

# **No Substitutes**

## **June 18, 2017**

Our Savior's Way  
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM

**Pastor Justin Kumfer**

Martin Luther once said the, "Whoever sees Christ as a mirror of the Father's heart, actually walks through the world with new eyes." I think we can all agree that being a father gives you new eyes. For everyone here we have an image of a father in mind. Maybe it's your own father, maybe it's the person who filled the role of father for you, or maybe it's you and how you think you look to your children. Whatever the case may be the importance of a father, and yes a mother, cannot be understated.

Thinking about fathers in general for a minute, what makes a good father? This week I came across a "simple list of 100 ways to be a good father." It might be just me but I don't see how simple list and 100 things fit together but oh well. I was looking through the list to see what was on it and checking off those things that I do or try to do. Of those 100 things I maybe do 40 of them occasionally and possibly half that regularly.

On this list were things like be present with your children, laugh at yourself regularly, leave your watch and phone on your desk sometimes, say I love you, a lot, grow a beard, and many others. And this got me to thinking, if this is a list of things that a father recommends for other fathers, what would God's recommended list for us be?

Thankfully, finding a list of the things God wants us to do is pretty clear. He even wrote it down for us. It's called the 10

commandments. It was so important for us to know that He even wrote it down twice.

You all know or at least have an idea about the 10 things on this list, don't have other gods, don't misuse God's name, keep the sabbath day, don't murder or steal or lie, or commit adultery, etc... All of these commands are like the list I mentioned earlier in that they will help us be better fathers, mothers, children, neighbors and so on. But they are different in that these commands aren't up for debate.

The list of 100 simple things to be a good father included write a book on fatherhood. That was one of the suggestions. That list was primarily suggestions, or things that might help someone be a better father, and granted they are good things. But God's list isn't just suggestions for you to follow and its not just for fathers. God's list are in fact God's commands for everyone.

I say commands and I can already see some of you rebelling. Because what do *we* do with commands? Well, looking back at our history we break them. God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree, they did it anyway. God commanded the people of Israel not to follow other gods, they did it anyway. Our parents tell us not to spill that milk on the floor, we did it anyway. We are a rebellious people. We see a rule and we want to do the opposite. Someone tells us not to do one thing and that one thing is all we want to do. And the rule we break more often than most, "You shall have no other gods before me."

This summer we're going to be looking at the 10 Commandments. God the Father's first commandment for us was to put Him first. As Lutherans we ask, What does this mean? The Small Catechism says, "We should fear and love and trust in God above all things." Whoa, whoa, whoa! Above all things? You mean I have to put God above my family? You mean I have to trust in Him to care for me instead of my job?

You mean that I can't love my new iPad as much as I love Him? I don't know if I can do that. Besides why would He make a rule like that anyway? Doesn't He love me and want me to be happy?

God's response to that question is, "Of course I do. That's why I made the rule." You see we think that when there are rules for us to follow that they limit the fun we have. Or they are trying to keep us from being happy. That whoever made them wants to keep all the fun for themselves. But that's not the case. Parents know this better than most. Don't put that lego in your mouth. Go to bed. You need to eat. Sit down or else you might spill....too late. And that was just yesterday in my house. Too often we don't see commands as guides to keep us safe and happy. We see them as roadblocks to happiness.

Martin Luther's quote that I began with said, "Whoever sees Christ as a mirror of the Father's heart, actually walks through the world with new eyes." From God the Father we have a rule that there should be no other Gods. But when we look at this rule in light of Christ it's not a condemnation but a gift. In all of the religions across the world none of them have a God who sacrificed so that their followers would not be lost. Romans 5 says, "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person —though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

In Christ we see the love of the Father in action. Our sin set us apart from God. It's like when a child does something wrong and they stand apart sad, scared, maybe even ashamed of what they did because they knew it would upset or disappoint their parent. Our sin looked like that before God. We stood apart because our sin separated us from Him. That sin couldn't be in the presence of a Holy God. So, God did something about it. He sent His Son into the world to restore us and bring us back to our heavenly Father.

It wasn't an easy task. God knows our weakness, and our rebellion. So, He didn't leave it up to us to save ourselves. He didn't make our salvation something we received or earned through our hard work or best efforts. He made salvation a gift for us. A gift that was bought and paid for through the blood of His beloved Son. The blood of Jesus covered us and made us right before God so that when the time comes we will be saved. The greatest gift a Father could give, is love for His children. Love that sets rules to lead us but also gives grace to cover us. That grace came when God the Father sacrificed something that was very precious to Him in order to save what was even more precious to him. You and me. The love that we see in Christ.

That's what a good father does. Our God isn't just a good Father, He's the best Father. If you're only thanking and praising God for your earthly father today you're missing out. Because every father owes all he has to his Heavenly Father who shows us all what true love is.

Let's pray...Father God..

Let us then lift our praise to Him singing Good Good Father.  
Amen.