

LESSONS FROM MY FATHER – TVC – JUNE 19,2022

Many of us here this morning are fathers, and on this day each year, we tend to get puffed up a little bit.

-We soak up the admiration and bask in the praise.

But we know that we'll have to come back to earth tomorrow morning, and sometimes the descent comes with a thud!

- Many of you will know the name Howard Hendricks, the well-known Christian lecturer and author.**
- One day, after finishing a lecture at some event, he and his wife were approached by a young man who couldn't wait to tell Howard what a wonderful presentation he had made.**
- After making his comments the young man said to Howard, "You are a great man!"**
- Shortly after, the couple were in their car driving home and Howard, glancing over at his wife, said, "A great man! How many great men do you know?"**
- She immediately shot back, "One less than you think."**

- I think my wife, Jerry, must have taken some cues from Mrs. Hendricks because I've had some similar experiences.

-We have two daughters and when they were in their early twenties, Jerry thought they were a little slow in getting dates and evaluating their prospects.

-So, from time to time she would encourage them on how to "put themselves out there" in an appropriate manner.

-But they always came back with the same refrain: "Mom, we're looking for someone like Dad. We can't find anyone like him."

-About this time, I would get a catch in my throat and smile lovingly at the girls.

-One day, Jerry had had just about enough of this nonsense and she said, "Girls, do you think your father was like this when I married him? I've been training him for the past 20 years!"
- Let me say, on a more serious note, that not all of us have had fathers who reflected the kindness of Jesus and the love of God the Father.

-I was blessed to have a father who did. He was saturated with the joy and grace of God and was always diligent in sharing his faith with others.

-He spent the last years of his life in the Memory Care Unit on the second floor of the Pavilion across the street.

-Day after day he stood by the elevator and as people got off he would ask each one, “Do you know Jesus?” That’s just the way he was.

LESSONS FROM MY FATHER - Title

- My father taught me many things about the Scripture, the Christian Life, and the principles of the Christian faith.**
- This morning I want to share with you four of the most important lessons he taught me.**

THE FIRST IS GOD’S GLORY

- Have you ever noticed how often we talk about God’s glory?
 - o And this is certainly not inappropriate! Pastor Andy preached a wonderful sermon on the glory of God in his series on the core values of TVC.****

- **Four weeks ago he preached another sermon, from John 17, in which he also emphasized the glory of God.**

But I wonder if we don't need to be more careful about, what sometimes appear to be, MINDLESS REFERENCES to the glory of God.

- **Almost out of habit, we pray that God's name will be glorified.**
- **We sing, sometimes unthinkingly, about the glory of God.**
- **We dedicate our church buildings and our babies to the glory of God.**
- **Inadvertently our references can become like some sort of "Christian mantra". . . a kind of "spiritual good luck chant".**
- **We begin to feel comfortable with God's glory, like we feel comfortable with an old pair of jeans or a favorite sofa.**

As human beings, we should be very UN-comfortable with God's glory.

- **His glory has to do with:**
 - His reputation and honor.
 - His blinding splendor.
 - His moral beauty.

- His intrinsic worth.
- His indescribable majesty.
- His perfection and righteousness.
- His otherness and weightiness.
- His limitless, ineffable, majestic power.

- We should never become comfortable with God's glory. We should be in absolute awe!

- We should speak of His glory in hushed tones.

Yes, He's our gracious, loving, heavenly Father. . .

But think about it: When Isaiah saw the Lord, seated on a throne, high and lifted up, was his first impulse to run up to the throne and jump into God's lap?

- Not when he saw the heavenly seraphs.
- Not when he heard them worshipping the Holy One.
- Not when the door posts began to shake.
- Not when the whole temple was filled with smoke.

Isaiah cried out: "I'm ruined! I'm doomed! My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. There is no way I can survive this encounter!"

In Revelation we read about the Apostle John coming face-to-face with the glorified Christ. Was his first reaction to run up to Christ, and give Him a big bear hug?

- **Not when he saw that His head and hair were white like wool.**
- **Not when he saw his eyes of blazing fire.**
- **Not when he realized that His voice was like the sound of mighty ocean waves.**
- **Not when he saw that the Son of Man was holding seven stars in His hand and that a sharp two-edged sword came from His mouth.**
- **Not when he caught a glimpse of His face that shown like the sun in all its brilliance.**

John's reaction was to fall, like a dead man, at the feet of Christ, and humbly worship Him.

