



THE PURSUIT OF GODLINESS

2. Living the Character of God

21 JUNE, 2020



*Today is first time we meet under the strict condition of “Private Prayer”, which means no speaking or singing. We cannot have prayers spoken in public; we can use written prayers to guide our thoughts. Where the text is in **RED**, the music or song will be played. Please do **NOT** join in singing! Enjoy the music and the singing and let the words speak to you.*

After the Benediction, please leave by the garden doors. You may fellowship outdoors, but please follow the advice of our Government. Thank you.

Please take with you, all paper/books you may have touched or collected, including this order of service.

Welcome Church and Welcome to Worship!

Last Sunday embarked we on a 4-part series on The Pursuit of Godliness, starting with “Made in the Image of God”. Today we shall look at **Living the Character of God**, appropriate also for Father’s Day, which this year falls on the Summer Equinox, equal days and nights (no reference to equality, please!).

The celebration of Fathers’ and Mothers’ day is difficult for many. Starting with the arrival of cards with pictures of cars, fishing, golf and other “manly” pursuits, praising Father for qualities they **know** they don’t have, many feel inadequate, judged, even shamed for not being the “perfect Father” described on the card!

As we celebrate Fathers’ Day, let’s remind ourselves once again, the focus is not on ourselves as Fathers, but on our Fathers. Everyone joins in the celebration as EVERYONE has a Father!

LISTEN **In the presence of Jehovah**

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven: (*Ephesians 1*)

who knew you and chose you before the world began; (*1 Peter 1, Ephesians 1*)

who loves you so much that he calls you his own children; (*1 John 3*)

who has brought you from darkness into light and filled you with his glorious power; (*Colossians 1*)

who has prepared an inheritance for you that will never spoil or fade; (*1 Peter 1*)

who encourages and strengthens you in every good deed and word; (*2 Thessalonians 2*)

who comforts you in your troubles so that you can comfort others. (*2 Corinthians 1*)

This is our God, the ultimate source of all things, and the One for whom we live. (*1 Corinthians 8*)

Let's Worship our great God together!

compiled by Christine Longhurst1

HYMN **This is my Father's World** (*Please listen or hum*)

READING **Matthew 3:13-17**

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John, but John tried to prevent him. *I need you to baptise me*, he said. *Surely you do not come to me?* Jesus replied, *It is right for us to meet all the requirements of the Law; let it be so now.*

After his baptism, as soon as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God coming down in the form of a dove. And a voice from heaven said, *This is my Son, my beloved Son, and I am wonderfully pleased with him.*

PRAYER for our Fathers

Heavenly Father! Today we ask You to bless our fathers for the times they reflected the love, strength, generosity, wisdom and mercy that You show in Your relationship with us, Your children.

We honour our fathers for some or many of these: putting our needs above their own convenience and comfort; for teaching us to show courage and determination in the face of adversity; for challenging us to move beyond self-limiting boundaries; for modelling the qualities that would turn us into responsible, principled, caring adults.

Not all our fathers lived up to these ideals.

Give them the grace to acknowledge and learn from their mistakes.

Give us grace to offer them the same forgiveness you offer us all.

Help us resist the urge to stay stuck in past bitterness, instead, to move forward with humility and peace of heart.

We ask your blessing on those men who served as father figures in our lives when our biological fathers were not able to do so.

May the love and selflessness they showed us be returned to them in all their relationships, and help them to know that their influence has changed us for the better.

Give new and future fathers the guidance they need to raise happy and holy children, grounded in a love for God and other people - and remind these fathers that treating their wives with dignity, compassion and respect is one of the greatest gifts they can give their children.

We pray for fathers who have passed on from this life, that in your love and mercy, You will forgive the all wrong and welcome them into Your loving embrace, and that our family will one day be reunited in your heavenly kingdom.

