

Not Forsaken

SERMON OUTLINE 1

Sermon Title: The Most Important Thing about You

Sermon Text: John 1:10-13

“He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.” –John 1:10-13

I. Introduction: A. W. Tozer famously wrote, in his book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” Tozer is right. As Colossians 1:16 tells us, we were made *by* God and *for* God. Therefore, what we think about Him is more important than anything else.

II. Transition Statement: The natural question, then, is “What do you think about when you think about God?”

III. Three Points:

- a. Point 1: We all tend to make God into something that He is not, like the following “gods”
 - i. Grandpa God: Grandpa God is sweet and charming, but he’s really out of touch with reality, kind of tough to get in touch with, and, even though we’re comfortable with him, he’s ultimately not very helpful.
 - ii. Scorekeeper God: This version of God is all about what you can and can’t do. He’s a rule-making, tally-keeping umpire in the sky, and you better keep on his good side.
 - iii. Cosmic Force God: This God is a nebulous force—nameless and faceless, probably with no personhood or personality, kind of like The Force in *Star Wars*.
 - iv. Angry God: Angry God lives to punish people, to push people around, to make them pay. He’s the God people talk about when they move away from someone, afraid they’re going to get struck by lightning.
 - v. Buddy God: This God is on our level. He’s casual, and we can treat him casually. He’s chill and care-free and not really concerned with our lives—makes for good company, but not much else.
 - vi. Me God: This God is, well, me. We may never say overtly, “I’m God,” but we often act like it—like we’re in control, self-made, and the world revolves around us.
- b. Point 2: A guide for thinking about God
 - i. The good news is, God has not left us in the dark in terms of what to think about Him. That’s what the Bible is for.
 - ii. Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us God has been revealing Himself from the beginning of time through people called prophets. Then He sent His Son into the world to give the full and final revelation of who He is. So, do you want to know what to think about God? Learn what Jesus thinks about God.
- c. Point 3: A God to call “Father”
 - i. More than any other picture of God, Jesus teaches us that we should see God as Father.
 - ii. Not only did He come to tell us we could call God “Father,” He came so that God really could be our Father. “To all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God.”
 - iii. If you are a Christian, God is your Father. If you aren’t yet a Christian, you can know God as Father by receiving Jesus Christ.

IV. Conclusion: I recognize that seeing God as a Father is difficult for some people, because some of us have had really bad experiences with our earthly fathers. We’ll deal with that more in the coming weeks, but for now, this is a place to start. This week when you pray, pray to God as your Father.

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SERMON OUTLINE 2

Sermon Title: God Is a Perfect Father

Sermon Text: Luke 11:1-13

"He was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'Whenever you pray, say, Father, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us. And do not bring us into temptation.' He also said to them: 'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him at midnight and says to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I don't have anything to offer him." Then he will answer from inside and say, "Don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed. I can't get up to give you anything." I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend's shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" -Luke 11:1-13

I. Introduction: Talk about various kinds of problems people have with their fathers (abusive fathers, absent fathers, passive fathers).

II. Transition Statement: I recognize that some of us do not have good fathers or do not have good relationships with our fathers. And even the best fathers aren't perfect; every single one leaves something to be desired. But we'll see today that God is not like that. He is a giving, generous, and good Father.

III. Three Points:

- a. Point 1: Jesus tells us to call God "Father"
 - i. We saw last week that Jesus reveals God to us as "Father." This week, we see that He tells us to call God "Father." When we pray, we should pray to our Father.
 - ii. If Jesus tells us to call God "Father," then it must be a good thing to see God as Father. We have to follow the way of Jesus and let God redefine for us what a Father is, rather than imposing our experiences with our earthly fathers onto our heavenly Father.
- b. Point 2: God is a giving Father, a generous Father, and a good Father
 - i. We see in the text that God is giving. If a friend will give another friend what he needs just to get him off his back, how much more will our loving Father be willing and ready to give us what we need?
 - ii. We also see in the text that God is generous. If evil fathers give their children what they need, how much more with God give us what we need and then some?
In this, we see that our heavenly Father is good, and His desires for us are good.
- c. Point 3: Talking to your Father
 - i. So, we should talk to our Father as the giving, generous, and good Father that He is.
 - ii. This means we tell Him our needs, tell Him how we're feeling, ask Him to help us and protect us, and pray for His name to be honored as holy.
 - iii. In this, we see that our heavenly Father is good, and His desires for us are good.

IV. Conclusion: We sometimes struggle seeing God as Father because we see in Him a reflection of our earthly dads. But God is not a reflection of our earthly fathers; He is the perfection of fatherhood. He is the original Father, and thus, the perfect Father.

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SERMON OUTLINE 3

Sermon Title: The Family of God

Sermon Text: Ephesians 1:3–6

“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him. He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One.” –Ephesians 1:3–6

I. Introduction: Tell a story about adoption (great opportunity to highlight a family in the church who has adopted). Finish the story by talking about the adopted child relating to other children in the family.

