

Third Sunday of Easter – April 14th, 2024
GOD OUR PERFECT PARENT

Prayer

Abba, help us to become better children, both of you, our heavenly Father, as well of those parents that raised us.

AMEN

Introduction

As I thought about the focus of today's sermon, I realized that not all of us are parents, but that we are all children, even if we're adults and even if our parents have died, we still are products of their nurture (or lack thereof).

Children of God

God has only one natural child, one that was begotten of His Father before all worlds but incarnate in time and space through a teenage virgin some two-thousand years ago.

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However, He has millions, if not billions of adopted children. You and I are included in that count if we have been reborn by water and the Word through the sacrament of Baptism, where God forgave all of our sins and gifted us with the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Our Perfect, Heavenly Father

What does our perfect, heavenly Father do for us and to us? Let's look at some of the ways:

- (1) First and foremost, He loves us. Those of you who've been around for a while can probably guess which of the Greek words that are translated as 'love' is in today's text. If you guessed Agape, you would be right. This is that self-sacrificing love that Jesus acted upon when He took our sins upon Himself. It is inclusive of descriptive words such as benevolent, holding in esteem, and exhibiting good will toward.
- (2) As we heard in last week's sermon quoting Luther's explanation to the first article of the creed, our Father provides for ALL of our temporal NEEDS, albeit not necessarily all our temporal WANTS.

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- (3) Our Father protects us through the heavenly host, as we read both in Psalms (91:11)

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways

and in the letter to the Hebrews (1:14)

Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

- (4) Through the written Word, the Bible, as well as the living Word, Jesus, our Father teaches, trains, reproveth, and corrects us.

Our Imperfect Earthly Parents

In contrast, because we live in a fallen world, our earthly parents are imperfect. Those of us who are parents know that parenting is not an easy task – we are often imbalanced, at times too merciful and at other times too harsh; at times too controlling while sometimes too lax.

We are often intolerant of our children, not acknowledging that they have different personalities, skills, abilities, talents, likes, and dislikes than we do; we sometimes act like they should be our clones.

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I don't know about you, but as a scout leader I've seen way too many helicopter parents, who don't understand that their children need to do things on their own, and maybe even fail a time or two, as part of their growing up into healthy, mature adults.

Finally, I've also seen parents who want to relive their own childhood through the lives of their children, especially if there are things they wish they could have done, but didn't have the opportunity to do when they were growing up.

We As Imperfect Children

Enough about parents, what about our role as children? Again, because we live in a fallen world, we may project the imperfect nature of our earthly parents into our heavenly Father, instead of recognizing that even the most wonderful earthly parent is but a pale imitation of the perfection of God's parenting.

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As children, we may not make much of a distinction between how we treat our heavenly Father and how we treat our earthly parents. On a regular basis, we disobey both earthly and eternal parents. It's a good bet that we also fall short of the perfect respect and honor that we should have for God, Mom, and Dad.

God's Perfect Son

As imperfect as we are, we do have a sibling who is perfect. Jesus, who was just as human as we are, lived a perfect, sinless life. We read in Hebrews (5:8-9):

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him

and in the Psalms (18:30)

This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

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But Jesus was not only fully human, but He was also fully divine. Because of this, He was able to conquer once and for all sin, death, and the devil through His death and resurrection. We heed His word as recorded by John (10:18):

"No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

What else can I tell you about our perfect sibling? When He ascended to Heaven, He gave us the Holy Spirit as our comforter. We know from last week that He continues to be our advocate – our defense counsel – with respect to the Father.

John in his Gospel quotes Jesus as saying (John 14:3)

And if I go and (1) prepare a place for you, (2) I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

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In today's text, John wrote (1 Jn 3:3)

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is

Finally, the book of Revelations promises that we have been invited to our brother's wedding feast, the marriage supper of the lamb.

I invite you now to partake of the sacrament of Communion, which is a foretaste of that feast which is yet to come.

AMEN