

Title: The Father who gave his children everything
Text: Luke 14.25-27
Theme: 1st and Greatest Love
Series: Jesus said that?!
Prop Stmnt. Since the Father is the best and has given us the best, his purposes, plans and commands can only be for our best.

Read Text:

Andrew Fletcher is a politician from Scotland who wisely said, “Let me write the songs of a nation; I don’t care who writes its laws.” The things that capture the heart and imagination of people has an enormous impact upon a culture. We are the church. We are the people of God. We are the followers of Christ and we are called by Christ, out of the world, to go on behalf of Christ to the world in order to think, sing, speak, work, love, play, serve, and worship in such a way that their hearts and imaginations are captured by something about our lives that is out of this world. Living in complete abandonment to the authority of our King/Savior Jesus Christ is radical. It is crazy. It is nonsense to this world. But, it is also captivating.

But that is not what the contemporary church has been attempting to do for the past 25 years. We have been on a mission to prove that Christianity is cool. Christianity is not cool. It is not trendy. It is radical, but it is not vogue. So, in order to make Christianity cool, Christianity has watered down its message so much that its taste is almost indiscernible from the world. John MacArthur said,

“In the minds and methodologies of most evangelicals, the entire gospel was finally reduced to one easy idea: that Jesus is a kind Savior who patiently waits for sinners to “accept” Him (or invite Him into their hearts), and that He offers eternal life – no strings attached – in exchange for anyone’s decision to do so.”

The message of the church has dropped the language of self-denial because it does not fit with the world’s language and idolatrous goals of self-expression and fulfillment. So, Jesus is our home-boy, but LORD, KING, MASTER? Sacrifice? Lay down your life? Take up your cross? Come and die? Those within the church do not think that language like this will appeal to the non-churched, so these ideas are set aside in exchange for something that is more positive, more appealing, more relevant, more...worldly. And that is the problem. The church looks like, sounds like, and speaks like the culture. It has attracted the curious, but it has lost its voice.

This mini-series entitled, “Jesus said that!?” is being given with the hope that we recapture the high ground of commitment, the deep gravity of cost, the wide-scope of living full throttle for his glory and the soul-satisfying, heart-filling, imagination-capturing, blood-pumping, adrenaline-kicking joy of living in complete abandonment for the glory of Christ. I want you to want to be the tobacco in a cigarette smoked by Jesus. That may not be the best metaphor that I could come up with, but it does make the point – doesn’t it? Grow me up, roll me up, light me up and use me up in order that this world

may know that you are the King. Living in order to put him on display is the most demanding, and thrilling existence you can ask for. He is the greatest good. He is the highest goal. He is the ultimate purpose. He is the noblest cause and the most worthy aim. So, when he says, you love me more than mother or father, or anything else, he is commanding you to do something that is consistent with who he is.

Look at the setting of this command. (13.22, 31-35) He was on his way to Jerusalem. (18.31) He was on his way to die. But, here were these large crowds that were following him. Jesus knew that many of them were simply following because it was exciting, but they had no idea what they were in for. Once again, he makes the point that following God has never been about impressive numbers but about commitment. Like Gideon, whose army was too big, the crowd was too large. We should never confuse size for strength. We should never trade volume for integrity because impressive numbers do not change hearts. What Christ said that day made no political sense. That is why he said it. He was making it very clear that if you were truly going to follow him, you had to do more than simply go along with the crowd. Internally you have to prize him above all else. You have to consider Christ to be your ultimate allegiance. Christ is making it very clear that it is NOT possible to be his follower without being a disciple. It is not possible to be a camp-follower without being a soldier of the king. It is not possible to hang around for the benefits of the gospel, without jumping in with both feet. Just because you hear the lecture does not make you a student. Just sitting in a garage does not make you a car. When a couple stands before me to get married, I say at the outset of the wedding service, that this covenant of marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly. Because of What you are about to say, and Whom you are saying this to, and because you are saying this in the presence of God, you had better count the cost of marriage. Don't say this, unless you are willing to live this. So, Christ is letting them know up front, here is what it means to follow me. "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple."

