

Good morning and Happy Father's Day. It is a real treat for me to share this morning's message with you. As some of you already know, I have a passion for family ministry, so being asked to speak on a day like Father's Day is like asking a land-locked fish if they'd like to be placed back in the water.

Now, I recognize that days like Father's Day can arouse a myriad of emotions. For some there are proud emotions of being a father; for others, fond memories of your father; and, for others maybe some mixed emotions or even outright negative emotions. So, my prayer is that wherever you are at this morning, that God would use today's message to speak to you in a way that will be helpful.

Today's message may relate more directly to father's, but will give everyone an opportunity to respond and use what God has so richly provided in His Word.

This morning I'd like to do something a little different. The first half of "the message" will actually be a Q&A with some of our church members, which will lead into the second half of our time together where I will share some thoughts related to John 17: 6 – 19.

So, at this time, I'd like to ask four members to join me up front. The Q&A time will, I'm hoping, not only give you a fairly intimate view into a part of these people's lives, but should allow for an opportunity to hear something that you may relate to.

Q&A ...

Let's thank all four of these people for sharing with us this morning...

So, we've just heard four different life stories. Maybe you heard something that relates to you. Or, different parts of stories that relate to you. In some cases, the answers were similar, while in other cases they were quite different. All of us have a different story. If I asked each of you to come up here and answer these same questions, besides being here until well into the evening, we would be blessed with quite a diverse range of life stories.

One thing is certain though, each of us has been impacted in some way by our earthly fathers. You may say, "I've never met mine" or "he left when I was too young to remember". Well, that is an impact. Dads, we in turn have that same opportunity with our children – or, all of us have an opportunity to help dads around us with whatever impact they will have on their children.

With that in mind, let's open up our Bibles or devices to today's Scripture, John 17: 6 – 19. You can also follow along in the bulletin as it has been reprinted there for you; or, follow on the screen behind me.

In John 17, which comes right before John's account of Jesus' arrest, Jesus is first praying for Himself; then he prays for His Disciples; and, finally He prays for All Believers. We will look at His prayer for His Disciples. I will be reading from the English Standard Version. Jesus prays:

<sup>6</sup> "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. <sup>8</sup> For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup> I am praying for them. I am not

praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. <sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

As we take a look at this passage, let's see how we can use it as an encouragement for dads in how they can impact their children through prayer and teaching – asking our Heavenly Father to care for them, much like Jesus prayed for His Disciples. If you are not a dad, you can pray in this way for special people in your life, and teach them as well.

Let's first look at verse 6, where Jesus prays, “Yours they were, and you gave them to me.” Here Jesus is submitting that all is the Father's. And that the Father gave them to Jesus. Likewise, our children are not really ours, they are from God. Despite our marital interactions that biologically lead to the making of a baby, and a mother's many months of biologically nourishing the baby in her womb, it is God who truly created us and knew us even before we were in our mother's womb (Ps 139).

If we understand that our very own children really aren't even ours, we can gain a new perspective on how we handle their upbringing. If we know that the God of the universe has pretty much given them to us on loan, and that He will one day be measuring how we take care of his “talents”, we will be moved (or hopefully we will be) to begin understanding how much of a treasure they are and how much we should be pouring into their lives. If that is all you get from today's sermon, may it be enough to drive you to your knees everyday dads, asking God the Father to help you to take care of *His* little ones.

The next point I would like us to look at is found in verse 7, where Jesus prays, “Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.” Many in St. Albert are particularly materially blessed. Whether it is for our material possessions, family or friends, gifts and talents, health - we need to ensure that our children understand that God is our provider of everything. Yes, we need to go to school, obtain training and get jobs to help “pay the bills”, but I dare you to say you can do it on your own and that you don't need God. ☺ PAUSE. Without Him we are not, and we have not. Thank you Father of Lights.

The next verse we'll look at is verse 8. In this verse Jesus prays, “For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth.” Dads, teach your children the Gospel. Encourage your children to embrace the Gospel message and eventually accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour. If you don't consider yourself an evangelist and if you never share the Gospel with anyone else, ever, at least share it and teach it to your children. This ministry alone would constitute an incredible eternally valuable part of being a disciple of Christ.

