knows about. My Grandpa isn’t my Father, but I wouldn’t trade him for all the dads in the world.”

A fourth grader writes, “Sometimes as a joke I’ll put my stinky socks in his briefcase, so at work the next day he will think of me! He’s always at the concerts and plays that I’m in, even though he lives an hour away.”

A fifth grade girl writes, “...you know what else my Dad does? He braids my hair. I’m the only girl I know whose dad braids her hair. I think that’s a perfect dad. He already is the world’s greatest dad to me. I just wanted everyone to know that.”

A sixth grader writes, “One time I had an assembly and I was a soloist and my dad was in the first row and after my song I smiled at my dad and my dad smiled back and started crying. That was the best thing I ever saw.”

So, the news for Dads isn’t all bad. Father’s Day is known as the day grown kids call home to speak to Dad.

If you got a Father’s Day present, I hope it was something you can really use. Actually, Dads, in monetary terms, what can our children give us that we cannot purchase for ourselves? In a society as affluent as ours, it is a real challenge to give someone anything they truly need. What do you give to someone who has everything? Now you and I may not feel like we have everything, but think about it. Don’t we basically have everything we need? Most of the things we want are simply bigger and better variations of what we already have. What do you give to people who have everything? That’s what I want to talk about for a few moments today.

We have so much. That’s the first thing we need to see. We have so much.

A visitor from a Third World country came to the United States. As he was riding through a subdivision, he noticed a car backing out of a garage and he said with amazement, “You even have houses for your cars.”

We are rich, if we only knew it. That is why we need to listen closely to Jesus’ words. “Freely you have received, freely give.” Here is the motivation for all good works, “Freely you have received, freely give.”

Of course, when Jesus spoke these words to his disciples, he was not talking about financial blessings. He was talking about the spiritual blessings the disciples had received through him. His love, his grace, his peace. He was asking them to go out into the world to share the faith that he had nurtured in them.

You and I are loved by God. This makes us spiritually rich, if only we knew it. We have treasures that are not dependent on the stock market or the size of our bank accounts or the resale value of our houses. We are rich because we’re loved. We are loved by other people and we are loved by God.

We are particularly mindful of our family relationships on a special occasion such as Father’s Day. To know that we are loved is the greatest gift we can receive from a parent. But to know that we have a heavenly parent who loves us is the most wonderful gift of all.

In 1997 a soldier in Jordan went on a rampage and shot and killed seven Israeli schoolgirls who were on a field trip to the “Island of Peace,” which is a park on the Jordan River between Israel and Jordan. Two of the girls were killed on the spot. The others were taken to a Jordanian hospital but later died.

In the midst of anguish and anger and alienation, without warning, King Hussein, the king of the country where the crazy gunman lived, left his throne, left his palace, left his very country without notifying photographers and journalists, and entered the homes of the families of the slain girls. King Hussein in all his majesty and grandeur entered each of the

modest homes of these grieving families and fell on his knees. He bowed down before them. In each home, he looked into the eyes of the mother, the father, the sisters, the brothers, all the people who were grieving the loss of each young girl and said, 'I beg you, forgive me. Your daughter is like my daughter; your loss is my loss. May God help you to bear your pain.' And the king, humbled before them, bowed and walked out to go back to his country, back to his sovereignty.

This king, this Moslem king, gave us an image of our relationship with Christ. The God of all the universe humbled himself and came into our world to show us how much we are loved. And now it's our job to take that love to others. "Freely you have received, freely give."

And that's what Christ expects out of his disciples. He expects us to be more like him. To be like our heavenly Father who gave himself so completely for the world. "Freely you have received, freely give." That's our challenge. Let's get with it.