

# Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

## SERMON FOR

June 21, 2015

*“A Father Who Ran*

*Jim Wilson*



Reverend Bill Freeman: Senior Minister

Eckart Seeber: Music Minister

Marie Paulus-Nyquist: Children's Minister

Donna Scott: Lay Reader

## ***Menifee United Church of Christ***

*Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM*

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***Live Life Fully Alive!***

June 21, 2015  
"A Father Who Ran"  
Rev. Bill Freeman

**Micah 6:6-9**

*With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

**Luke 15:11-24**

*Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.*

## *A Father Who Ran*

When Pastor Bill approached me a few Sundays ago with the idea of my giving the sermon on Father's Day, I was a little numbed, and perhaps a little dumb, as well. Also, a little flattered, but at the same time wondering "why me?" However, as the days went by and June 21<sup>st</sup>, Father's Day, became imminent, I realized that it was too late to decline the offer, so here we are. It's Father's Day and I am before you...at 92 a father and a grandfather, but not a great grandfather yet, in spite of my years...and probably without all the wisdom one would expect at this age.

Most Americans celebrate the third Sunday in June as Father's Day, and venerate fatherhood in general, such as fathers and father figures, including grandfathers and guardians and others who assume that role. But still, the day was created to honor fathers, just as Kathleen a few weeks earlier told us how Mother's Day was finally recognized. Interestingly, it took perseverance to get both days established.

Father's Day is usually marked with the giving of gifts, often in the realm of home improvement, electronics, tools, sports equipment, and perhaps more generally – ties, shirts, and some other male regalia. You've seen the advertisements in newspapers and on TV pushing their ideas of the perfect gift for dad. Unfortunately, we can't escape businesses taking advantage of the commercial opportunity a special day provides. Life has become more complicated and gift ideas for Dad can be pretty big and expensive now. I remember when our kids were in elementary and junior high school, all of us dads showing off our new ties at Adult Sunday School shortly after opening our presents that morning at home. We were a festive bunch in tie colors of orange, lavender, and chartreuse – colors we probably would seldom wear.

Now, of course, many churches use the day to celebrate the theme of fatherhood, even more specifically, the idea of God as Father of us all, as expressed in the Lord's Prayer: a prayer in

which we sing or say every Sunday – “Our Father, which art in Heaven.”

So, how did such recognition of fathers ever get started? Kathleen told us that efforts to honor mothers were started shortly after the Civil War, but it was not until May 8, 1914 that Congress passed a law making the second Sunday in May the official day to honor Mothers. That took about 44 years. Likewise, it took some perseverance to have fathers recognized “officially.” In 1910 a Father’s Day celebration was held in Spokane, Washington, at the YMCA by Sonora Smart Dodd (who was born in Arkansas) (I don’t know how she got to Spokane. I just mention it because it was my place of birth, as well. We Arkansans get around.) The date of the celebration was June 19, 1910. Sonora’s father, a Civil War veteran, was a single parent who single handedly reared his six children. Having heard a sermon about Mother’s Day in 1909, Sonora told her pastor that fathers should have a similar holiday honoring them. Several local clergymen accepted the idea and June 10, 1910 the first Father’s Day sermons honoring fathers were presented throughout the city. Unfortunately, the special day tapered off and was not recognized every year. It wasn’t until the 1930’s, however, when Miss Dodd returned to Spokane from a period in Chicago that she started promoting the celebration again.

In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson went to Spokane to speak at a Father’s Day celebration and wanted to make it official, but Congress resisted. Following that effort, several Presidents tried to make Father’s Day official, but without success. Lyndon Johnson in 1966 issued the first Presidential proclamation making Father’s Day the third Sunday of June. Six years later the day was made a permanent National Holiday when President Nixon signed it into law in 1972.

Almost unbelievable. It took from 1910 until 1972 for our country to honor fathers with a day especially for them, as there had been a day since 1914 to honor mothers. If you’ve been trying to keep up with the figures, it turns out that it took 62 years to grant fathers their special day for which we as fathers are appreciative and grateful to those people who wouldn’t give up

on giving mothers and fathers their special day! Father's Day is now pretty much celebrated around the world.

Well, that's a bit of the history of Father's Day, but what does it mean for us today and specifically the fathers among us? The day really is a time to celebrate fathers, current and past, and to give thanks for all the love, support, and good times we've experienced with our fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers or even caring men in our lives who have been father figures for us. We can cherish the memories of, and perhaps still do, the camping trips, fishing, golfing, or just quiet times together. Those who are blessed to still have a father living can let him know personally how much you have learned from his example of love and guidance. And for those who have not experienced this type of relationship, or want to understand it more fully, there are many passages and references in the Bible to expand and deepen our knowledge.

Perhaps the story in Luke 15:11-32 is one which not only shows us the behavior of a loving father, but dramatically gives us insight into how God would react. While generally known as The Story of the Prodigal Son, we see the remarkable behavior of the father. The younger of his two sons asked for his inheritance from the father well before he should have (which he would normally have received at the time of his father's death) and he cut himself off from the family by going to another country where he lived the high life of spending, carousing, doing many of the things a young man might do to spread his wings and have a great time. But he was not wise in his behavior, and soon found he had run out of all his money. He got employment feeding pigs, but quickly realized that the servants at his father's home were living and eating better than he could. The son, through the reality of his living and no longer able to support himself, did at least realize his errors and only planned to ask his father to take him back as one of the servants.

He knew his behavior had made him sinful against his father and heaven. So he travelled home. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming in the distance. He was thrilled and felt great compassion for his son. The father could not hold himself back. He started to run to to meet him. He ran all the

way, throwing his arms about him, and lovingly kissing him. The son was contrite, filling the father with so much joy, the father forgot the anguish of the past, and had a feast prepared to welcome his son home. To the older son who had been faithful and dutiful, his father, explained everything had always been his. The younger son, though, had been lost and now was found. The father was overflowing with love and forgiveness, just as our Heavenly Father loves and forgives us when we repent and change our ways.

The great love shown by an earthly father for the returning of a wayward son – or just the day to day interaction of a caring, loving, listening, attentive father – is magnified many times over by the forgiveness and love of our heavenly Father.

The parable reminds us that we are accepted by God because of His Grace, not because of our merits. Our heavenly father is waiting to run to us with open arms.

How shall we meet Him this Father's Day?

We hope your day will be very special!

*Happy Father's Day*



*What Makes A Dad?*

*God took the strength of a mountain,*

*The majesty of a tree*

*The warmth of a summer sun,*

*The calm of a quiet sea,*

*The generous soul of nature,*

*The comforting arm of night,*

*The wisdom of the ages,*

*The power of the eagle's flight,*

*The joy of a morning in spring,*

*The faith of a mustard seed,*

*The patience of eternity,*

*The depth of a family need,*

*Then God combined these qualities,*

*When there was nothing more to add,*

*He knew His masterpiece was complete*

*And so,*

*He called it...Dad!*

## THE GOLDEN RULE

*What is hateful to you  
do not do to others.*  
Judaism

*Do to others what you would  
have them do to you.*  
Christianity

*None of you believes until he wishes for his  
brother what he wishes for himself.*  
Islam

*Do not do to others  
what would cause pain if done to you.*  
Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself  
would find hurtful.*  
Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,  
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*  
Taoism

*Do not do to others  
what you do not want them to do to you.*  
Confucianism

*Treat other people  
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*  
Humanism