If you aren't going to pray for lots of different things, at least pray for the children God has entrusted to you. In verse 9 Jesus prays, “I am praying for them.” Jesus specifically prays for His disciples. Yes, earlier in this chapter He prays for Himself and later He prays for all the Saints, but here He purposefully lifts up those precious

disciples that the Father has entrusted to Him. Dads, pray for your children. God wants us to pray, and Pastor Tom has preached much about prayer over the years, but be sure to pray specifically for your children – and pray for them daily! PAUSE. If you feel really ambitious, pray for them more than once a day. ☺

So, what can you pray for? Well, let's look at what Jesus prayed for His disciples in verse 11, "Holy Father, keep them." If you have an NIV version, it says "protect them". Pray that God would keep your children in His hand; that He would protect them; that he would make His face shine upon them; that He would be gracious unto them; and, that He would grant them salvation and peace.

Furthermore, in verses 14-17 we find more to pray for. We can pray specifically for SPIRITUAL protection. It is good for our children to be protected from ailments, hurt and physical harm. What is far more important, though, is that they are protected from the evil one. Satan would want nothing more than to destroy the spiritual lives of our children; in turn, taking a toll on our own spiritual life. Dads, pray that Satan would not have his way with your children and, furthermore, that the Father would sanctify them through His Word.

That would mean, then, that they have to be in His Word.

Are you in His Word? Let me tell you a little story about my beautiful wife taking our oldest daughter to preschool one morning when we still lived in B.C. On the way, a very long coal train just started to cross the road she was on. These trains take upwards of 5-7 minutes to pass by. Catharine knew she would be late and said, "Shoot, train." Well, every time we drove by that spot our very impressionable 3-year-old went on sharing that mommy says "Shoot, train." Thankfully it wasn't worse. My point though, is that our children – even early in their lives - are easily impressed upon by us.

If you want them to be in the Word, you need to be in the Word – both by yourself and with them.

So, what if you don't even know this Heavenly Father we have been talking about? Well, this Father's Day, you can make it a very special one by having a new Father – our Father in Heaven. He is waiting for you to get to know Him. How do you get to know Him? Through His Son Jesus Christ. No one comes to the Father but through Jesus Christ. If you recognize that you are a sinner – just like me, I'm a sinner (saved by grace) – and know that you need a Saviour to save you from your sins, and that you would like to turn away from those sins and be renewed, get to know Jesus Christ. Earlier in the book of John, in John 3:16 it says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Jesus paid the penalty for your sins when He hung on the cross and died. The great news is that He rose to life again and through that, if you believe in Him and accept Him as Lord and Saviour of your life, you too can have eternal life in Heaven with Jesus and our Heavenly Father. If you are being led to making a decision like this, I'd encourage you to speak with whomever you came with today, or with one of our pastors or with me after the service.

As we heard from those who shared with us, Dads, you will have an impact on your children. What's yours going to be?

May I suggest that it be a positive impact for Christ in the life of your children? At a minimum, pray for your children – *daily!*

Maybe you're saying to yourself, "Well it's too late. If that's what I was supposed to do, then I missed the mark."

It's never too late to start!

Or, maybe you're saying, "I don't have the time to do all of that," or, "I can't" for some other reason.

Do what you can! At least pray for them! Every day. If you miss a day or two, don't beat yourself up. Just pray for them again and recommit to praying for them daily.

Dads, I want challenge you. If you want to commit to any of what was shared this morning, even if it is just one thing, like praying for your children, could I ask you to stand up. Stand up for the precious gifts God has given to you.

If you're not a dad, how would you like to encourage those standing, in their desire to be a positive impact for Christ for their children? If you think it's important for dads to have a positive impact for Christ on their children and you would like to commit to supporting, praying for or encouraging these dads in some other way, would you please stand in support?

Probably one of the biggest issues in our society today is that there are not enough men willing to stand up for their wives or their kids - especially spiritually. You know what? We guys aren't as tough as we make ourselves out to be. We need support. In a world that in so many ways is focussed on tearing down men, dads need all the support they can get in order to do what they need to do. Thank you for standing up for them.

Dads, support or no support, you have a calling in your life to be the dad God wants you to be for your children – His children. Let's pray...