Have you ever noticed how we are so often enamored with human celebrities? (Sports figures, TV personalities, maybe even political leaders.)

- **Apparently in his day, actor Paul Newman was quite a stud – suave, good looking.**
- **He and his family often visited a quaint town in New England which they liked.**

- **One morning, a middle-aged woman in that town, after a brief run, decided to treat herself to an ice cream cone.**
- **She went to the little bakery and ice cream shop that she loved and found there was only one patron sitting at the counter.**
- **To her surprise, it was Paul Newman, and she felt herself melting under his gracious gaze.**
- **She chided herself, remembering that she was a happily married woman, and tried to pull herself together.**
- **She ordered a double-dip chocolate cone which the clerk handed to her along with a handful of change.**
- **Without even glancing at Newman again, she turned and walked out the door.**
- **But, when she reached her car she realized that she had some coins in one hand but her other hand empty.**
- **“Where’s my ice cream cone?” she said to herself.**

- She hurried back into the store expecting to find the clerk waiting for her with the cone, but he wasn't even behind the counter any longer.
- With that she happened to look over to Paul Newman again who broke into his familiar, warm and friendly smile.
- Knowing what she was looking for, he said kindly, "You stuffed it into your purse."

Why is it that we are so impressed, even unnerved, by the aura that surrounds human celebrities . . .

- While at the same time we're so nonchalant about how we approach God, the Creator of the universe???
- People call Him "the Man Upstairs" or "The Big Guy in the Sky", or by some other flippant reference.

Maybe we don't use those terms but are we ever flippant, or frivolous, or impertinent when we encounter God – whether in prayer, or worship, or in our daily lives? (I think I am sometimes.)

Shouldn't we be more aware that we are standing before the Lord of Glory, the maker of heaven and earth, the Alpha and Omega!

-He's not just a greater version of ourselves. He is the omnipotent potentate of the universe!

In fact, God's glory is so important, it's the thing about which God Himself is most concerned.

- **Initially this sounds very strange to us.**
 - When Jesus, God in the flesh, was on this earth, He was meek and lowly of heart. He was the humble Servant who washed His disciple's feet.**
 - To say that God the Father is most concerned about His own glory, sounds egotistical and arrogant!**
- **But God knows that everything in heaven and on earth is dependent on Him:**
 - Dependent on His might and power.**
 - Dependent on His creative genius.**
 - Dependent on His knowledge and wisdom.**
- **He knows that upholding His glory, and retaining His rightful place in the universe, is ultimately what's best for us!**

-Every human father knows that his children need to honor him (and their mother), and recognize his authority. Because:

**-Without him (and their mother),
-Without his care, without his strength,
-Without his guidance,
-Without his provision . . . he knows
His children will perish!**

- Just look at the moral depravity of our American society today, due in large measure to the fact that millions of homes are without a father figure.**
- A good, loving father takes every appropriate step possible to retain his proper role as head of the home because he knows it's what's best for his children.**

Similarly, God's glory is the most important thing in the whole universe!

- If His glory does not reign supreme, nothing else matters.**
- If His glory does not reign supreme, who will sustain the planets and the stars – the universe?**

**-Will the U.S. Congress do it?
-Will the United Nations do it?**

- God knows that lifting up His glory is what's best for us, for everyone, for everything!

A number of years ago, when I was serving as president of the Alliance, Jerry and I were visiting a church in Pennsylvania.

- Jerry was invited to speak to the children in Children's Church while I preached in the Sunday Morning Service.**
- She had been asked to explain to the children something about what I did as president.**
- So, knowing that a lot of kids were into sports, she began by saying that the C&MA was like a big team, with members all over the world, and that I was like the coach of the team.**
- Everything was going well until one little girl put up her hand and said, "But, Mrs. Nanfelt, I thought God would be the coach of the team."**

(Picture Trophy)

I thought Jerry's response was perfect. She said, "Have you ever watched what happens after the Super Bowl is over, or after the World Series ends? Who gets the trophy first?"

-The trophy goes to the owner of the team!

-God is the owner of everything. He gets all the glory!

2. WHY HAVE I MADE SUCH A POINT OF THIS?

- **Because understanding the majesty of God's glory is the starting point for understanding the depths of GOD'S GRIEF.**
- **The CRUSHING GRIEF, borne by God, is a second lesson my father taught me, and which I want to share with you this morning.**

Of course, there is a huge mystery here!