II. Transition Statement: When God adopts you, you’re not an only child. The Bible tells us that all Christians are sons and daughters of God, which means we get brothers and sisters when we put our faith in Christ.

III. Three Points:

- a. Point 1: When God adopts you, you get a whole family
 - i. The New Testament is full of commands related to brothers and sisters. Jesus even says that people who lose their biological families by following him “receive a hundred times more, now at this time—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields” (Mark 10:30). He’s not talking about biological families and physical possessions, but about sharing in the family of God.
 - ii. With a family comes great joy—but also some difficulty and awkwardness. It can be hard to get along with your siblings! We may even be prone to want to walk away from the family—to have a relationship with our Father but not our brothers and sisters.
- b. Point 2: God wants you to be part of the family
 - i. Because an adoption by God is an adoption into His family, we’re called not to separate from the church.
 - ii. You can’t love Jesus and hate His church. It’s like telling someone you love them but hate their wife or their children.
 - iii. God is serious about this. He tells us in Hebrews 10 not to neglect gathering together, because doing so will lead to us falling away from the faith completely!
- c. Point 3: How to behave in God’s family
 - i. Fortunately, the New Testament gives us all kinds of instructions for how to behave in the family of God, how to love our brothers and sisters.
 - ii. Romans 12:9–21 is a great place to start. It tells us to love one another, to share in one another’s highs and lows, to forgive, and to adopt a posture of humility toward one another.

IV. Conclusion: Individual Christians aren’t complete if they aren’t committed to a local church. You need the body of Christ, the church. At the same time, churches need Christians! So, will you commit? Will you commit to being a part of the whole family of God? Will you commit to not only loving your Father, but loving your brothers and sisters as well?

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SERMON OUTLINE 4

Sermon Title: The Gift of a New Family Tree

Sermon Text: Hebrews 2:10-18

“For in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was entirely appropriate that God—for whom and through whom all things exist—should make the source of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying: ‘I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters; I will sing hymns to you in the congregation.’ Again, ‘I will trust in him.’ And again, ‘Here I am with the children God gave me.’ Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. For it is clear that he does not reach out to help angels, but to help Abraham’s offspring. Therefore, he had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. For since he himself has suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.” -Hebrew 2:10-18

I. Introduction: Share a story about a funny or awkward moment at a family reunion.

II. Transition Statement: The reality is, we all have funny and awkward stories about our families. But our family trees contain more than just awkwardness. They contain brokenness, dysfunction, and sin. What we need is a new family tree.

III. Three Points:

- a. Point 1: Your old family tree
 - i. We all have brokenness and sin in our family tree—abuse, divorce, premature death, sickness, absence.
 - ii. Where is the brokenness in your family tree? Where is the loss? Where are the patterns of sin?
- b. Point 2: Your new family tree
 - i. The good news of the gospel is that when you become a Christian, you get a new family tree.
 - ii. John 1 says that Christians are born again, born not by the will of man, but by the will of the Father. We have a spiritual family tree—God is our Father and Jesus is our older Brother.
 - iii. This spiritual family tree actually trumps our physical family trees. This family is the most fundamental to your identity—not your physical family.
- c. Point 3: The tree at the center of it all
 - i. There is a third tree, a tree that transforms your first family tree and gives you a new one—a tree that Jesus was nailed to 2,000 years ago.
 - ii. This tree—the cross of Christ—tells us at least the following three things:
 1. The cross of Christ reinforces God’s love for us.
 2. The cross of Christ is the place that allows us to know that God understands our pain.
 3. The cross of Christ is proof that God can take the worst and bring something good from it.
 - iii. Most importantly, at the cross, Jesus made a way for us to be in right relationship with the Father. This is what our text for today tells us—that Jesus, through suffering, defeated death and the devil and brought many sons and daughters to glory, to God. He became our Brother because of his self-sacrifice on the cross, and He made the way for God to be our Father through that same self-sacrifice.

IV. Conclusion: The cross is the center of the universe. It is the most important thing that ever happened. I don’t know if you have an older brother or sister, or maybe you grew up wanting one. In your new family tree, you have a perfect older Brother, Jesus. He went to the cross as the perfect, unique Son of God, after living the life we couldn’t live, and He died the death we deserved to die so that we could be accepted by God. He was forsaken by God on that cross so that you and I will never be forsaken. He is the perfect big Brother.

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SERMON OUTLINE 5

Sermon Title: Relating to Your New Father

Sermon Text: Luke 15:11-32

“He also said: ‘A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.” So he distributed the assets to them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living. After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He longed to eat his fill from the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one would give him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! I’ll get up, go to my father, and say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers.’” So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father told his servants, “Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let’s celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” So they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he summoned one of the servants, questioning what these things meant. “Your brother is here,” he told him, “and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.” Then he became angry and didn’t want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him. But he replied to his father, “Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.” “Son,” he said to him, “you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.””