This command is a good and gracious command, both for you and for your family. Now, I know that it is Father's Day, and on a day like this when many of us will enjoy some time together as a family I realize that I have my work cut out in order to prove this to you. And I want to do so much more than prove this point, I want this truth to capture your heart. So, there are two questions that you ought to be asking right now. The first one being:

1. **How can God command me to honor my parents and hate my parents?**

This statement not only seems to go against our natural instincts, but it also (on the surface) appears to be difficult to reconcile with other things that Christ has said about loving one's neighbor and even taking care your family, besides the fifth commandment. Didn't Christ excoriate the Pharisees because instead of helping out their parents financially, these guys said that their money was dedicated to the Temple? So, what gives?

Doesn't 1 John say that "anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness." (2.9) How can hating one's parents be consistent with following Christ who claims to be love? The answer to that is found in what Christ meant by the word "hate."

When we think of the word hate, we think almost exclusively in emotional terms. We think of hate like, despise, scorn, abhor, and detest. But the word that is translated hate (miseo) can also have the idea of priority. In other words, Christ is not calling you to detest your family, but to prize him above your family. An example of this would be Jacob's relationship with Rachel and Leah. We read in Genesis 29, that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. Verse 31 says, "When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved (hated – ESV), he opened her womb." The point is, she was loved less. She was not preferred. Leah was not hated as in despised, she was not Jacob's favorite. This is the idea here in Luke 15, which is supported by the parallel text in Matthew 10.37. "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." If this sounds shocking it was meant to be shocking, because that is how precious the kingdom of Christ and how precious Christ the King really is. He is to be adored above all. You take care of that which is the nearest and dearest to your heart. For many of you that is your family. However, Christ is to be considered even nearer and dearer than your family.

But, do you know why? Your family, as your family, is not eternal. His family is. Your family is a taste of life together with the eternal family of God. When you prefer Christ above all, the evidence of his will be seen in a humility and love and care that seeks to honor your parents and family.

That brings me to question #2

2. **Why is the command to prefer Christ above family a good and gracious command?**

A. **Because no one (not even dad and mom) can give you what God can give you.**

It is so natural for us to love our parents and to love our children and family. We receive so much from them. They provide for our food, clothing, shelter, identity, refuge, security, even our name. And for parents, children can be such a delight. They give us satisfaction in their growing, joy in their responsibility, laughter in their humor, and contentment in their maturity. But, for all of the things that we give and receive in a family, no one gives like God. Our families give, and that is great, but it cannot match the way God does. Our families give and that is precious, but it cannot match the way God gives.

Argument: God is merciful and loves to give. Mercy gives!

What has God done that would prove that?

- God has given us life (Genesis 1.1; 2.7)

God created us and then God breathed into us the breath of life. We laugh at Bill Cosby's line when he said, "Son, I brought you into this world and I can take you out." But the truth is, life is in the hands of God. With all of the advances in reproductive technology, God still is the author of life.

- God has given us a Savior (Luke 2.11; John 3.16)

The angel told the shepherds that, "unto you is born this day, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Jesus told Nicodemus that, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Your family can give you many things, but they cannot save you. Our hands are tied. We would gladly trade places with our children when they are suffering. We would gladly take their death if we could to let them live – but we can't. We might be able to rescue our children from a burning building, or donate a kidney or do some other self-sacrificing deed. But, we are only finite humans. We cannot save them from their sin. But God gave us a Savior, and through Christ he has given us eternal life.

- God has given us eternal life through faith in Christ (John 10.28; 14.6)

What a gift! Paul says, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Cor. 9.15) Your family may be able to give you an encouragement and food, memories and support. But Jesus said, "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish." "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." God has not only given us a Savior, he has given us eternal life by means of faith alone in this Savior. And God is so incredibly gracious that He even gave us the faith to believe in this Savior.

- God has given us faith to believe (Ephesians 2.8-9)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this (faith) not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast." I cannot make anyone believe in Christ. As much as you may love your children, you cannot force faith into their hearts. But God who breathed physical life into Adam, has, "in his great mercy...given us new birth into living hope." Yes, in giving us faith to believe...

- God has given us birth (new) (James 1.18; 1 Peter 1.3)

James 1.18 says, "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created." God gave us birth. God birthed us in him (speaking of the new birth, the spiritual birth) so that we would be a portrait of what he is going to do with the rest of creation.