- **If God is so mighty, and gracious, and powerful, what could possibly cause Him to grieve?**
- **First let me remind us that God revealed His glory, which we've just been talking about, to all humankind. You know the Scripture:**

-“The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display His craftsmanship.”

-“They speak without a sound or word: Yet their message has gone throughout the earth and their words to all the world.”

(Ps. 19:1 & 4)

-“Ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature.”

(Romans 1:20)

- **The Apostle Paul concludes that there is no excuse for humankind not to stand in awe of the glory of God.**
- **Everyone on earth should be crying out like Isaiah: “I’m ruined! I’m doomed! I’ve seen the Living God!”**
- **And like the Apostle John, every member of the human race should be falling at the feet of the Holy One in absolute surrender!**

But we know that we humans have not responded to God in this way.

- **Again, the Apostle Paul reveals the reality of the situation:**

- “Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship Him as God or even give Him thanks.

Instead of worshipping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshipped idols, made to look like mere people, and birds and animals, and reptiles. They traded the truth about God for a lie.

So, they worshipped and served the things God created, instead of the Creator Himself, who is worthy of eternal praise.”

(Romans 1:21,23.25)

Like some of you, I’ve witnessed these dreadful scenes in places like the jungles of Borneo, and the villages of Africa, where people make animal sacrifices to evil spirits.

(Temple Worship PIC)

I’ve been stunned as I’ve watched hundreds of people press into the incense-filled temples of Asia, bowing down to worship grotesque idols, idols that cannot see, or hear, made by human hands.

And lest we think that these are just backward people who don’t know any better, all we need to do is look around us, and maybe even into our own hearts . . .

-Where we find people who worship money, and status, and prestige and style and stars.

The first chapter of Romans winds up with the conclusion that the lives of all humankind have become full of every kind of wickedness, sin, and greed.

- And even though people “know God’s justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway!”

(Romans 1:32)

There was only one possible course of action: God had to condemn sin and punish sinners.

- Not because God is vengeful.**
- Not because God is mean and arrogant.**

-But because it was imperative that God’s glory be lifted up and that His Name be honored and exalted.

So, in the Bible we read quite a bit about God’s judgement against sin.

- These statements about eternal punishment are not only numerous, they’re alarming, and we would be foolish to ignore them.**

Yet, you’ve probably heard people say:

- “There’s no way! God would never punish people so severely! God is loving, kind and merciful.”**

- “And, most people mean well, so it wouldn’t be fair for God to send people to hell.”

But hear me! This is precisely why God GRIEVES!

- He grieves because He has no choice.
- Allowing sin to go unpunished would mean offending the matchless, incomparable, glory of God, and that would be unthinkable.
- We’ve already talked about the disastrous results this would cause for the whole universe.

Does God enjoy punishing people? No!

- There is nothing in the Bible that suggests that God celebrates when a sinner goes to hell.
- It doesn’t give Him pleasure; it gives Him GRIEF!

(Cartoon Police giving Ticket)

We humans, of course, are just the opposite:

- Don’t you love to see someone who has passed you on the inter-state, going 90 mph., pulled over by a state trooper a few miles down the road?
- We say, “Good. He deserved it!”

But God isn't like us. He's like a father who grieves because his son has gone astray, and just wants him to come home, no matter what he has done.

Isn't it amazing that God GRIEVES over the lostness of the very people . . .

- **Who mock Him, and disobey Him, and reject Him, and rebel against Him?**
- **God loves people so much that he GRIEVES over their lostness.**
- **He doesn't want them to be lost. He wants them to be found.**

3. AND THIS LEADS US TO THE THIRD LESSON I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU TODAY:

We've talked about **God's GLORY, and **God's GRIEF**, - the third truth has to do with **GOD'S GIFT**.**

- **Interestingly, even though people recognize, to some degree, their sinfulness, many struggle with the idea that God will actually go so far as to punish sinners.**

- They contend, as I mentioned a moment ago, that if God is loving and good, there is no way that He would ever send someone to hell.

- "It just wouldn't be fair!", they say.

But, let me tell you what is NOT FAIR! God's grace is not fair! It's totally undeserved!

A number of years ago, when the three granddaughters we had at the time were about 9 or 10 years old, Jerry and I took them bowling.

