

I Am Your Father

A Message for Father's Day, 2020

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Introduction

Today is Father's Day. In America and other parts of the world, we take a little time off to honor our dads. I hope you'll do that today. If your father doesn't live nearby, I hope you'll pick up the phone. Oftentimes in churches, on this day, we take a break from the normal routine to think about fathers in different ways. Let's do that today.



In 1977, I was a first-year student at Indiana University in southern Indiana. I remember one weekend being told that there was a movie I just had to see. So, I got into a car with some friends who drove me an hour north to the city of Indianapolis. There, we sat in the front row of a wide screen panoramic theater and watched the newly released epic film "Star Wars". In that film, I met Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia and Han Solo for the first time.

For any epic film you need epic bad guys, so we also met a mysterious dark Lord named Darth Vader. Darth Vader was a cross between a wizard and a high-tech samurai warlord. As a premier bad guy, he was dressed in a black outfit complete with black cape and scary looking helmet. He and his group had no problem tormenting and killing innocent people. At one point they blew up whole planet.

Well, it was such a good film I had to go see the sequel. Me, and lots of others. It came out in 1980 and was entitled, "The Empire Strikes Back". In the first movie, Luke Skywalker had the potential to be a Jedi Knight, but he didn't have the training. He gets that training in the second film from the Jedi Master, Yoda. If you ever saw that film, you remember one of the most powerful scenes in the Star Wars saga.

Luke faces Darth Vader in a duel with light sabers. In that duel, Luke's not doing well. He's overmatched. He's becoming weaker and weaker with each blow. At one point, Vader swing's his saber and Luke loses a hand. He winds up on his back at the end of a narrow platform overlooking massive cavern. There is no escape. Darth Vader looks down at him and says the immortal words: "Luke, I am your father".

Luke looks back in horror. Vader is a monster. Luke can only call out "no-ooooooooo".

He hates the prospect of being taken in by Vader so much, he throws himself off the platform into the darkness, likely falling to his death. Will he survive that fall? There may be someone in the audience who hasn't seen it, so I won't say.

Let's think about all this. We have a character in a movie, Luke Skywalker, who never knew his father. When he finds his father, his father turns out to be a monster. A man to be despised by any person who wants to be described by the word, "good".

You know what? Many people have a father that they don't know. In the Bible, we're told we have a father in heaven. Many are surprised by that. They've never met him. They don't know him.

What would it be like to meet your heavenly Father? Would it be like Luke meeting his father, something to cause horror? Or, would it be a joyous event? Or perhaps something in between?

Sadly, there are many who have grown up in churches. They believe they have a heavenly Father. But, they don't know him very well.

The Bible has a lot to say about him, so we can't cover everything in one session. Since we're currently in the book of Matthew, let's see what Matthew has to say. Recall that Matthew wants his friends to know about Jesus. So, we'll let Matthew tell us what Jesus, the Son of God, has to say about our heavenly Father.

We'll focus our talk today around some questions about our heavenly Father.

- I. Who is he?
- II. What is he like?
- III. Why would anyone **not** want to meet him?
- IV. How can you meet him?

I. Who Is He?

Let's look at one of the most famous passages in the Bible: The opening of the "Lord's Prayer".

Jesus was telling his followers about Prayer. He started by telling them some things to avoid. Then, he said these famous words: "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...'" (Matthew 6:9)

So, Jesus started by saying, "Yes, we have a Father." The Father lives in the realms of heaven. He's very important. His name is to be hallowed. -It is to be revered and spoken only with love, awe, and incredible respect.

As we read the Old Testament of the Bible, we see an unfolding of knowledge about God.

Some of his qualities are like that of a father. Ideal fathers are caring and giving, and they protect their children. So, people started referring to God as “Father”. Let’s look at the prophet Isaiah.

Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8)



Prior to that people always thought of God as the Creator. Isaiah expands on that a bit. The Father is like a master artist. Artists can use a lot of things to work their art. Isaiah pictures an artist who uses clay.

Master artists have an image in their mind. The best artists know exactly what they want their finished product to look like. And that’s how it is with the father. He is our maker. But, he’s no

amateur. He’s a master, and he knows exactly what he wants to make.

