

Lessons from Our Father in Heaven

- As His children we will be... † **Despised as God's Son, our Teacher** (vv.24f)
 † **Defended from fear in His care** (vv.26-31)
 † **Never disowned as we echo our Lord** (vv.32f)

In the name of Jesus, our loving Lord and Master, dear children of the heavenly Father:

If you grew up knowing God as your Father, you might imagine this is normal. But if you've been along on our journey in God's grace here at New Life, you know this is truly unique to Christianity. You could see the difference almost immediately reading the first two chapters of the *Quran*. The Muslim god they call "Allah," Arabic for "god," has a totally different relationship with his followers. The Bible reveals the LORD as the Savior God who gave His one and only begotten Son to rescue all people whether they believe it or not. Muhammad's "Allah" requires his followers to submit (meaning of "Islam") and even sacrifice their own sons in suicide missions to blow up innocent women and children. Naïve Americans should read the *Quran*. Read it side-by-side with the Bible as one Pakistani woman did when the Muslim imam could not heal her dying grandson. The Bible finally convinced her that the LORD alone is the Savior-God. When she dared to call Him, "Father," she watched with delight while the God of the Bible did what Allah could not. Our Father in heaven miraculously cured her grandson.

On this day in America dedicated to fathers, we want to learn some **Lessons from Our Father in Heaven**. Whether memories of our earthly father are pleasant or painful, God's Son, the Lover of our souls, shares God's love in these **Lessons**. Jesus gave a realistic picture to His Twelve disciples when He sent them on their first evangelism mission. As God's children we too will be...

† **Despised as God's Son, our Teacher** (vv.24f)

Since last Sunday's sermon, Jesus has commanded His disciples to travel light, trusting His care through their hearers. Jesus says, "*The worker is worth his keep.*" (10:10) They would need His guidance and protection all along the way because of dangerous opposition from pagan Gentiles and their fellow Jews. They would face family fragmentation and betrayal because the world hates Jesus. "*But he who stands firm to the end will be saved*" (10:22) Spurred by persecution, they need to keep advancing the Gospel of the Kingdom. There's plenty of work to do before the Son of Man returns in glory.

And now Jesus makes what is really an understatement. "*A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.*" Just to sit in the teacher's desk or the boss' chair would be a great honor. So Jesus says, "*It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.*" But following Jesus will not mean sitting comfortably in a desk chair. "*If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!*" Jesus' fellow Jews called Him the devil's names. Religious people will do the same today to anyone who trusts in Christ alone.

No one likes to be called names. Jesus didn't either. But did He forget His heavenly Father when they said He worked for the devil? Did He turn coward as we were tempted in school if we were the only ones not laughing at the professor's jokes about Christians and their Bible? Did Jesus give in to ridicule as we are tempted in our relationships if someone near and dear mocks our faith and wants us to stay home? Do we try to set ourselves above our Lord and Master as if we can avoid suffering with Christ?

What a tragedy every time we've sinned this way. I'm not comfortable looking in this mirror either, but I need to admit that even without knowing it, I have dishonored my Father in heaven in spite of His loving faithfulness to me. And yet He only wants me to see my sins in order to forgive me for the

sake of His own Son who was sacrificed in my place and yours. Take comfort from the promises of **Our Father in Heaven** when His Son Jesus shows the Twelve how we are...

✠ **Defended from fear in His care** (vv.26-31)

You might think that losing promotions or friends for Jesus goes unnoticed. Especially if family relationships are hurting, you feel so lonely. You lie awake wondering, "What can I do? Does anyone care what's happening to me?" Our Father in heaven wants us to know He cares and remembers. ***"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known."*** Come the Judgment Day, our heavenly Father will finally expose everything to vindicate His children.

Meanwhile, we have a job to do. Remember last week? We heard Jesus tell His disciples to limit their mission to the Jewish people. (Matthew 10:6) Not anymore. Now He has sent us into the whole wide world with the Gospel. And He wants it broadcast by every means available. Jesus says, ***"What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*** Keep things in perspective next time you're tempted to go dark with the Gospel and silence your witness. When we let fear of people turn down the volume, it's like being afraid of a spider while a tornado blows your house apart. Unbelievers may be able to torture and kill this body, but they cannot touch our immortal soul. They are the ones who ought to be afraid. In the Hinnom Valley outside Jerusalem was a garbage dump that kept on burning for centuries. The Jews called it, "Gehenna." Jesus here pictures a warning for everyone to fear not man, but God's eternal "hell."

Instead of giving in to fear of ridicule or suffering, let your heart rest strong and true in the promises of **Our Father in Heaven**. God's Son reveals His love this way: ***"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?"*** One commentator noted you can still find in Jerusalem and Joppa "long strings of little birds, sparrows and larks, for sale, trussed on long wooden skewers." (Vincent) Even the most ardent animal rights activist would feel worse if her cat died than if a sparrow flew into her window. So be encouraged as you watch the little birds: ***"Not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."*** A bald friend of mine likes to say, "God created only a few perfect heads and covered the rest with hair." Even so, our Father knows the exact number and every intimate detail of our lives. **Defended from fear in His care**, learn comfort that we are ...

✠ **Never disowned as we echo our Lord** (vv.32f)

"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven." To ***"acknowledge"*** literally means *to say the same thing* as God about His goodness and love.

Many people want to call themselves "Christian" or even attend church without confessing Christ publicly as their personal Lord and Savior. They want to keep God at arm's length. But that's no better for you than a fireman too far away to pull you to safety. God is still calling through the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why keep pulling back like frightened souls in a fire too afraid to come close to the window for the rescuers to reach? Keep holding yourself back from Jesus now, and He will finally give you your wish on Judgment Day. How earnestly some will want to seek Him then when it's too late. Alas, a Savior at arm's length does no good at all.

Today remember Peter who denied Jesus in spite warnings like this. But when Peter repented, Jesus forgave and restored him. God desires to teach us today these **Lessons from Our Father in Heaven**. For the sake of His Son's willing sacrifice in our place, we confess that we are **Never disowned as we echo our Lord**. We are **Defended from fear in His care** also in the face of persecution. Since Jesus says, "I love you," we can always answer, "Jesus, I love you too." And **Our Father in Heaven** wraps His powerful arms around us, baptized as His own dear children. Even if earthly fathers disappoint, on this Father's Day, be at peace in Jesus, secure in God's love, now and forever. Amen.