

## **The Legacy of Fathers**

*preached by Rev. Paul Sakasov on June 17, 2018*

Luke 8: select verses 40 - 55

40 Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. 41 Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house 42 because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more." 50 Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." 51 When he arrived at the house, Jesus took the daughter of Jarius her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" 55 Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up.

In 1962 Rick Hoyt was born in Holland, Massachusetts. As a result of oxygen deprivation to Rick's brain at the time of his birth, Rick was diagnosed as a spastic quadriplegic with cerebral palsy. At the time, Rick's parents, Dick and Judy were advised to institutionalize Rick because there was no chance of him recovering, and little hope for Rick to live a "normal" life.

Not wanting to give up, Rick's parents did everything they could for him. In the early 70's they found a group of engineers who built their son an interactive computer that allowed him to communicate for the first time. Soon after he received this gift he told his father that he wanted to run a marathon.

At that point in his life, Rick's dad, Dick was not in very good shape. But, he started to train. And soon after they ran in their first marathon together. And then another. And another. Then came the triathlons. And thirty seven years later the two had competed in 255 triathlons and 72 marathons together. Through it all, Rick would tells his dad that when they ran together, he felt like he wasn't disabled. It is a touching story.

In our Scripture reading this morning we are given another touching story, this time about a father and a daughter. In the text we are told that the father's name was Jarius and his daughter was his only girl; she was daddy's girl. While the text doesn't provide any details about their relationship, we may imagine that from the moment she was born, Jarius' daughter had a special way of tugging on his heart

strings. Nothing gave him more joy than to come home and hold his precious little girl in his arms. To see her smiling face, to hear her laugh, to watch her explore her world with a sense of awe and wonder; was a delight beyond description. For her whole life, Jarius' daughter gave great pleasure to her father. There wasn't anything Jarius wouldn't do for her.

Then one day, as we discovered in today's Scripture lesson, she became mysteriously ill, to the point of death, and Jarius was devastated. The thought of losing his beloved daughter tore his heart. In desperation he thought of what he could do to save his daughter. Then he remembered hearing about Jesus. Just days ago the crazy man who lived naked in the cemetery came into the city wearing clothes and behaving like a normal person. He told everyone that a man named Jesus had cast out a legion of demons from him and made him whole. "Perhaps this Jesus could heal my daughter," thought Jarius.

So, Jarius left his daughter and he left his home to find the healing rabbi. It wasn't long before he came across the crowds, many of whom also came to be healed. There were so many. How would he ever reach the rabbi? It would be hard, but, he would find a way. His daughter's life was at stake. So, he pushed through the crowd, he butted his way in front - and then, with no regard for his dignity as a ruler in the synagogue, he threw himself to the ground - and begged with tears that Jesus would come and heal his daughter. To his great relief, Jesus agreed.

Then as Jesus walked with him toward his home, a servant came to inform Jarius that his daughter was dead. The news was so awful he couldn't bear to hear it. He couldn't allow himself to believe it. As he was coming to terms with this difficult news, Jesus told him to believe. And so against all reason, against experience, against common sense, Jarius believed.

He believed to the point that he still took Jesus to his home. He still believed even as others mocked and scorned Jesus when he announced that the young girl was not dead. He believed as he watched Jesus kick out all his close friends and relatives out of the house. He believed as he led Jesus into the room where his dead daughter lay. He believed as Jesus took his daughter by the hand and told her to get up. He believed as his daughter's spirit returned to her and as he watched her stand up. He believed. And through his belief, through his love, his daughter lived. Presumably, we would like to think, she lived happily ever after.

While life rarely works out so smoothly, and not every story about father and child is a happy one, we have none the less chosen as a society and as a church to set aside one day each year to celebrate the gift of fatherhood. This is because we recognize how important good fathers are to a healthy society. Therefore, we want to celebrate all the good things about fatherhood as a way of encouraging dads to be their best.

It is for this reason that we take time this morning to honour our father's, as the fifth commandment tells us to do. It is for this reason that we remember that our fathers, as imperfect as they may be, have given a lot of themselves on our behalf and they deserve our appreciation. For over the years they have changed our diapers, paid bills, stayed up worried late at night, given us rides, babysat our children, helped us out with home renovation projects, given us instruction and so much more. These things should not be taken for granted.

In a similar way, on Father's Day, and everyday, we must also remember to show our respect and appreciation for our heavenly Father for all the good things we have received through his hand. As Scripture testifies, we are made in the image of God; which is no small thing. We are His special creations. As such, God loves us dearly, just like Jarius loved his daughter. God's heart is touched when He sees our smiling face. God's heart is moved when He hears us laugh. God takes great pleasure in watching us explore the world He has created. God delights in us. God's heart is also broken when He sees our suffering.

That is why the heart of our heavenly Father was broken when sin entered the world and we became ill, deathly ill, like Jarius' daughter. That is why, in anguish of soul, God the Father called out to Jesus, His only Begotten Son, to go into the world and save us. That is why the Father spared no cost in purchasing our salvation. Whatever needed to be done was done. Whatever extreme measures had to be taken, were taken. This is the heart of our heavenly Father.

And in response to this enormous heart for His children, the question for us is, on Father's Day, what are we prepared to do in order to honour our heavenly Father? While answering this question is not the intent behind the establishment of Father's Day, as Christians, it must be first and foremost on our minds.

For it is far more important than finding the right gift, or sending the right card, or

saying the right words to our earthly dads. Not that these things shouldn't be done, but, our first priority on Father's Day is to give honour to our heavenly Father.

This is why we are gathered here today, in God's name. This is why our celebration is filled with the songs, prayers, and stories of our faith. This is why we commit ourselves to demonstrate the compassion of Christ, and to proclaim his gospel, and to demonstrate his character. For this is how we honour our Father in heaven.

So as we celebrate Father's Day, let us begin by renewing our commitment to be holy as God is holy. Let us renew our commitment to love God and our neighbour. As part of living out these great commandments, may we find creative and thoughtful ways to honour our earthly fathers for all they have done on our behalf. And with these words of encouragement, I would like to close with a Father's Day Poem

*Father's Day Poem*

Dad is a person who is loving and kind,  
and often he knows what you have on your mind.  
He's someone who listens, suggests, and defends.  
A dad can be one of your very best friends!

He's proud of your triumphs, but when things go wrong,  
A dad can be patient and helpful and strong.  
In all that you do, a dad's love plays a part.  
There's always a place for him deep in your heart.

And each year that passes, you're even more glad,  
more grateful and proud just to call him your dad!  
Thank you, Dad ... for listening and caring,  
for giving and sharing, but especially, for just being you!  
Happy Father's Day!