We won’t go into all the passages, but in order for God to be the Creator, he must have unthinkable power. Without great power, you can’t make a universe, much less all of us.

So, the Father is God. He lives in Heaven. He’s important, in fact, the most important being in the universe. In fact, he made the universe. And he has a plan. He is a master artist who knows exactly what he wants to make.

So, now we know something about our Father. Let’s ask the next question.

II. What is the Father like?

What is he like? After we learn about the power of God, we need to learn about his character.

A. He is good.

The Father is good, and he is generous with his children.

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:9-11)

Jesus uses earthly parents as an example. Most parents take care of their children. If you have a child, and your child says, “I’m hungry”, what do you say? Do you say, “Here’s a shoe - Chew on it for a while”? No. If it’s time to eat, you give your children something to eat. If you want to feed your children, your heavenly wants to feed you.

Further, there’s character involved. We have problems. We’re imperfect. We sin. God on the other hand, is perfect and good. So, if we, Jesus says, who are evil, know how to give good things to our children, how much more does your heavenly Father want to give good gifts to his children.

B. He knows everything.

Next, the Father in heaven knows everything.

“... your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” (Matthew 6:8)

In this statement, there are two important things. We’re told that our Father in heaven knows what we need. ***That’s because he knows everything.*** Going back to the prophet Isaiah:

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. (Isaiah 40:28)

To say that God has “understanding no one can fathom” is another way of saying he knows everything. Anyone who wants to create a universe need that.

Can you imagine what would happen if God didn’t know everything? One day, he starts to make a universe. He gets halfway done. All of a sudden, he runs into something he didn’t know about. Because of that, the whole thing falls apart. God looks at the mess and says, “Wow! I didn’t know that would happen.”

Fortunately for all of us, God knows everything. He knows what he’s doing. He knew how to create a universe before he started. So, the universe will never unexpectedly fall apart.

So, The Father God knows everything. This implies something. Because the Father knows everything, ***he knows us.*** He knows everything about us.

There’s good news here. Because God the Father knows everything, and because he knows everything about us, he knows what we need before we even ask. That’s great!

But, there's also potentially bad news. If God the Father knows everything about us, he also knows about the bad things. He knows about our sin. Think about the last time you sinned. **God knew about it.**

But there's also good news in that.

If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. (1 John 3:20)

Sometimes we sin. Actually, lots of times. Sometimes, our hearts condemn us. But God the Father is greater than our hearts.

We learned that God is good. But, there's something even more important for us.

C. He values us.

God the Father **values** us. He thinks we're very valuable.

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (Matthew 6:26)

There are lots of birds out there. There's a magazine called "birding-world". It says there are over 100 billion birds in the world. That's a lot of birds. And yet, the heavenly Father feeds them. Jesus says that you are much more valuable than they. I've spent time in other discussions going into all the scripture, so we won't do it here. Suffice it to say that, to the Father, humans are the most valuable form of life in on our planet. By far. That means your heavenly Father values you.

As I said, we don't have time to go into his here, but God doesn't merely value you. He loves you. And in fact, the modern word "love" may not cut it. What's the word we should use? God cherishes you. Yes, he cherishes you.

III. Why would anyone not want to meet him?

So, our heavenly Father is the God who created the universe. He has great power. In fact, all power. He has great knowledge. In fact, all knowledge. He knows everything. He is good. He values us highly. He cherishes us.

So, why would anyone **not** want to meet him?

Because God is not the only voice in our world. There are other voices. You've heard me refer to them as the idols. Those other voices, the idols, want to control our world. When people listen to the idols, they want to kick God off his throne.

Here's a passage of Scripture that we should get accustomed to. All Scripture is important, but certain segments stand out. Here it is:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles." (Psalm 2:1-3)

We live on a planet where most of the population is in rebellion against the heavenly Father. The Father is worthy of having his name being hallowed. He is worthy of being the king of the universe. The other voices, they don't like that. The reasons are many, but for now let's say they are evil and misguided. So, most of the places you go on earth, you will hear lies and distortions about who God is.

