

God Is a Good Father - 1.knowing the Father and Being Like Him

by Zac Poonen

Knowing God as a father is essential for experiencing intimacy with him and overcoming self-centeredness.

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Scripture: Matthew 5:48, Matthew 6:26, Luke 6:36, Luke 15:20-24, Hebrews 12:6

Topics: "God The Father", "Christian Discipleship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God as a loving Father who cares for us deeply. It highlights the need to surrender all areas of our lives to Him, including our attitudes towards others, and to trust in His provision, discipline, and guidance. The speaker encourages a deep, intimate relationship with God as a Father who loves us unconditionally and desires our growth in Christlikeness.

Transcript

I thought if Jesus himself were standing in the pulpit today, what would he speak about? And we don't need to guess about that because when we read the Gospels, what did he speak about the most? And I'll tell you, he spoke about his father. He had come to earth to reveal the father, not just to die for our sins. Do you know that he didn't primarily die for our sins because he loved us? You know, we can think like that because we like to think that we are very important.

But I want you to turn to the Gospel of John and verse, just before he went to the cross, John 14 and verse 31, so that the world may know that I love the father. I do what the father commanded me. Let us go from here to the cross.

So when Jesus died on the cross, the first thing I see is, wow, how much he loved the father. Now most of us have spent all our lives thinking at the cross and saying, wow, how much he loved me. Because even after we become Christians, we never get out of our self-centeredness.

The race of Adam is a self-centered race. Everything revolves around me. And I want to say, my dear brothers and sisters, as long as you live like that, you will never come into the fullness of the Christian life.

You'll never be able to walk as Jesus walked. You'll never come into that life of perfect peace and joy that the apostles experienced. And that you hear from this pulpit so often, but you find so difficult to achieve.

You know why? Because you never want to get out of self as the center. And this is just one indication. Jesus loved me and died for me.

But Jesus said that the world may know that I love the father. So I want you to look at Jesus on the cross as one who loved the father so much. His whole life was centered around the father.

You know, the first commandment is, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, strength. And then you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Do you believe Jesus kept that commandment? Do you believe that he loved the father more than he loved you? Self-centered you.

I mean, it took me years to see that, but it changed my life. Completely changed my life. When I saw that so much of what we call Christianity is centered around ourselves.

And that's why every unhappy marriage there is in Christians is because both are self-centered. And I saw that true repentance is, if it's really 180 degree turn, like I was speaking about repentance last Sunday, I think most of us have not turned 180 degrees, maybe 90 degrees, 135 degrees. 180 means I'm no longer centered in myself.

I never think at any time in terms of how will this affect me, but how will it affect the glory of God? I mean, it doesn't happen overnight, but if you work towards coming there and say, Lord, I want 180 degree turn. I want to say to you in Jesus name, from a little bit that I've tasted in my own life, that you will live at a level of the Christian life that 99% of believers know nothing about and that you yourself have never experienced. There's something you're missing, my brothers and sisters, because the devil has blinded your eyes.

You think that you can make the best of your life if you seek your own. That's where the devil has deceived you. If you say, if I take care of me and my family first, everything will work out okay.

It won't. God never intended man to live like that. In fact, the choice in the garden of Eden between those two trees was really this choice.

Adam, do you want to live a self-centered life or do you want to live a God-centered life? Adam said, I want a self-centered life. The tree of knowledge of good and evil symbolizes that. And until we have rejected that choice of Adam 100% in our life, I can say we're not really converted.

It's a tremendous grief to me that so many Christians live in that such a low level. I mean, if it's a grief to me, can you imagine what a grief it is to our father in heaven? Jesus came to reveal the father. And once you know God is your father, it'll make a tremendous difference in your life.

I believe all of us know God is our father to different degrees. I mean, the day you're converted, you say, I'm a child of God. God is my father.

And I said that for so many years, but I was a very insecure Christian, always trying to impress others. Why do I want to impress others? Because I'm insecure. I don't know God is my father.

One of the things that happens when you really know God is your father is you don't want to impress anybody in the world anymore. You couldn't care less what people think about you. Can you honestly tell me that you couldn't care less what people think about you? You ladies who dress up in fashionable styles, tell me honestly, you couldn't care less what people think about you.

You only care what almighty God thinks about you. It'll make a difference even in the way you dress. I'll tell you that.

So many things in our life change. When I say, Lord, the only thing that's going to matter to me is what you think about me, not what man thinks about me, not what my fellow believers in CFC think about me, but what you think about me. That's a person who has really known God as father.

And another proof of it is, I want to ask you, you know, I want to, I hope you'll believe me that I'm trying to help you, not condemn you this morning. I don't want to condemn anybody. Spirit of condemnation is not in the new covenant.

That's an old Testament ministry. And we don't do that in this pulpit. We're not here to condemn you.

We're not here to make you feel guilty when you go home. I honestly say the Holy Spirit's come to lift us higher. The voice from heaven is my son, my daughter come up higher, come up higher.