–Luke 15:11-32

I. Introduction: Tell a story about a time when you lost something important to you and how hard you looked for it.

II. Transition Statement: In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells three consecutive parables about lost things that were found. The third and final parable is about a lost son and a father who lavishes grace and love on his son—and it tells us about how the heavenly Father loves us.

III. Three Points:

- a. Point 1: The Father runs to you
 - i. The younger son was a legalist. It may not seem like it, because he broke all the rules, but when he decided to go back to his father, he thought he had to work his way back into good standing. He thought he had forever lost his standing with his father because of his bad behavior.
 - ii. But before the son could even work his way back to the father, the father came running to the son.
 - iii. This is a picture of our heavenly Father. No matter how bad you’ve messed up, you can’t forfeit His love for you, and you can’t work your way back into His good standing. He comes running to you, and all you have to do is be willing to be received back into His loving arms.

b. Point 2: The Father celebrates

- i. Not only does the father run to the son to forgive him and welcome him home, but he also runs to all the family and neighbors to tell them about his son's return and to celebrate together.
- ii. This parable, along with the two before it, includes a celebration for the lost thing that is found to show how overjoyed God is when we are found, when we are welcomed back into loving relationship with our Father.

c. Point 3: The Father pleads

- i. The younger son gets most of the press in this story, but there are actually two sons, and both of them, at one point or another, are lost.
- ii. The father has already humiliated himself twice by dividing his inheritance while he is still living and then by running to greet his younger lost son (most fathers were far too dignified to run in this day and age).
- iii. At the end of the story, he humiliates himself a third time by going outside during the party and pleading with his older son to come in.
- IV. The younger son threw away his life and thought he had to earn his way back into his father's good standings. The older son was religious and well-behaved and thought he had already earned his way into his father's good standings. But the father pleads with him, showing us that neither son could earn their way into his good standings, but that both of them had his full love and affection just because they were his sons.
- V. The heavenly Father pleads with us too, and He wants you to know, whether you're the reckless younger brother or the religious older brother, that He loves you just because you're His child.

IV. Conclusion: We have seen this morning the amazing, forgiving grace and love of our Father. You have a Father, and that is good news. You are a beloved son, a beloved daughter. Come to the Father and find the freedom that is yours simply in being His beloved child.

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SERMON OUTLINE 6

Sermon Title: Growing Up to Be Like Dad

Sermon Text: Ephesians 5:1

“Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children.” –Ephesians 5:1

I. Introduction: Whether we like it or not, we all grow up to be a little like our parents. Have you ever had that moment when you realize you’re saying something or doing something just like your mom or dad? Sometimes it’s a little annoying or even embarrassing, but we all do it!

II. Transition Statement: Well, there’s nothing embarrassing about growing up to be like our heavenly Father. In fact, the Bible tells us that’s exactly what we’re supposed to do. We’re called to imitate our Father, to grow up to be like Him..

III. Three Points:

- a. Point 1: Created in the image of God
 - i. From the beginning, God wanted us to be like Him.
 - ii. Genesis 1-2 tell us that God created us in His image, which means a number of things:
 1. We can think of “image” as a noun—there’s something, some quality, about us that is like God that no other part of His creation shares.
 2. We can also think of “image” as a verb—we should actively image God. This means, like Him, we have creativity and authority, just as we see Him creating and ruling in the first chapters of the Bible.
- b. Point 2: Sin broke the image of God in us
 - i. Unfortunately, even though the first human beings, Adam and Eve, were made in God’s image, they sinned. They acted in ways that God would never act, so instead of rightly imaging Him, they painted a false image of Him.
 - ii. Now, we still bear God’s image, but instead of being mirrors of His character, we are like carnival mirrors. We paint a distorted picture of who God is.
 - iii. God is serious about this. He tells us in Hebrews 10 not to neglect gathering together, because doing so will lead to us falling away from the faith completely!
- c. Point 3: Salvation restores God’s image in us
 - i. When we believe in Jesus and become Christians, the Holy Spirit begins to restore God’s image in us. This means He makes us look more and more like our Father.
 - ii. When we grow up as Christians, we want to be the spittin’ image of our Father!
 - iii. How can we do this? Jesus said anyone who has seen Him has seen the Father, and the Bible elsewhere says He is the exact image of God, the visible image of the invisible God. So, the best way to imitate our Father is to imitate our Brother.
 - iv. We can do this by looking to Jesus’:
 1. Love
 2. Humility
 3. Self-sacrifice
 4. Care for others
 5. Care for the glory of God
 6. Patience
 7. Holiness
 8. And every other quality of Jesus

IV. Conclusion: We have a good, good Father who loves us and provides for us. We’ve seen in this series that God is our Father and how that is a good thing, because He is the perfect Father. He is not a reflection of our earthly dads; He is the perfection of Fatherhood. This was made possible by the loving self-sacrifice of our big Brother Jesus on the cross. What should our response be? Our response should be to grow up to be just like Dad.