He rules with wisdom, goodness, and love. The other voices, they see this as "chains" to be broken. The Father wants to share his wisdom with us. The other voices see these as "shackles" to be broken. Far from helping to create a world where the Father's name is hallowed, the other voices foment hatred of God. They want his name to be hated and despised.

So, the average person has a distorted view of God. They view God the way Luke Skywalker viewed his father, Darth Vader. The average person thinks that if they were to meet their heavenly Father, it would be like Luke on the narrow ledge crying out, "no-oooo". And so, the average resident of planet earth joins the rebellion. ***That's why we see a world that's breaking all around us.***

IV. How can you meet him?

So, how do you meet your heavenly Father? Let's learn more by looking at the words of our Lord recorded by Matthew.

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Matthew 11:27)

We believe that God is complex, and that he can be described as "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit". This is also known as "Trinity". I addressed that topic a while back in a message entitled, "God is Complex". I'll invite you to find that message on our web site if you're interested.

Jesus, God the Son, says that all things have been committed to him by his Father. He says no one completely knows the father except him.

This is important: Jesus says that he chooses to reveal the Father to people. Unless he does that, no one can know the Father. Let's make this personal.

- Unless Jesus reveals the Father to you, you can't know the Father.
- If you want to meet the Father who lives in heaven, you must do so through Jesus, the Son.

How does this work, exactly? The answer to that is both simple and complex. On the complex side, theologians have debated and whole denominations have been divided. So, we'll have to leave the complex part for another day.

On the simple side, let's start with this: ***You must believe in Jesus and receive him.***

12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:12-13)

You must do these things: believe and receive.

What do you believe? Believe God is good and that he loves you.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Believe that God is powerful. He is the Creator who has power over life and death.

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

How do you receive? In the same verse we're told to make Jesus our Lord and Master. "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord...'"

If you do those things, believe and receive, you become a child of God. You can begin to know your heavenly Father.

At this point, I'd like to add one thing. Our session is coming to a close, so I'll make a personal observation: ***Once you do this, you need to give the Father time.***

It takes time for a master artist to create a fine work of art. All around us, we're given the idea that anything we want should come right away. Some call this the McDonald's approach to life. That means "I want it now." Others call this the microwave approach to life. That means, "I want it fast." To fully understand who your heavenly Father is, you must give him time. Great chefs only work in fine restaurants. You sit down, you order, and you wait. That's how it is with our heavenly Father. You start by believing and receiving Jesus. Then, you must be patient.

What do the other voices say? Everything is right now. Turn on the TV, and they have all the answers. Just wait until after the commercial. Have you ever noticed that you come back after the commercial, and the problems are still there? In fact, there are more problems. You come back tomorrow, and the problems are still there. And the next day, and the next.

Believe. Receive. Then give the heavenly Father time.

Let's pull this all together.

Conclusion

We started with an image from a well-known movie. We saw a young man, Luke Skywalker, who met his father. He believed his father was evil, so he cried out, "no-ooooo".

We've learned that we have a Father. He is the Father in heaven. He is the Creator of all things. Unlike Luke Skywalker's father, our Father in heaven is good. He is powerful. He knows everything, including everything about us. He values us, in fact, he cherishes us.

Why would anyone not want to meet him? Because of the other voices in our world - People who want to remove the heavenly Father from his throne.

If you would like to meet your Father, you must do so through the Son.

- You must believe.
- You must receive.
- Then, you must be willing to wait.

Early in our talk, we quoted the prophet Isaiah. He said God the Father is like a Master artist working with clay. In 1862, a woman was born named Sarah Addison Pollard. She accepted Jesus as her Savior and Lord. She was touched by the idea of a master artist working with clay, and so in 1907 she wrote the words to the hymn, "Have Thine own way, Lord".

Have Thine own way, Lord - Have Thine own way.
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine Own Way, Lord (Adelaide Addison Pollard, 1907)

On this Father's Day, we set time apart to honor our earthly fathers. So, do that. Pick up the phone. Take your dad out to dinner. But then, take some time to honor your heavenly Father. If you haven't met him yet, now is the time