- I said I would go first, to show them how to do it, and I proceeded to roll the ball down the alley, at a speed which, I'm quite sure, must have exceeded 100 mph. It was like a massive bullet!
- I watched as a measly five pins went down.
- I think my next roll brought down another pin or two.

Anyway, one of the three little girls volunteered to go next.

- I should mention that the bowling alley people had flipped a switch which brought up bumper guards so that none of the girl's balls could roll into the gutters on either side of the alley.

(I guess they did this anytime little kids were bowling.)

The bowling balls were so heavy that our little granddaughters had to cradle them in their arms to get into position.

- Our first volunteer, Emily, was only able to drop the ball at her feet. She couldn't actually roll it.

- I watched as the ball slowly started to move down the ally.

- I latter calculated that I could have gone to the snack bar for cokes and get back before the ball actually reached the pins!

The ball proceeded down the ally ever so gradually, bumping into the bumper guard on one side, then crossing over to the other side where that bumper guard sent the ball back across the ally again.

- Back and forth it went until it finally got to the end of the ally and collided with the pins.

- I couldn't believe my eyes. All ten pins went tumbling down!

- I have to admit that my first reaction was, "That's not fair! I know I didn't have the best form but my 100 mph. shot certainly deserved a better result!"

- And, if it weren't for those bumper guards, Emily's ball would have ended up in the gutter and would have missed the pins entirely. Not fair!
- Then, it seemed as though God whispered to me and said, "This is a picture of grace. Grace is not fair! It's not deserved! Grace is a gift that helps us do something we can't do ourselves."

We can't really comprehend the incredible value of God's GIFT of GRACE unless we see it in the context of His GLORY and GRIEF.

He grieves because of the rebellion of humankind, and our disregard for His GLORY. But out of his Grief has come His GIFT.

His Gift was the salvation He provided through His Son, Jesus Christ.

- The Apostle Paul called Jesus . . .
 "The Unspeakable Gift",
 a gift "Too Wonderful for Words".
 (II Corinthians 9:15)

We know the story so well, we need to be careful not to forget the ENORMITY of this event!

- The Great God of Glory, who created the universe, and holds it all together . . .

- **Became a man, and took upon Himself the punishment for our sin, and the sin of the whole human race.**

-He didn't come to condemn the world but to SAVE the world.

A missionary once told me a about their experience in trying to learn the language of a certain people group.

- **It was a tedious process because they had to start from the beginning.**
- **They would point to items, like a chair or a table, and ask for the appropriate word for that item.**
- **Over time they moved on to concepts like trying to find the word for "save" as in "Jesus saves".**

The missionaries had learned the word for "help" which was something like "pang", but they realized that Jesus had done more than "help" us.

- **So they said to their language helpers, "What if a person were to fall down into a well, and you let a rope down to rescue them, what is the word for that?"**
 - "Oh, that's 'pang'", the people said.**

- The missionaries proposed many other scenarios in an effort to discover an appropriate term for “save”, but they were always given the same answer: “pang”, to “help”.
 - Then one day, a flood washed out the bridge that went over the small river that rushed through the village and the missionaries helped the people build a raft that they could use temporarily to get across to the other side.
 - Not long after, while crossing the river on the raft, a woman fell off into the water. She was struggling to survive when the missionary dove in and saved her.
 - The people ran down the bank excitedly shouting, “Djau! Djau!” The missionary said, “What is ‘Djau’? Didn’t I ‘pang’ her?”
 - The people said, “No, this is different. You went down into the river yourself, where she was, and you ‘Djau-ed’ her”.
 - Immediately the missionaries knew that they had found the word they were looking for.
- They knew that this is what God did! He Himself came down to our sinful earth,**

where we are, and he “Djau-ed” us, He
SAVED us.

- If it were not for the GIFT of God’s grace, we would all end up in the gutters of life every time. Our eternal future would be hopelessly bleak!
- But He came down where we are, and He rescued us from the punishment and the judgement which we deserved.

But it’s important to understand that God’s Gift consisted of more than just the salvation which He provided.

- His give included the provision He made for communicating His Good News to the peoples of the world.

(Water rushing Picture)

- A reservoir is of no value if there is no channel through which the water can flow to meet the needs of thirsty people.
- God did not just provide a “reservoir” of salvation. He established a channel through which His salvation, the water of life, can flow to thirsty souls.

