

Psalm 103

The Family (The Ultimate Father and Son)

Introduction: We've been going through a series on relationships here on Sunday mornings and we come this morning to the subject of the family. Almost everyone agrees that the Family is important, vital even, to society. The question is what family are we talking about? The ideal family? Dad, Mom, 2.5 kids?? How do we define family?

One Problem in appealing to the "ideal family" is that there is really no such thing as the family "golden age." (Midnight in Paris example)

Russell Moore in His book Onward, writes, "The kingdom mystery behind the family is why there is no "golden age" of "family values," this side of Eden. The Fall led to a disruption not only of the peace between God and humanity, but between the man and the woman in marriage. And almost immediately after the Fall, the fracturing of the family began, from violence between brothers, to polygamy, to sexual immorality, to sexual violence, and almost every other imaginable deviation from the Genesis mandate. No Generation is exempt from this tension.." - Russell Moore

As I was studying for this subject I found myself face to face with a question I had never truly thought about -What reason would you give why someone (such as yourself) should be willing to have children, to raise a family? Common answers - children are fun; as an expression of our love; or because that is simply what you do..do any of these seem adequate an answer???

I have to admit I think I fell into the last category by default. Children were never something I thought deeply about except for that I wanted them. I love my parents, I especially have a great relationship with my Dad, and part of me wanted to mimic that, or carry that relationship on, to pay that same love and care into a child, especially a son. But I never thought deeply about -The why of Children.. I don't think that I am unique, in this respect.

One of the greatest crisis threatening the family is that we lack (even in the Church) a moral account of why we commit ourselves to having children.

When we talk about the traditional family being in crisis the problem with appeals to save the family is we assume that we all know what it means when we say family is a good thing..

So then where do we get our understanding of family, and our family values, as Christians, why is family a good thing?

Going back to what I said a moment ago about myself - my desire to have children was to model something that I myself had experienced - which was the unfailing love of a Father and Mother, a house that was a training ground, and a house that was a home. I didn't necessarily realize but I wanted children because my parents modeled for me the ultimate Parent, and the ultimate home - which is God the Father.

1. God is the Ultimate Father.

1. **“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.” -Psalm 127:1-2**
2. The first thing we need to understand is that the “House” the home, the whole family structure is something that is given us by God and unless we recognize this fact of God’s design and intention for it.. we labor in vain, and will eat the bread of anxious toil... All our attempts at “family” at building a true home for our children will ultimately fail, they will fall short, unless God is at the center, unless God is recognized as both architect and builder. Why is that? Because the family is modeled after God himself. (Trinitarian harmony, oneness, love, honor and glory.. pictured in mankind before sin..)
3. In Ephesians 3 Paul refers to God as **“the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives it’s name.”** You can also think of how many times Jesus spoke to us about the Father, about believer’s being his children, or the references that we find all over the New Testament for God being our loving heavenly Father and we being his beloved children who have total confidence in his love, acceptance, protection, discipline..and so on. It would be silly for us to think that God, in trying to relate to humanity compares himself to a father. No, rather fathers, and mothers are created to reflect the love and commitment God has for his people.

4. Now I've said this before, but some of you say and think things like, "well I have a hard time relating to God as a father because I had a very poor example of a father." But you are obviously comparing your parent to some sort of standard. God is a Father in the best of terms - the greatest earthly fathers and mothers pale in comparison to the love of the Ultimate Father.
 1. Psalm 103 gives us this amazing picture of God and his love for his people - we see, absolute safety, compassionate anger, and ultimate home. And one of the most amazing things is that all of these examples are parental illustrations. Maybe you've made a caricature out of God - you see him as all powerful and distant, or as simply loving and accepting everyone... God is much more complex than that. He is almighty, he is King, he is judge, he is lover, he is Father...
 2. **"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments."** -Psalm 103:8-18
 1. **Absolute safety**
 1. **"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. 14 For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust."**

1. (Compassion or pity doesn't fully carry across the idea here, It is literally the emotional attachment and love that a mother feels for her nursing child when her milk is coming in)

1. **“Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.16 Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.” -Isaiah 49:15-16**

2. **“He remembers that we are dust”** Dust is a metaphor for what is weak, what is falling apart, for what is sinful..(God knows that we are weak, that we are stupid, that we are sinful and that's why he loves us..) You know what God loves you more when you are doing right, and he loves you more when you are doing wrong... he loves you in the good and the bad, the same. God is so emotionally and deeply involved with his children because they are such idiots. We are so safe in God's father love..Parents you know this, It's amazing isn't it, that when one of your children is acting up you feel more parent love for them, your compassion for them increases when they are being stupid often times. This shows how we are made in God's image - he is the ultimate Father and there is abundant safety in his love..