In the Name of Jesus our Christ and your Son, who taught us, the perfect father-son relationship is attainable through the power of the Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

~ adapted from a prayer written by Tony Rossi

HYMN **Father hear the prayer we offer****PRAYER**

O God, Father of us all; you know what is right and good for us, but too often, we only want our way or no way, instead of your way. Have mercy on us when we turn away from you, towards bright lights and instant rewards. Forgive us when we do not value your Fatherly love and concern for our well-being.

Lord, let Fathers know, their struggle is not in vain. We do not know the circumstances by which, they became hateful, intolerant, prejudiced, angry and insensitive, forgive them their attitudes, feelings and actions, some of which influenced us to change our ways, and some impacted us adversely. Deliver us from the evil which corrupts fatherhood, and teach us loving Father, the better way to be a father who reflects your life.

We beg you this prayer in the Name of Jesus Your Son. **AMEN**

LISTEN to the words of THIS song.**MESSAGE**

Fathers' Day, like Mother's Day, is difficult for many, especially those who feel, or made to feel, it's all about them, and they don't measure up.

The Bible clearly instruct us, *Honour (respect, obey, care for, with due obedience and courtesy) your Father and Mother. Then you will live a long life (an abundance of God's blessings) in the land the Lord your God is giving you.*¹

Clearly, the focus of this day, is **FATHER**. Everyone has a father. Some may feel, ***father doesn't deserve respect, care, obedience and courtesy because of what they did to ...*** Not all fathers are God-fearing, nor do all fathers treat their children kindly, but being the child of bad or uncaring parent does not negate this commandment. We are **NOT** instructed to honour

¹ Exodus 20:12

good parents and dishonour bad ones, to obey virtuous parents and disobey those we think do not live up to their God-given responsibility!

But God has not given us the responsibility to judge our father; any wrong he might have done is to be settled between him and his Father God. We don't know the circumstances which drove his behaviour. We are to **honour** our father. Jesus repeated it and Paul reiterated it to the Church in Ephesus and Colossae, *Children, be obedient your parents.. in the Lord (the way God intended and Christ demonstrated), for this is right and well-pleasing to the Lord.*²

The strength of this instruction is two-fold: first, we will always be our parents children. They introduced us to the world, and they taught us, to the best of their ability and knowledge, how to live in this world, for which we should be grateful.

Second, our children come under the same instruction, to honour us, their parents, and enjoy the positive outcome: God bless them with long life, lived in good health, in peaceful relationships with family and friends, in the home in which God has settled them! We set the role model: our children will learn to treat us, based on how we treat our parents.

It is interesting that in one single instruction, we are made responsible for the spiritual welfare of three generations: our own, our parents and that of our children (and generations after them).

Fathers are very special to God; some are fathers **of...** and some are fathers **to...** The Genesis accounts tells us that God's creation was complete when a **human being** in His own image, having the attributes and qualities of male and female³, received the breath of life. This human being was unable to relate with anything in the animal kingdom and lacked companionship. God separated the human into two beings, both in

² Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:20

³ Genesis 1:27

His own image, investing in each, a distinct part of His characteristic attributes, that of male in one and female in the other, and man and woman were born.⁴ On discovering the woman, the man is absolutely ecstatic and waxed lyrical in poetry and song:

The man's first recoded words, when God presented him with his wife, starts with gratitude to God (*At last!*) and he could not stop adoring her - *bone from my bone (sharing my DNA) and flesh from my flesh (sharing my spirit)! If I am 'man', then she will be 'woman'. She and I are one, because we both are made by God; we belong together, physically, emotionally and socially, and compatible as friends and lovers.*

The male of the human species becomes a friend, lover and husband of his wife, before becoming a father; **a father, therefore, finds his identity in being male.** The man is made complete in his relationship as a husband to his wife and a father to his children. By God's perfect design, the family is the central unit of society. This is the story of male and female, man and woman, father and mother.

