



Wayne's Words

Rev. Wayne Walters



Father's Day

The original gospel passage coincidentally set for today is at once a shock and a seeming slap in the face to fathers and mothers. In Luke 14:25-35, Jesus uses hyperbole (startling exaggeration) to awaken his listeners to a critical truth. This is that our allegiance to God must take priority over our allegiance to our families, especially when family culture or pressure stands against a wholehearted obedience to our Creator and Lord. This seems paradoxical, given that healthy families are the God-given environment in which children grow and flourish. Through the love and wise guidance of our parents we discover our unique identity and worth. We are also required by the commandment to honour our parents. This surely includes our Christian responsibility to care for our parents as they age, just as they have cared for us in our infancy.

Yet the power and influence that families wield over their members is subject to God's loving and holy purposes. Parenthood is a trust, a stewardship given by God. Jesus redefined family as 'those who do the will of God'. They are his mother, brothers, and sisters (Mark 3:31-35). The apostle Paul described his role among the Thessalonians as like that of a father – 'encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God...'

Children need strong and nurturing adult role models. The African Proverb wisely reminds us that 'It takes a whole village to raise a child'. The nurture fathers give their children is strengthened by the encouragement and interest given by uncles, godfather, family friends and mentors, each calling forth and affirming the person the child is becoming. Children need a father's comfort, forgiveness and acceptance for times when they fail, are hurt, or become overwhelmed. And they need a father's example and urging to be people of character, integrity, and faith when the whole world may seem to be moving in the opposite direction.

Today we are invited to give thanks for our fathers and other wonderful men in our lives, and in some cases to dare to forgive our fathers. We are called to support and pray for those who cannot be the father they long to be due to the heartbreak of family separation or other circumstances. We are challenged to be fathers and mothers to the next generation - to encourage and urge them on as they feel their way to becoming seekers and followers of Jesus - who fully revealed the love of our heavenly father and opened the way for us to belong to him forever.

God bless you,

Wayne

