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Christmas Day
December 25, 2022
INI – SDG

This Is My Son: Jesus

John 1:12-14 ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

What’s wrong with the world these days? One could probably list a lot of things, but the problem we are going to talk about today is fatherlessness.

Unless one is a computer engineer or a physicist you have to be careful about statistics. Statistics, especially those from a survey, usually only confirm our preconceived notions. Nevertheless, the statistics concerning kids growing up without a relationship with their father are overwhelming.

According to “What Can the Federal Government Do to Decrease Crime and Revitalize Communities?” from the United States Department of Justice, children from fatherless homes account for:

63 percent of youth suicides

90 percent of all homeless and runaway youths

85 percent of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders

71 percent of all high school dropouts

70 percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions

75 percent of adolescent patients in substance abuse centers ¹

There simply isn’t any real doubt that an increase in broken homes and fatherless children is directly linked to an increase in violence and other major social problems.

But we don’t even really need statistics to know the problems of fatherlessness. God’s word is quite clear about this.

Because of the importance of this relationship God gave us the fourth commandment. The fourth commandment, which is the first of the second table of the law, protects the relationship between parents and children. “Honor your father and mother.”

¹ Office of Justice Programs, “What Can the Federal Government Do to Decrease Crime and Revitalize Communities?” <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/172210.pdf>, 1998.

When God commands children to honor their parents He also commands parents to be worthy of that honor. The parent who neglects, abandons, abuses or in the words of God “provoke their children to wrath,” is just as guilty of breaking the fourth commandment as the child who is willfully disobedient.

The statistics mentioned above are no surprise to those who know God’s word. God promises in the fourth commandment “a long life upon the earth.” When there is a good and right relationship between parents and children the result is in general, a healthy prosperous life. When there is a wrong relationship between parent and child the result is often the opposite. The more broken the relationship the more severe the result.

However, God’s word goes even deeper than this. It reveals to us that the real problem for the world is fatherlessness. It’s not just 71 percent of American high school dropouts that have a problem with fatherlessness but every human who has ever been born without their Heavenly Father.

What is wrong with the world these days? The same thing that has always been wrong with it since Genesis chapter three. We are fatherless, without our Heavenly Father, separated from Him because of our rebellion.

Ephesians 2:12-13 ¹² **that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.** ¹³ **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

God’s word is quite clear that the problem the whole world has from almost the very beginning is that it is without the Father.

Those who lack a good relationship with their earthly fathers often attempt to find replacement father figures. John reminds us in our text how the world without a Heavenly Father has attempted to find replacements.

John 1:13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The world has tried all manner of things to make up for this gaping hole. We have attempted to find substitute father figures in idols made of wood and gold and silver, but imaginary beings who act and say whatever we want them to say cannot fix the missing relationship we ought to have with our true Father.

The world has attempted to prove itself worthy of God’s love and earn its way back into a good relationship with our true Father. But even if it were possible to earn our Father’s love, such earned love could never replace the unconditional love that ought to exist between a father and a child. Indeed earned love is not love at all.

More recently the world has tried so hard to convince itself that we don’t need our Heavenly Father. The world is a preteen who thinks that he can do just fine on his own and ends up living in the gutter. But the harder we attempt to convince ourselves that we are just fine without Him, the more obvious it is that something is terribly wrong and missing.

Our text reminds us that we become the children of God not by birth, or blood or will but by the grace of God.

John 1:12 He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

This is the gift of Christmas. Not just that the Father gave His only Son but that He through Him gave us sonship. We celebrate not only because a child is born but because through that child, we now have a Father.

In our advent series this year we heard about biblical examples of fathers who failed their children and the serious consequences that resulted: Adam and his son Cain, Abraham, and his son Ishmael, and probably the most dramatic of them David and his son Absalom. We think of David as this great hero of faith but there is no doubt that he failed to be a good father and the results were catastrophic, although of course that is no excuse for what Absalom did.

Not only do we need a father we need the right relationship with our father. Because our relationship with our heavenly Father is broken, therefore also our relationships with our earthly fathers are to greater or lesser degree broken as well. Our fathers at times fail us as Abraham and David failed their kids and we at times fail to be good parents.

But God sent His one true Son so that through Him we might receive a true Father who does not fail us.

This is the first commandment. In the first commandment God does not demand that we worship Him like a dictator. Rather He calls us to honor, love and trust him as a true Father. Just as the fourth command protects the relationship between earthly parents and children so the first protects the relationship between us and our heavenly Father.

Yet because we have failed to keep and protect this relationship God restored it through His son. We could not come to Him, He came to us.

There are so many Christmas stories and movies out there attempting to express the joy of Christmas. We just recently watched a new one, "Spirited," with Will Farrell and Ryan Reynolds. But of course they all fail utterly because none of them recognize the truth that the problem is fatherlessness and the only solution is that God has become our Father through the gift of His son.

No story has ever expressed the joy of Christmas better than the parable of the Prodigal Son. There we are lost, homeless, living in filth and our Father sees us when we are still far off and comes to us and by His grace makes us again "children of the heavenly father." Now we are not fatherless but sons of God.

What is wrong with the world these days? They do not know their Father and do not have a relationship with Him. This is the answer for those kids who through no fault of their own are without earthly fathers. This is the answer for all of us who fail to be good fathers and good children.

This is the gift of the Father, that He is our Father, that through His Son we have the right to be called the children of God and to call Him Father, that by His love that relationship which we broke has been restored.

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

Amen