- **THE CHANNEL IS THE CHURCH!** The followers of Jesus. People like you and me.

Because of His love for humankind, He wants everyone to hear about His grace, and He's committed this task to us.

- If you're a long-time CMA-er, maybe you're under the impression that being a Great Commission church is a special uniqueness of the Alliance.
- Great Commission completion is the biblical responsibility of EVERY Bible-believing church.
- The Church is part of God's gift to the world.

4. THIS BRINGS US TO OUR FINAL THOUGHT.

- My father would be quite upset if I didn't mention this. It was something that he was very passionate about!
- We might refer to the concept as – **GOD'S GAME PLAN.**
- What we've talked about so far, (**God's GLORY**, **God's GRIEF**, and **God's GIFT**) are all elements of a larger strategy, a **GAME PLAN**, if you will, that leads to a grand celebration.
- Jesus said that He will come back to earth again, a promise He repeated several times.

- **We have to admit, however, that after 2,000 years, the urgency of His coming has tended to wane.**
 - We don't think about it all that much.**
 - The whole idea of the "end times" seems like a huge jigsaw puzzle to us.**
- **Strange thing about jigsaw puzzles: Sometimes it takes a long time to figure out how all the pieces fit together.**
- **At times we may even question whether all the pieces are there.**
- **We may even give up and put the whole thing back in the box – maybe to work on it another day.**

Maybe we feel this way about the "end times" . . .

- **Yes, God's GAME PLAN is complex and we don't understand everything about it.**
- **But we can be confident that each aspect of God's plan is carefully crafted to fit in with the whole.**
- **All the pieces are there. Not one piece is missing. Including the last vital piece:**
 - The climax of God's plan for the ages.**
 - The return of Jesus Christ as King.**

- **One of the fascinating things about Christ's return is that Jesus gave us some clues as to when it will happen.**

-As you know, the most definitive clue is found in Matthew 24:14 where Jesus said:

“And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it: then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14)

- **In other words, when the Gospel is spread across the world to the degree that God has preordained, the end will come and Jesus Christ will return.**

Obviously, God's GAME PLAN has a lot to say to us, His Church.

- **Remember, we're the channel through which His Gospel is communicated to the people of the world.**
- **If you're a sports enthusiast, you know that a Game Plan is of little value, unless it's executed.**
- **The players have to go out on the field and play, not spectate!**

- **Think about it! We have a part in preparing the way for King Jesus to return!**

-What a celebration that's going to be!

- a. **This is why The C&MA sent missionaries to, what was known then as, the Belgian Congo, where for many years we had more missionary graves than we had living missionaries.**
- b. **This is why we sent workers into the jungles of Borneo and West New Guinea, among people who were headhunters and cannibals.**
- c. **This is why we sent people to Laos in 1950 to reach the Hmong people. At that time there was not one known Hmong Christian in the world.**

-By the way, a few years ago, Jerry and I attended a Hmong church conference at the Target Center in Minneapolis.

-The Hmong Christians in the U.S., who had come as refugees from Southeast Asia, were celebrating the coming of the Gospel to their people.

- What an event it was. Ten thousand Hmong believers were there to thank God for allowing them to be part of His family.

- All across the world, on all five continents, and in dozens of countries, Alliance workers are sharing the news of God's grace and love.
- And thousands of missionaries, serving with other agencies, are effectively ministering in many other countries, helping to extend Christ's Kingdom world-wide.
- We are doing this, because we love Jesus, and we want Him to return!
- IT'S ALL ABOUT **GOD'S GLORY!**

-The Prophet Habakkuk wrote:

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:14)

-Everyone has SEEN the glory of God. We're about helping people UNDERSTAND the glory of God and the truth of God.

- IT'S ABOUT **GOD'S GRIEF!**

-About His agony and compassion for the lost and the dying.

- IT'S ABOUT **GOD'S GIFT!**

His gift of salvation and His gift of the Church to be a channel of blessing to the world.

- IT'S ABOUT **GOD'S GAME PLAN!**

It's God's intention that the Gospel be preached in all the world as a prelude to Christ's return.

These are truths that my father shared with me and, in subsequent years, the Holy Spirit has burned them into my heart.

Most of us hearing this message are well aware of these truths.

My prayer is that God will enable us to embrace them with our whole hearts, and live them out in our daily lives.

