

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
COMPASS, PA

June 20, 2021 – PENTECOST 4 / PROPER 7B / FATHER'S DAY

The Rev. Dr. Nina George- Hacker

Sermon: "God—the Best Father"

Job 38:1-11	(God answers Job: The Creator is in charge. He knows far more than we do.)
Psalms 107:1-3, 23-32	(God is our merciful rescuer who stills the storm and quiets the waves.)
2 Corinthians 6:1-13	(Through Christ, God is our help and salvation. Now is the time to receive this gift!)
St. Mark 4:35-41	(Jesus stills the storm and challenges His disciples' faith.)

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Back when David Letterman was on TV, I don't know if any of you stayed up late enough to watch his show. As part of his opening shtick, Letterman would sometimes do a little routine called "the top ten." It consisted of a list of humorous—and frequently stupid—questions, comments, or items. A while ago, I came across a "top ten" list of, quote, "Wise Sayings of Fathers." In reverse order, they are:

10. Because I said so, *that's why!*
9. Just wait'll you have kids of your own.
8. What did I just finish telling you?
7. This is going to hurt me more than it does you.
6. Do I look like I'm made out of money?
5. Not now; I'm watching the game.
4. When you break your leg, don't come running to me!
3. No! We are *not* lost.
2. Be quiet! Can't you see I'm trying to think? ...

And the top ten saying by fathers:

1. How should I know? *Ask your mother!*<sup>1</sup>

On this Father's Day, we thank God for the fathers who helped give us life, regardless of whether or not they were wise or loving. Some people didn't even know their fathers. Earthly fathers, no matter how caring or involved in their children's lives, still disappoint us at times, and may not always be there when we need them most.

But our Heavenly Father will never fail us. He will never abandon us. All of today's Scripture lessons proclaim the faithfulness, love, and power of God that we can depend on, every moment of our lives, no matter what we are going through.

Think about God's servant Job, who, for 37 chapters has suffered unimaginable pain, loss, and devastation, as his health has been wrecked, his possessions ruined, and his family killed. To add insult to injury, Job's friends mock and deride him, suggesting that his troubles must be the result of some secret sin. "You brought this on yourself," they wag their fingers. "I told you so," they sneer. *Hmm*. Ever been treated like that? Some *friends* this guy has! And certainly, Job has moments of doubt, wondering "Why me?" and "Why? God."

At long last, in Chapter 38, God answers Job! Finally, we're going to learn why Job had to suffer so much calamity. But does God explain? Not on your life. The Lord begins a recital of His mighty deeds and awesome power that lasts for four chapters. The condensed version of God's answer is: "I am the Creator and Ruler of the universe. I'm in charge, and you're not. I know what I'm doing. What makes you think you know better than I do?"

Job's humble reply appears in Chapter 42, verse 2: "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted." Well, it's good that Job's faith is so strong, and certainly God can do *anything*—and will. But how does this story of faith and patience-through-suffering end? God is angry at Job's friends who misled him by saying that he deserved God's punishment. Even so, God informs these no-good, so-called 'friends' that Job is going to pray for them—and amazingly, Job does. What a *mensch!*

Then comes the payoff. In response to Job's faith, patience, and humility, God is faithful to the very end. In Chapter 42, verses 10 and 12, we read: "After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before ... The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first ..." And that, my friends, is the nature of God our Father. He isn't out to get us. He's not trying to make our life miserable. He doesn't play games with us. We are not His pawns.

Our Heavenly Father loves us more than we can begin to imagine, and always wants the best for us. The rub comes when we realize, and find we must *accept*, that God's way of bringing about the best in our lives may not be the way we would choose.

Today's Gospel lesson echoes these same themes of God's sovereignty, wisdom, purposes, and power, as Jesus answers His disciples' fears of drowning at sea by changing the weather. In response to Jesus causing the storm to stop, His followers cry out, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Who *indeed*? As God in person, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, He made the weather, and can do with it what He chooses.

In Colossians 1:15-20, we read that Jesus, as the Son "of the invisible God [is] the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

Did you get that? God was pleased to fill Jesus with *Himself*. Yes, God the Father became God the Son, in order to love us up-close-and-personal. In Jesus Christ, we see every attribute and power that is God the Father's.

And while Jesus lived on earth, He did the awesome deeds that only God can do—healing the sick, raising the dead, bringing hope to the poor, and saving the souls of all who believe in Him. In today's Gospel story, the disciples caught a glimpse of the One who *created* the wind and the waves—the only One who could order them to cease and be still. A good reminder that God is able to calm the "storms" that threaten to drown us in *our* lives, too. He alone is our *life-saver!*

In 1989, an earthquake almost flattened the country of Armenia. This deadly tremor killed more than 30,000 people in less than four minutes. In the midst of all the confusion following the quake, a father rushed to his son's school. When he arrived, he found the building flattened. Standing there looking at what was left of the school, the father remembered a promise he made to his son, "No matter what, I'll always be there for you!" Tears began to fill his eyes. It looked like a hopeless situation, but he could not take his mind off his promise.

Remembering that his son's classroom was in the back right corner of the building, the father rushed there and started digging through the rubble. As he dug, other grieving parents arrived. They tried to pull the man off of what was left of the school, shouting, "It's too late!" "They're all dead!" "You can't help!" "Go home!" Even a police officer and a firefighter told the frantic father that he should go home.

But the man refused to listen, and he continued digging for his son stone by stone. He dug for eight hours. And then twelve. And then twenty-four and thirty-six. Finally in the thirty-eighth hour, as the man pulled back a boulder, he heard his son's voice. The father screamed his son's name, and a voice answered him, "Dad? It's me Dad!" Then the boy added these priceless words: "You promised, Dad. 'No matter what,' you said, 'I'll always be there for you!' And here you are Dad. You kept your promise!"<sup>2</sup>

Dear friends. Our Heavenly Father keeps His promises. He will never stop seeking us, and once we allow ourselves to be found by Him, He will never let us go. Moreover, He has provided two wonderful ways to keep us close to Him until He returns to take us home:

Because Jesus is pure love, even as God the Father is, He promised to never leave us. That is why Christ sent God's Holy Spirit to live within us, filling us with God's wisdom, power, and love, so that we could keep on keeping on, until He comes again. We celebrated this great and wonderful gift on the Day of Pentecost.

A second way that God the Father has made it possible for Jesus to be with us forever is by His being present to us spiritually in His Body and Blood. In John 6:56, our Lord says: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them." Today, when all who are baptized receive the Body and Blood of Christ, Jesus will be in us, and we will be in Him. Could we get any closer to our Savior than that special intimacy?

How generously our Father has provided for us, by blessing us with two of the most wonderful gifts imaginable: God giving us His Holy Spirit as a means of grace, to teach, comfort, guide, and protect us daily—sometimes even hourly or *minute-by-minute*. And Jesus offering us His Body and Blood as a means of grace to fill us with His spiritual presence—that's why it's so important for us to partake of Communion frequently.

Let us with thankful hearts receive and treasure these precious gifts of God—a father who loves each and every one of us as His precious children—trusting that He will safely carry us through every storm or earthquake life may bring our way. *Amen.*

<sup>1</sup> Adapt. "A Father's Wisdom" © 2001-2009 Sermons4kids < <http://www.sermons4kids.com/fathers-wisdom.html> > 20 June 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Adapt. Jack Canfield & Mark Victor Hansen, *Chicken Soup for the Soul* < [illustrations@CLERGY.NET](mailto:illustrations@CLERGY.NET) > 10 June 2002.