

8/1/2010

**THE PSALM AND THE INVOCATION**

**Psalm 103**

Lay Minister: 6 The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

**People: 7 He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel:**

Lay Minister: 8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

**People: 9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;**

Lay Minister: 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve

**People: or repay us according to our iniquities.**

Lay Minister: 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;

**People: 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.**

Lay Minister: 13 As a father has compassion on his children,

**People: so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;**

Lay Minister: We begin our worship today in the name of the God who forgives and shows compassion.

**People: In the name of God the Father, and in the name of God the Son, and in the name of God the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

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***(God calls parents to constantly teach their children about Him.)***

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

**THE EPISTLE LESSON Hebrews 12:5-11**

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***(Parents teach through loving discipline, following the example of God.)***

5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

**THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 15:11-32**

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**(A father speaks lovingly to two sons. One son listens and one doesn't.)**

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. 13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'

20 So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 31 "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

INTRO - After returning home from 10 straight days of long hours of youth gathering, and after returning to 5 intense days here at home, I was down on the Kenai Thursday and Friday and yesterday morning, fishing. As I cast a fly for red salmon Thursday evening there was a young man who stepped in beside me and started throwing His fly.

He didn't know what he was doing too well, he was young. The young boy's dad told him to watch it so he didn't hit me. I remembered a similar incident about 8 or 10 years ago where our whole family was at the same fishing spot, but there were more people. I was teaching Tim to fish for reds, and an Elderly lady to him to "Watch out! Don't hit me kid." I tried moving him down the beach, but when I talked to my wife who was sitting in a chair watching, she decided we needed to leave. She didn't want some lady being mean to her son. With this in mind, I told the dad of this young boy fishing next to me, "It's ok, he's got to learn. I can move a little."

According to Professor Thad Warren, our speaker this year at Workers Conference, "caring conversations" are one of the most important characteristics of teaching faith to our children in such a way that they keep that faith for their lives. However, as I stood there throwing my fly but catching few fish, for the moment, I wondered why I can find it so easy to be kind to a stranger, but often my conversations with my own children have an intent, and don't always come across in such a caring manner. I love my children, but often my conversations don't seem caring, even if they are intended to show love.

I. Keeping this in mind, today we begin an August sermon series on Christian parenting. School is starting, and our emphasis on raising our children comes into focus again.

A. Some may think, "well, I don't have children, this doesn't apply to me." But, you may have grand children. Or, as a member of the God's church we all have a responsibility to instill faith and Christian life in our children. Even children have a reason to listen, because in knowing their parent's job, they understand God's purpose for them.

B. It is important that we know what the job is that God gives to parents.

1. We are not just to care for or protect our children.
2. God calls parents, first and foremost, to raise children knowing about God.
  - a. Today's Old Testament lesson calls us to teach children about God, whether sitting at home, or traveling somewhere, but everywhere teaching.
  - B. Many know Proverbs 22:6, **Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.** God's people are to teach their children about God and His ways.
  - c. And Ephesians 6 tells Fathers, **4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.** Fathers and mothers are to teach their children about the Lord and His ways. That is our main job as parents.
3. If you think about it, teaching about God is the best way to care for and protect our children. If our children learn about God, this takes care of their eternity, as they learn of God's love in Jesus.

II. So, looking at today's Bible readings we can consider how parents can have caring

conversations.

A. The Father in the parable of the two sons is a picture of God and His love to us. This Father showed love to both sons in times of bad behavior by the sons. But, it does not seem to have been regular conversation. Otherwise he would not need to have explained to the older son he was always welcome to have a dinner party with His friends. The idea of caring conversations is that these happen on a regular basis.

B. Our epistle lesson from Hebrews brings up a difficult reality when it comes to children. One of the jobs of parents in teaching children about life, and about God, is the job of discipline. All God's children need correction and direction. While parents often try to softly direct children in a Godly direction, the sinful nature in children, and in adults, can often lead us astray. It can be a struggle to discipline children in a caring way. Even God had to punish to catch the attention of his straying people. Parents, even God has struggled with His children.

C. Our Old Testament Lesson gives a picture of regular conversation with children.

1. Yes, we are to talk about God with our children at all times.
2. But, just talking with them regularly is important.
  - A. A study quoted in the first Promise Keepers book says that dad's average less than a minute of conversation a day with children.
  - B. With busy schedules, TV, computers, and I-Pods, it can be difficult to get time with children. It takes time!
  - C. But, regular conversation with children, asking about their day, asking about their friends, teaching them about God and life, is so important to convey the love we have.
  - D. Unfortunately, this may be one of those areas where I share God's Word with you and say to do as I (and God) say, not as I do.

III. Actually, as I look at Scripture, the best example about regular caring conversation with children is not a person, but God and our teaching on prayer.

A. In prayer, God doesn't just talk, but He listens. That is what prayer is, God listening. The Lord of the universe taking time to listen to us!

1. We get to talk to the Lord of all about anything, from our heart.
2. Perhaps the most common teaching on prayer is that God encourages us to always pray. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says to **"pray without ceasing."**
3. If God encourages us to come to Him at all times, about anything, and He will listen in love and wisdom, that is an example for parents to follow.

B. It is important to say that no parent is perfect. I know I'm not. This series is not intended to create guilt, but to give direction and help.

1. I am thankful that my wife is parent of our children along with me. Two people can do better than one. Her strengths fill in for my weaknesses.
2. Thankfully, single parents know that we have another parent in God Himself.

CONCLUSION - There is an old song from the play, "Fiddler on the Roof." In that song Tevya asks his wife, "do you love me?" She responds, "For 25 years, I've washed your clothes, cleaned your house." "Yes," Tevya asks, "But do you love me?" Finally she responds, "Yes, I do." It is important to share our love in words. Regular, loving conversations share our love, and by example, share God's love with our children.