

SERMON OUTLINE

Main Sermon Theme: In order to make us children of God, God sent His only-begotten Son into the world—the Son of Man and Son of God—to be the perfect Son that we could never be.

- I. Father and child relationships are extremely important but often complicated.
- II. Like Cain, Ishmael and Absalom were not the promised Son.
- III. Our relationship to our heavenly Father is summed up by the story of the prodigal son.
- IV. Jesus is the perfect Son whose birth, death, and resurrection reconcile us to our heavenly Father.
- V. Through Jesus, you are a beloved child of God with whom He is pleased.

SERMON

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation this morning is the Holy Gospel according to Saint John, chapter one verses one through eighteen.

Boys and girls, Merry Christmas! How important is your relationship to your father? It is very important. It's incredibly important for your emotional and social well-being. According to

a study done by the Department of Justice, “What Can the Federal Government Do to Decrease Crime and Revitalize Communities?”, it has been found that not having a father at home accounts for:

63 percent of youth suicides

90 percent of all homeless and runaway youths

85 percent of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders, aka they do not listen to mom and dad

71 percent of all high school dropouts

75 percent of adolescent patients in substance abuse centers ¹

Children do best when they know and are raised by both a father and a mother.

But even when dad is present, it doesn't mean that everything will go well. Authors and screenwriters have often recognized the complex relationship that often exists between fathers and sons and have used those tensions to create powerful stories.

When Darth Vader in *The Empire Strikes Back* revealed to Luke Skywalker while they were fighting that he was, in fact, Luke's father, it was the most shocking father-son moment since . . . well, probably 2,000 years beforehand in the Jordan River

¹ Office of Justice Programs, “What Can the Federal Government Do to Decrease Crime and Revitalize Communities?” <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/172210.pdf>, 1998.

when Jesus was baptized, and God himself announced, “This is My Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

How many other movies can you think of that revolve around the relationship between fathers and sons? I can think of *The Godfather*, a story really about sons trying to not disappoint fathers, *Finding Nemo*, a story about an overprotective father and a wayward son; and *The Lion King*, another story about a son who feels like he can’t live up to his father’s expectations.

Based on our own storytelling, we humans know both how important fathers are and how difficult our relationships with them can be.

In our midweek Advent series this year, we have explored three different father-and-son relationships found in the Old Testament, all of which ended in disappointment and often in tragedy.

Cain, the son of Adam, was not the promised Savior that Adam and Eve hoped that he would be. Rather, he continued in his father’s sin, becoming the first man among many who would strike out and kill his own brother, Abel.

Ishmael, the son of Abraham, was not the promised son either. Abraham and Sarah thought that they had to take matters into their own hands in order to produce an heir for Abraham. But they soon

learned the folly of not trusting fully in God and trying to produce on their own what only God could do.

Absalom, the son of David, despite his father's great love for him, ended up disappointing his father as well, rebelling against him and losing his life in the process.

All of these stories, both biblical and modern, help point us to the most complicated father-son relationship of all time. It's the story of God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth, and the children He created, the sons of men.

This is our story.

Though we desperately need the presence of our loving heavenly Father in our lives for our wellbeing, we have rejected Him time and time again through our sinful and foolish ways.

Like Cain, we have not lived up to the expectations given to us in the Ten Commandments and have become murderers through our sinful thoughts and words and actions. Like the story of Ishmael, we have tried to take matters into our own hands, thinking that our good works will earn God's love and favor. But our efforts are doomed to fall short and drive us further away from God. Like Absalom, we have rebelled against our heavenly Father

and King, wanting to rule our own lives instead. But this will only lead to death and condemnation.

Rather than trust in our heavenly Father's guidance, which is always wise and good, we prefer to place our trust in political figures, or military might, or in ourselves to find salvation in this life. Rather than listen to the truth that our heavenly Father speaks to us, we prefer to listen and place our confidence in the opinion of others.

Our story is a story of wayward and stubborn children who have a Father who is even more stubbornly pursuing us out of His great love.

The Christmas story tells the story of the only perfect Father-Son relationship that has ever existed. This relationship has existed since before time began. It will continue to exist throughout eternity.

It is a relationship that is proclaimed in many of the Christmas songs we sing.

“Of the Father's love begotten ere the worlds began to be, He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending He” (*Of the Father's Love Begotten*, LSB 384:1).

“Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love’s pure light” (*Silent Night, Holy Night, LSB 363:3*).

“Son of the Father now in flesh appearing!” (*O Come, All Ye Faithful, LSB 379:2*).

It is a story that is told in the first chapter of John’s Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, He has made Him known. (John 1:1–2, 14, 18; emphasis added)

God the Father knows how much we need Him, despite our rejection of Him. We need to know our Father. It is the only way to find true joy, peace, hope, and life. **And in order to make us children of God, God sent His only-begotten Son into the world—the Son of Man and Son of God—to be the perfect Son that we could never be.**

“When the fullness of time had come,” Paul explains, “God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4–5, emphasis added).

Jesus is the true Son of Adam who is the promised Seed foretold in Genesis 3 and who committed no murder with his thoughts, words, and actions. Rather, he was murdered that we might live.

Jesus is the true Son of Abraham, the One who would bless all nations, by taking our salvation into His hands and giving to us His righteousness.

Jesus is the true Son of David, the King of kings, who remained perfectly obedient to His Father, and yet became a curse for us by hanging from a tree.

Psalm 146 reminds us: “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish (Psalm 146:3–4). But Jesus is both the Son of Man and Son of God, the Prince of Peace, and when His breath departed, God’s plan of salvation was complete—God and sinners reconciled.

Because of the gift of His Son, God reveals to us, in a shocking twist, that He is, in fact, our Father, who loves us and forgives us and gives us the right to become children of God. God adopts you and makes you part of His eternal family through your Baptism into Jesus. What God said to Jesus at His Baptism, God now says to you through yours: “This is My son. This is My daughter, with whom I am well pleased.”

You are not a fatherless child. You do not have an absentee Father. Though you don’t deserve it, you have a perfect relationship with your Father who has given up His only-begotten Son for you and who will always love you and care for you and shield you with His presence, just like a good Father should do.

The Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.