

SUNDAY SERMON – 3RD MATTHEW – 2015-06-21

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In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Today in America we honor fathers, especially fathers who emulate God the Father. God the Father is always there for His children, always loving them, correcting them, allowing them to make mistakes, forgiving them and most especially, sending His Own Son to sacrifice Himself for them. All human fathers fall short in comparison to God the Father. We praise God for men who do their best to love Him and who love and care for their wives and their children. We need godly men today as much or more than ever. Here's some of the bad news:

- 24 million children in the United States of America live in a fatherless home.
- 40% of students in grades 1-12 come from homes with no biological father in them.
- 71% of teenage pregnant mothers have no father in the home.
- 71% of high school drop outs have no father present.
- A child is 4 times more likely to live in poverty if there is no dad in the home.

Now for the good news. There are so many statistics I can quote for you about what a difference godly parents make to their children and by extension to our society. A recent study found that if the mom is faithful in bringing the kids to church, about half of them will continue to go to church. Regardless of the mom's participation, if the dad regularly brings the kids to church 2/3's to 3/4's of kids will continue to come to church as adults! Dad's I want you to hear this and commit to coming to church for your own sake but more especially for your kids' sake.

The tragedy this week at a historic Black church in Charleston, South Carolina has got many wondering, *"How can God let something like this happen?"* I submit to you that we are asking the wrong question. *How can WE allow something like this to happen?* Though the young man perhaps suffered from mental illness, he also seems to have suffered from spiritual illness. Did his parents not teach him to love God and to love his neighbor regardless of color? For 3 of the 400 years of public education here in America, we taught our kids about God's Law and God's Love. Did his school teach him the Bible, about prayer and the love of God? I can pretty much guarantee that it did not. By his own confession, the young man said that he almost didn't go through with his plan because he felt so loved and accepted by the people at that church during the Bible Study.

How long will we continue to turn our back on God and think that we can do it better? Understand that even if we do turn back to God, even if most families stayed together, went to church and raised their children to know God, even if we put the Bible and prayer back in school, there will still be suffering in this world...but there will be much less of it due to crimes like we saw in Charleston, South Carolina. If we as a society repent and turn back to God, there will be much less crime, much fewer people in jail, much fewer children in foster care and much less poverty, hunger and homelessness. The world will not become perfect...but it will become much better than it is now.

Which world would you prefer to live in? Then start doing your part. Father's commit to coming to church regularly with your wife and children. Teach them about God the Father's Love and Righteousness through your words...but more especially by your example. Let's put less dependence on our government to solve our society's problems and more dependence on God.

Today's Epistle reading, Romans 5:1-10, teaches us about God's love and how by enduring suffering, we can grow spiritually -- enduring suffering, leads to character, then hope and then love in God. We are all sinners loved by God, called to seek to live for Him. Doing so will save us and the world around us.

Today's Gospel reading, Matthew 6:22-33, teaches us to see how very blessed we are and to put our trust in God. Jesus calls us to live in His light and to let His light shine upon the world around us. He tells us that we have to choose between the way of the world or the way of God. The way of the world makes us anxious. The way of God brings us peace.

Today's Gospel reading closes with the admonition and blessing: *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."* The more of us who hear this message and seek to live by it, the more this world will look and feel like heaven. Start with the man or woman you see in the mirror when you get up in the morning, repent of your own sin. Then recommit yourself and your own family to God. Soon, all the rest of those around you will also be blessed with the righteousness of God and His Kingdom. We will be living in a paradise on earth, basking in the Light and Love of the Son, Jesus Christ.

To God be the glory, now and forever, and to the ages of ages, Amen.