Move forward many thousands of years. A young woman gives birth to a son, not conceived by the passion between a man and a woman, but through the work of the Holy Spirit. At God's appointed time, this Man is *baptised, He came out of the water and the Heavens were opened, and John saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. A voice from heaven said, "This is My Son, My Beloved, in Whom I delight!"*⁵

Those present heard this, and later understood the narrative to portray God's vision of fatherhood.

First, when Jesus was baptised, before He started His work, at this momentous event, His Father was **present**.

Second, His Father made His presence **felt** by the presence of the Holy Spirit as a dove.

⁴ 2:21-23

⁵ Matthew 3:16-17

Third, His Father made His presence known by **speaking** - *This is My Son!*

Fourth, His Father publicly **declared** His love for His Son - *My beloved Son.*

Finally, His Father expressed His **pleasure** - *in Whom I am very well pleased!*

This is the picture of fatherhood as God designed it. Fathers are not perfect men (neither are their children!). Mike Wilkerson⁶ notes, *Tragically, for many of us, the father-child relationship is fraught with fear, shame, dread, disappointment, or absence. For some of us, the word “father” has been darkened by the worst evils. Can you ever hope to know God as your Father, is your view of “father” is so broken?*⁷

On this day, for some, our father may not be alive, but we can still pray God’s mercy for the time they fell seriously short of God’s standard of fatherhood, and it is not too late to restore Godly fatherhood to your generations to come. We pray, *Our Father forgive us when we have sinned against you, as we forgive others who have sinned against us.*

Forgiving and receiving forgiveness are crucial steps in the journey of life. Today is another opportunity to restore our relationship with our Fathers, our children and others in their generation and ours. God instructed us, Jesus modelled it, it is time for us to follow. Welcome to Living the Character of God. **AMEN.**

LISTEN Hold me Father

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Before Jesus instructed His Disciples on a model of prayer He said, “Don’t recite the same prayer over and over as the heathen do, who think prayers are answered only by repeating them again and again. Remember, your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! If you want to, pray along these lines:”

⁶ Software developer, Pastor and leader of Redemption movement

⁷ Mike Wilkerson, “Redemption” (Wheaton ILL. Crossway) p.51

Our Father... *(pause and think whom you have addressed. Don't think of your father with all his faults, merits and strengths. Imagine in your mind, your perfect father. The person you have just called FATHER is the perfect father and so very much more!*

Whose home is Heaven - *The perfect Father does not live in our heart or anywhere on the earth. His home is Heaven; that is where He lives and that is where He belongs*

Your Name is Holy - *May every mention of your Name be spoken in hushed reverence, and every remembrance of your Name, always remind us of Your Holiness. You will always be Holy because Heaven is Your home; you live uncontaminated by sin.*

Three things we pray you grant us:

Nourish our bodies with food, enough for each day - *may we be a healthy witness of Your unending loving care for each of us.*

Forgive us all we have done wrong, only after we have forgiven those who have wronged us. *How else will they know of Your greatest gift which allows us to be restored in Your image?*

And, please do not lead us into hard testing in difficult times; protect and save us from the one who plots and plans only evil - *his time on the earth is limited and he can do no harm to those who believe and trust in their heart, soul and mind that*

ALL power and ALL glory, belong to You, the One, ONLY matchless King, forever into eternity. AMEN.

HYMN **May the Good Lord keep you and bless you**

BENEDICTION

A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children (Proverbs 13:22)
Inheritance is not only material; it is spiritual, moral and ethical. We inherit and leave as inheritance our relationship with God. The most important thing you can give your children or grandchildren is a godly example of a life well-lived!

"We regret not being able to serve tea and coffee and biscuits, which we would very like to, but are restricted. We look forward to the day when we can invite you to stay and enjoy fellowship after service, and on certain days, even lunch! Watch this space!"

As a member of Botley Baptist Church, please do not forget to remit your tithe and offering, either directly into the bank or drop-off your envelope at Church.

*If you are not attending this Church, have been blessed by the ministry of worship and God's Word, and wish to make a contribution, please click "EMAIL US" at the top of the home page.
Thank you.*