

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
REV. JOHN BURTON
JUNE 19, 2011 – FATHER’S DAY

SERMON: WHAT A FATHER NEEDS
TEXT: I KINGS 3: 3-14

Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?” It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.”

Solomon was a wise man.

I used to be a wise man. I’m not sure when I lost that but I do remember, clearly, being wise when I was a young pastor. Before I got married and had children I knew all manner of things about being a good parent – and was more than willing to share my wisdom with all my married friends. In fact, I wish I could have found my very first Father’s Day sermon and preached it today for I was wise back then.

Solomon had a once in creation encounter with God. Solomon asked for wisdom and God was so pleased that Solomon had not asked for long-life or riches or the death of your enemies that God gave him not only wisdom such as the world had never seen but God also gave Solomon power and great wealth.

Note to self: if God ever asks – ask for wisdom!

As an example of Solomon's wisdom there is told a story about two women who came before the King, both claiming to be the mother of a baby. Both women argued energetically, proclaiming that they were the child's mother. Solomon decided that since he could not tell who was the baby's mother he would have the baby cut in half and each woman should get a half. One woman agreed. The other woman pleaded and begged and even suggested that the OTHER woman take the living child. Solomon saw which woman acted like a mother – and promptly gave the child to the woman who sought to preserve his life.

That was pretty sneaky of Solomon. Wise even. But I've always wanted to know – what did the other woman want with half a baby? Could she claim half a baby on her welfare form? Could she turn in half a baby for a life insurance claim? I just don't get it – see, I'm just not that wise, apparently.

There are lots of things that pass for wisdom these days. I'm not wise enough to have come up with any of them but they are very good:

- Middle age is when broadness of mind and narrowness of the waist change places.
- If Ignorance is bliss then why aren't more people happy?
- If you lend someone \$20 and never see that person again – it was probably worth it.
- You only need two tools: WD-40 and duct tape. If it doesn't move and it should – use the WD-40. If it moves and it should not – use the duct tape.
- Time may be a great healer – but it is a lousy beautician.
- As John Wayne said, "Life is tough. It's tougher if you are stupid."
- If you can remain calm in a crisis – it's probably because you don't have all the facts.

Personally I think that wisdom is even better if it is wisdom that makes you smile and nod your head!

Being a father is not easy these days. I'm not saying that fathers have it harder than mothers – I'm just saying that it is not easy to be a good father. There are a whole lot of men who don't even try to be good fathers and not nearly enough of the ones who try succeed.

I wish that I could say "we" were all born with good fathers. If you were then thank your lucky stars and God above. If he is still living then go thank him! And if he has passed – say a pray of gratitude for him.

Fathers teach us many things about life that we call wisdom. For example:

A boy asks his father to explain the differences among irritation, aggravation, and frustration.

His father picks up the phone and dials a number at random. When the phone is answered, he asks, "Can I speak to Bill, please?"

"No! There's no one called Bill here," says the person who answered the phone.

His father hangs up. "That's irritation," he says.

He picks up the phone again, dials the same number, and asks for Bill a second time.

"No, there's no one here called Bill. Go away. If you call again I shall telephone the police," the person says.

His father hangs up and says, "That's aggravation."

"Then what's frustration?" asks his son. The father picks up the phone and dials the same number a third time.

He says, "Hi, this is Bill. Do I have any messages?"

Fathers are good like that. Fathers can make things clear. For example:

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence....

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there."

That's the sort of thing that a father ought to teach all his children, don't you think? Makes we wonder what Solomon taught all his children from all those wives!

Sometimes fathers are the ones who have to listen and learn.

A man came home from work late again, tired and irritated, to find his 5-year-old son waiting for him at the door. "Daddy, may I ask you a question?"

"Yeah, sure. What is it?" replied the man.

"Daddy, how much money do you make an hour?"

"That's none of your business! What makes you ask such a thing?" the man said angrily.

"I just wanted to know. Please tell me, how much do you make an hour?" pleaded the little boy.

"If you must know, I make \$20 an hour."

The little boy looked up at his father and he said, "Daddy, may I borrow \$9 please?"

The father was furious. "If the only reason you wanted to know how much money I make is just so you can borrow some to buy a silly toy or some other nonsense, then you march yourself straight to your room and go to bed. Think about why you're being so selfish. I work long, hard hours every day and don't have time for such selfishness."

The little boy quietly went to his room and shut the door. The man sat down and started to get even madder about the little boy's question

After an hour or so, the man calmed down. He started to think he might have been a little hard on his son. Maybe there was something he really needed to buy with that \$9 and he didn't ask for money very often. The man went to the little boy's room and opened the door. "Are you asleep son?" he asked.

"No daddy, I'm awake," replied the boy.

"I've been thinking, maybe I was too hard on you earlier," said the man, "It's been a long day and I took my aggravations out on you. Here's that \$9 you asked for."

The little boy straight up, beaming. "Oh, thank you daddy!" he yelled.

Then, reaching under his pillow, he pulled out some more crumpled up bills. The man, seeing that the boy already had money, started to get angry again. The little boy slowly counted out his money, then looked up at his dad.

"Why did you want more money if you already had some?" the father grumbled.

"Because I didn't have enough, but now I do," the little boy replied. "Daddy, I have \$20 now. Can you play with me for an hour?"

That one has always stepped on my toes. There are so many important things in life that demand our attention – sometimes we can make unwise choices about where and with whom we spend our time!

Being a good father isn't automatic. It takes a lot of work and dedication and...wisdom.

Much more than memorizing wise and funny stories...I'm talking about the wisdom to:

- love your family more than anything else!
- give your time to your family, generously.
- protect your family from all harm.
- teach your children things that will make them strong, caring people.
- introduce your children to God.

- put your family above your personal needs, desires, and interests.
- avoid situations, places and people who might damage your family.
- And the wisdom to make sacrifices so that your family grows and thrives.

Being a good father takes a lot of wisdom. Maybe if men thought that a father was like being a professional athlete – something that one had to train for, sacrifice for, be dedicated to for years – then maybe more men would take up the challenge!

After all, waiting for God to drop a few gigabits of wisdom on us hasn't worked since the time of Solomon!