- God has given us an inheritance (1 Peter 1.4-5)

Your parents may or may not leave you an inheritance. If they do, there are plenty of people who will want to help you spend it, including Uncle Sam. But listen to the kind of inheritance that God gives you in Christ. It “can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

- God has given us the victory over death (1 Cor. 15.57)

But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a victory over death.

- God has given us the Holy Spirit (Luke 11.11-13; John 14.16)

The permanent indwelling of the Spirit in our lives is such a gracious gift because it means that God himself will be with us at all times. He will never leave us. He will never be separated from us. No one can promise to do that. We can try, but we are subject to forces beyond our control. But God isn’t.

- God has given us his Word (John 17.8)

His Word is perfect. His Word is reliable. My son called me the other day and said, “my car is making this noise – what do you think it is?” I said, “Call John’s dad.” I have good intentions, but I do not have perfect insight. God does.

- God has given us the kingdom (Luke 12.32)

I want you to listen to this verse (Luke 12.32). “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” That’s the whole burrito! That is what all of these other gifts have been building toward. When he created the earth, and in that earth he made a garden, he put Adam and Eve and said – enjoy! It is yours to enjoy under my authority. They lost it all! They ruined it. So, God made a way for this to be restored, so that one day He could give it to us again, but this time – forever.

- God has given us every good and perfect gift (James 1.17)
- God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1.3)
- God has given us Christ (Romans 8.32)
- God has given us to Christ and Christ has given us back to the Father (John 17. 6, 22, 24)

God really is the greatest giver, and Christ really is the greatest gift so that we could enjoy the greatest kingdom, all of which means living with Him and his children forever and ever in perfect harmony and heart-filling worship. It is right for Christ to command you to love him above all.

B. Because no one (not even dad and mom) can love you like God loves you.

Christ loved you before you were born and he loves you all the way to the very end with a love that is never manipulative. His love is a pure love. His love is true. At the end of the Lord's prayer (John 17) Jesus prayed with a longing that we would be with him. He is passionate for his own. Being loved, or being wanted is one of our desires. We are vulnerable to pictures of little kids laughing and giggling while a puppy chases them or is licking them in the face. Why? Is it because dogs are so sanitary? No, it is because that little kid is enjoying the feeling of being loved, even if it is a dog. Sometimes that love or want is based upon need. Parents desire the love of their children and children desire the love of their parents and probably all of our relationships have developed in part on the basis of mutual need. But here is where our relationship with Christ is so remarkable. He loves us, not because He needs to, not because we bring anything to the table, not because we have something that helps complete Him, not because we make Him laugh, or because we are good in athletics or academics that affirms him. He loves us because He has chosen to love us, completely based upon His absolute and free will. He is the one that we ought to be pursuing. He is the one that we need, yet He is the one who pursues us. He is the one who is the most passionate one in the relationship. Christ really loves us and wants us to be with Him and to see his glory. Because no one can love you like God loves you, no one can satisfy you like God does either. That is why...

C. Because no one (not even dad and mom) is worthy of your worship, love, affection, and obedience like God is.

This is what is true about Christ. Salvation belongs to him. Glory Belongs to him. Power belongs to him. His judgments (decisions, counsels, plans) are true and just. (Rev. 19.1-2) Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty REIGNS! (v.6) No earthly relative has the might or the merit, the power or the position, the right or the royalty to command you to worship, like Jesus. The Lamb of God who died is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who roars! The Savior who suffered, is the Sovereign who Reigns! And because Christ is above all, he is to be loved and trusted above all. He will not accept any competitors. He will not bless any imposters. He will not tolerate anyone who presumes to take his place – and that is kind and good and gracious of God to demand this. It is merciful for God to demand us to prefer him above all, because if we preferred our children or our parents or our family above him, then we would be placing a load on them that they could not handle. Your parents cannot save you. Your children cannot rescue you. Your dad, your mom, your family, though precious will not reign on David's throne. So, love your family – but worship, prefer, Christ above them all.

Do you know why we have missionaries? To obey the great commission? Yea! But, because they chose to treasure Christ above family. It is part of carrying the cross.

Dads, teach your kids to love God more than you. He gave them what you couldn't, and what they truly needed.