

Like Father, Like Son

When we say, 'Like Father, like son?' is it a compliment or a criticism? I suppose it depends on the father and the child. I asked our congregation to help me explain how children reflect in their lives the lives of people who have made a great imprint on their minds and hearts.

Dena sent me this photograph with this explanation: "That is Scott on the roof of the school, snow blowing. There was a leak that needed fixing and without hesitation Scott and Joe went over and figured it out. It was an ask that didn't need to be managed or described, just "we have a leak." And I feel like that is something that my parents ingrained in us and I want to make sure my children know... don't make the ask complicated. Be someone who can say yes and do it without being more of a hassle. Sounds simple, but it isn't. It requires thinking outside the box and sometimes some heavy lifting."

Karel sent me this photograph of Jon, Mark, Tim and Caroline at the National Air & Space Museum. She explained:

"Mark's interest in aircraft and aviation history has taken our family to see rockets in Cape Canaveral, Florida and Huntsville, Alabama, a space shuttle in Washington D.C. and we've been aboard the Aircraft Carrier Intrepid in New York City. It's no

wonder Jon has been building model airplanes since high school and Tim is an aerospace engineer. Even our future daughter-in-law, Caroline, has had the pleasure of exploring hangars with us.” (Note to Pastor Bill – Karel has seen enough airplanes)

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And then there is Dan and his daughter, Nixin. Dan has been on dirt bikes and 4-wheelers for a long time, so when it came time for that always awkward ‘first date’, he asked Corrie, his future wife, to hop on a 4-wheeler with him, telling her to ‘hold on tight.’ As Dan says with a smile, ‘it worked.’ So, when Nixin turned 3 it was only natural that she learns to drive like her father! (Watch this, which is Nixin at age 4.) Watch for the hair toss now. I imagine Nixin as the next star female driver at the Indy 500 or Daytona (or at least the Plymouth dirt track!)

We all learn something from our parents or grandparents, a favorite aunt or uncle, or maybe a life mentor who came into our lives at a critical moment. Sometimes the traits we develop are biological, but mostly it seems they are one person teaching another person something they love, to love what they love.

That’s how it was with my friend, Robin, too. Robin was a lawyer in another city. You could see her picture on ads in the airport. She was quite a character, as was her father, also an attorney. Robin died recently, too young. But in a

newspaper story in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, I read that she wanted to be remembered as someone who knew that 'love is good'. It was a lesson learned by the precious love her parents gave her and taught her to pass along as she journeyed through the world. As she put it, in her unique style:

“In my heart and soul and down to my fingertips, I have known that my parents loved me more than life and ice cream and licorice combined, and as a result of knowing I was loved, they also taught me how to love.”

When I think about Easter morning, I picture Jesus emerging from the darkness of the Tomb (SLIDE) and, as dawn breaks in the garden, the Father thunders, “My Son! My Son! Today I celebrate you!” (SLIDE)

Love wins. So, the Father says, ‘Let’s celebrate, my Son. Let’s celebrate the Son’.

Why? Love. The Father’s love for the Son. The Son’s love for the Father. Their love which is so big that it saves the world from itself.

The Father loved the Son, more than the sun and the moon and the stars of the universe combined, and as a result the Son modeled that message of love for us. The Son loves us more than we know, regardless of our deeds or our heritage

or politics. The Son loves us imperfect beings because we are also the Father's children.

The Father and the Son make it their business to celebrate love's victory. That is what Easter is about. Light conquering darkness because light is motivated by love and darkness is motivated by hate. In that battle, my friends, love wins, hate loses. It may not appear that way to us all of the time, but that is only because our perspective is too narrow and too short. In the end, always, death is defeated. Love is victorious. Life emerges from darkness and as the light of life spreads across the horizon so does the love which its rays shine down upon us, springing forth new life in dead places. That is the lesson the Father teaches the Son, and the Son teaches us on Easter morning.

How do we know that the Father and the Son are in this business of spreading love and light? Look at Acts 13:32-33. The good news is that the promises God made to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, our spiritual ancestors, and the Jewish people's physical ancestors, what God promised them is now fulfilled for us! Do you see that? The blessings of the Promised Land, of abundant life, made thousands of years earlier, are given to all of God's children by the raising up of Jesus!

The Resurrection we celebrate today is the fulfillment of the promises of God contained in God's Word. Why is that so? Because, as this quote from the famous Psalm 2 explains, the Father gives the Son the title of King, sharing the inheritance of the Throne, Father and Son ruling together. (Acts 13:32-33)

As John Calvin explains, "Christ was declared to be the Son of God in power when he rose from the dead. (Then did) the Father bring him truly to light, that the world might know that he was begotten of him."

And the work of the Father is the work of the Son. (John 5:19) The Son does what he sees the Father doing. Just like we learn from our parents and mentors to love and do the things they love and do, so the Son learns from the Father to love and do the things the Father loves and does.

Look at what those works of love are that the Father teaches the Son. (John 5:21-22) "Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it."

Just as the Father raises the dead Son to life on Easter morning, so the Son raises to life those who have accepted his love for them, a love which is stronger than 'life and ice cream and licorice combined.'

How can he love us, we who have sinned against the Father? Because ‘the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.’ You see, as Friedrich Buechner said so beautifully, we are all of judged by Jesus, and that is a good thing:

“We are all of us judged every day. We are judged by the face that looks back at us from the bathroom mirror. We are judged by the faces of the people we love and by the faces and lives of our children and by our dreams. We are judged by the faces of the people we do not love. Each day finds us at the junction of many roads, and we are judged as much by the roads we have not taken as by the roads we have.

...there will come a Day on which all our days and all the judgments upon us and all our judgments upon each other will themselves be judged. The judge will be Christ. In other words, the one who judges us most finally will be the one who loves us most fully.”

What I want to encourage us to do then, as an act of Easter love, is to be a church which allows Jesus to be the judge. All we need to do is love. Let us offer genuine hospitality to our neighbors, the hospitality which springs from listening with love, not judgment.

I was struck by this statistic from the Barna Group. Among non-Christians and lapsed Christians, the number one quality they seek in a person with whom to talk about faith is, 'listens without judgment.' But only a third of Christians they know are perceived as having this quality.

Let's be a church in which we learn to listen to like children of the Father, the brothers and sisters of the Son, without judgment, so that everyone is encouraged to accept the invitation to come dine with Jesus, to accept the Father's love.

What is the message that the Son learned from the Father, and which we inherit as our message to Sheboygan? (Acts 13:38-39b) Forgiveness of sins. That is our proclamation. Not judgment and condemnation, but forgiveness springing from love and resulting in the resurrection to new life which comes from being set free from every sin.

Freedom to live. Freedom to love. Raised to new heights because Jesus' death and resurrection, by grace alone, have made us right with the Father forever.

BIG IDEA: The Father and the Son share in the work and the joy of setting us free from sin and raising us up to a new life of loving and serving:

Like Father, Like Son, Like Children.

This Easter we celebrate that love is still raising up children to hope. We celebrate the way that the Father showed love for the Son by surprising the darkness with the light of new life.



We celebrate that the Father still surprises the darkness as he raises us, his sons and daughters, to the hope of new life in 2021.

This Easter, after two years of waiting to gather together to celebrate, I am left not only with the image of the Father celebrating the Son on the first Easter morning. I am seeing an image of a happy day, a happy day when, with all of our sins being washed away, we emerge from the darkness of our graves into the light of the restored Garden, the new Promised Land, and the Father proclaims, 'That's my boy! That's my girl!'

Because Jesus is alive you are forever changed!

O Happy Day!