

Father's Day is always a strange mix.

Gracious God, May these words be your words of grace. Amen

Father's Day is always a strange mix. We all have different relationships with our fathers. Many of us grew up in an era when fathers were expected to be silent figures who were respected, feared, trusted, and admired. I remember when I was small, my favorite time of day was waiting for my father to come home from work. We would wait forever by the door. My mother would scold us, saying "Now, you know he isn't going to be home for a while." But that did not stop us from waiting for him. And when he did come home, we would fling ourselves into his arms as if our lives depended on it. And he would take each one of us in his lap and sing to us before dinner. But, as we grew up, he just didn't know what to do with us. He became all law and no grace. He was strict and stubborn. One day I remember catching a glimpse of him kissing my mother good bye and holding her for a moment before he left on a trip. It was such a tender moment. We discovered a scrapbook one day of newspaper articles about him and his work. This man who was just Dad to us was something else to the rest of the world. My mother would always tell us to show respect by calling him FATHER and not Dad or Daddy. When I was a teen, I finally got up enough courage to ask him what he wanted to be called, he quietly said. "Daddy is alright." I knew the Daddy who we waited for all those years ago was still there – sturdy and loving. He just didn't know how to show it. I began to understand that whenever he asked if we had enough money or offered to fix our cars, it was his way of showing love. You see he grew up without a father, so he just had to find his way. I am grateful for the quiet grace-filled man that Bill is and the way he parents Luke.

Jesus called God, "Abba" or Daddy. His relationship was that close to God. He understood him in a deep way. In the Old Testament Psalms we hear over and over again about "fearing God". If you look at the language, it is a language of awe. This language understands the sacredness of God's presence. Jesus, as close as he was to God, reflected God's priorities, character, passion, and love. In the Gospel of John, Jesus was trying to tell his disciples everything he could before he left them. God was invisible to them. But, by knowing Jesus, God's son, they could have glimpses of who God is. Before them stood the flesh and bone evidence of the reflection of God, just like our children favor us, reflect our principles, act like us...and embarrass us when we realize how much like us they are. How do we reflect God as our father? Well, look at Jesus' ministry of healing, acceptance, desire for justice, loving absolutely everyone, standing against violence, and standing with the poor. In the first letter of John, we hear how we can reflect God. It is not good enough for us to just say that we love God. We gotta walk the talk. That means understanding that we are called to love others as our brothers and sisters. We are all related and connected by God as our father.

I love the book and movie, "To Kill a Mockingbird". It is a story about Scout, Jim and their father, Atticus in a small southern town. Atticus is not only a father who reads to his children at night, he teaches them lessons of respect. He emulates the inclusive love of God. In a segregated and racist town, he takes on the case of an African American

man who is falsely accused of a horrible crime. With no doubt in his mind, he defends the man to the end. His children learn about love, justice, and living an honorable life by the way that he walks in his own skin every day. And Scout, she finds as the story progresses, that her Daddy walks the talk. And this spit fire half pint of a girl does too.

The greatest gift we can give our children is to reflect God, as Jesus. Walk in the world honorably, with kindness and compassion knowing that we have brothers and sisters all over the world who long for love, respect and God's grace.

Carry on the character and passions of Jesus...and you will carry God's presence. And people will know, saying "Here comes one of God's children – Boy, doesn't she or he greatly resemble their father!"