2. **Compassionate Anger**

1. **“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (eternal) 9 He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. (temporary)10 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”**

1. God is not retributive in his anger..he is never trying to pay us back for our sins, tit for tat...Now even the best parents in the whole world have made this mistake, to punish out of anger or embarrassment. But not with God, He's the perfect parent. He's neither neglectful nor retributive. God has compassionate anger. Yes, God gets angry.

2. But since his compassion is driving his anger this means that God disciplines us not out of punishment or wrath, but to teach us, to help us avoid greater hurt, heartache and damage to ourselves... Just like Hebrews says, God disciplines those he loves, for those without discipline are illegitimate children. If you love, you get angry.
3. E. H. Gifford, said, "Human love here offers a true analogy: the more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the drunkard, the liar, the traitor." - Anger isn't the opposite of love. Hate is, and the final form of hate is indifference." We as flawed human beings desperately need this kind of love. the love of compassionate anger.

3. **Ultimate Home**

1. "As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; 16 for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.

17 But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, (eternal home, love and acceptance in the Father) and his righteousness to children's children, 18 to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

1. Finally, there is something in every one of us that wants a home. They say you can fit anywhere but home is the place that fits you...and every heart longs for that place where we belong. God the Father promises to be that ultimate resting place for his people now and on into eternity.
2. Now the only problem with this description of God's love is that it is predicated on obedience - To those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments - these are God's children, the one's who experience his Fatherly love and care.

2. **Jesus is the ultimate Son.**

1. The love and care we see from the Father described in Psalm 103 is only possible because of the obedience of the ultimate Son - who obeyed his Father perfectly.

2. Hebrews 10:5-10 **“When Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”** When he said above, **“You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings”** (these are offered according to the law), **9** then he added, **“Behold, I have come to do your will.”** He does away with the first in order to establish the second. **10** And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
3. Hebrews 5:7-9 says, **“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. 9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him”**.
1. Tim Keller says this in his book encounters with Jesus, “At the beginning of history there was also a garden and a command. God put Adam and Eve in that garden, and they were told not to eat of the Tree. The direction was: “Obey me about the Tree, and you will live”—obey me and I’ll bless you. But they disobeyed.....Now there is another garden, and a Second Adam, and another command. Jesus Christ has been sent by the Father to go to the cross, which is also a tree. To the first Adam he said, “Obey me about the Tree and I will bless you”—and Adam didn’t do it. But to the second Adam he says, “Obey me about the Tree and I will crush you”—and Jesus does....Jesus is the first and last person in history to be told that obedience would bring a curse. The Father is saying, essentially, “If you obey me, if you are faithful to me, I will forsake you, cast you off and send your soul into hell.” And yet Jesus obeyed. Even as he was dying, abandoned by his Father, he called him “My God”—words that in the Bible were covenant language, conveying intimacy. Even though he was being forsaken, Jesus was still obeying.” Why? Because he is the ultimate Son who honors and obeys his Father

2. All of this, the unconditional love of the Father, toward us who believe because God the Father has made a covenant with us through his beloved one of a kind, perfect son, Jesus Christ. The covenant will never be broken because both are eternal and infinitely faithful - it cannot fail...
3. The only way that we will be transformed, changed, to be and to do all that we were created to be as parents, to be the family God has called us to be is by our hearts seeing how completely and totally undeserving WE are when it comes to God's grace.. when it comes to God making us his children, when we think of him lavishing his love upon us, to make us sons of God. It is only then that we will have the power, the love, the security, that we need to be a true parent and to give our children the right love, discipline, security they need to be true sons and daughters.
4. If you have the Holy Spirit, then you are a child of God, God is your Father, who knows you completely, and completely loves you. He will never leave you or forsake you. If you have the Spirit - then you know the Abba cry - let the cry of child like dependence teach you what it means to be a father or a mother who's children have confidence to cry out in this same way...
5. "The household is not just a relationship but an economy, an economy where we learn something of what it means to be children of God. Disharmony between parents and children is not simply a cultural problem; it implicitly pictures a false gospel of a Father who does not hear his son, a son who does not honor his father, a church that is not Mother to those of the faith." - Russell Moore

Conclusion: Why Family? Because Christians believe that there is an ultimate Family - Father, Son, and Spirit and the Bride of Christ -the Church. We believe that all family points back to God and is a sign of hope that one day we will be forever joined to God as pictured in Revelation 21. We believe that the family is to point to, to mimic, to put on display the true and ultimate family. This is our high calling as the church, to support our families in this task.

As the song goes - We are children of the promise, the beloved of the Lord; won with everlasting kindness, bought with sacrificial blood, bringing

reconciliation to a world that longs to know the affection of a Father who will never let them go...