It's always the voice from heaven. So I want you to be honest and ask yourself, whenever you pray, what are the first words that come out of your mouth? First word, Lord, nothing wrong in that. All I say is you don't know the father well enough.

When I pray, I say, dad, I never said that for many years. Then I knew I was filled with the Holy Spirit. There's a lot of controversy as to how do you know when the Holy Spirit's filled a person? Well, let me tell you one verse.

It says in Romans chapter eight and verse 15, you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, daddy, father. You know, it's very sad that that word Abba in the Hebrew has not been translated. I feel sad about so many words in the Bible that were not translated into English.

Baptism. Why in the world do they put a Greek word there instead of translating and say, immersion, go and immerse people. I don't agree with those translators.

They were trying to please people. Hypocrite. Why hypocrite? It's a Greek word.

Why not use an English word, actor, stop acting. That's the meaning of don't be a hypocrite. It means so much more to me when I'm told, don't act when you go to church, when you go to a meeting, just be yourself.

Hypocrite, such a complicated word. And I think, oh, I'm not a hypocrite, but I may be acting. So same way here.

Abba. It's not Abba. That's Hebrew.

I'm not Hebrew. I speak English. I don't want a Hebrew word.

I don't speak to God in Hebrew. I speak to God in English. So what should I say? Not Abba.

Daddy. Father. It's different from father.

Abba, father. Daddy, father. And it says the spirit of God cries out, comes within and makes us cry out.

He could never do that in the Old Testament because he came upon people, never inside them. And I want to tell you, you know, the spirit of God has filled your life when you cry out daddy. You don't need anybody to tell you that.

And I know the world of difference it made in my life as I grew up as a insecure young boy. I became a Christian and I was a very insecure Christian. Till in the mercy of God, he revealed to me that most glorious truth that I've never got tired of preaching for 35 years.

And I'll tell you, no man taught me this. There are many truths I have learned from other men I have to acknowledge. I did not discover forgiveness of sins myself.

Other people taught me the gospel. But when it came to this truth, that God loved me as he loved Jesus, I discovered it myself. I have never heard a tape or read a book in my life that taught that.

To me, it was as great a revelation as Martin Luther discovering 500 years ago that justification was by faith and not by works. It revolutionized my life. You don't realize how much it changed my life.

God is my daddy. He loves me as he loved Jesus. Amazing, unbelievable.

Now I want to put what sometimes in emails, you'll see a disclaimer. I want to put a disclaimer there. It does not apply to everyone who calls himself a Christian.

Jesus was referring to those 11 disciples who were surrendered to his lordship completely. And if there are a few sitting here like that, where you say every ambition of mine is surrendered to God. All my life, I love Jesus more than I love my parents, relatives, wife, children, brother, sister, my job, my house, all earthly property.

I love Jesus more than everything else on earth. That's for you. It's not for others.

So it may not be for everybody sitting here because some of you got ambitions which are outside the will of God. God bless you brother. I hope he can.

I don't know whether he will, but if your ambition is only to do the will of God. For many years, I've stood before God and said, Lord, my only ambition in life is to do your will on earth. Nothing else.

I have no other ambition on earth. And I wish all of you would say that it would transform your life completely. You think God will mess up your life? If you say that, I said that to God many years ago, many, many years ago.

Do you think God has messed up my life? Far from it. It would have been messed up if I hadn't said that. You think God messed up Jesus life because he said, I only want to do the father's will.

Those are the men and women who really lived the way God wanted man to live on this earth. Dear brothers and sisters, many of us may be just religious, speaking a lot of high sounding new covenant language. But you know, God is a father.

He longs that you know him as a father. You know, there's some Christians in certain Christian denominations who teach that you can't come to Jesus directly. You have to come through a mediator, Mary.

And the example they use is, and they say, you can't come to God directly. You have to come through Mary. And the example they use is, remember when daddy wanted to come and give you a spanking? Who came in between and stopped him? Mommy, right? That's why you need a Mary between you and God when he comes to give you a spanking.

Do you think such people would want to go near God as a father? They'd rather go to Mary. What about you? Do you go to God as a father? You say, no, I'd rather talk to Jesus. You're a little bit better, but not really.

You know what Jesus said? Turn to John 16. Listen to these words. Verse 25, John 16, 25.

These things I've spoken to you in figurative language. A lot of Jesus speaking was in pictures, parables, but an hour is coming. And that's the day of Pentecost.

Remember that. An hour is coming in the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit will come right inside you, which you disciples don't have right now in John 16. And I will tell you plainly of the father of your daddy in heaven.

When that hour comes, the Holy Spirit, in that day, you will ask in my name. Of course, we still go in the name of Jesus. But I do not say to you, listen to this.

Oh, I wish you'd be gripped by this. I do not say to you that I will request the father on your behalf. You need to hear that again.

I do not say to you that I will request the father on your behalf. Why? Because the father himself loves you. You need to be gripped by that.

And later on in John 17, 23, he says, I in them, in his prayer to the father and you in me, that they may be made perfect in unity so that the world may know two things. One, that you sent me to be the savior of the world. And Christianity has proclaimed that for 2000 years.

But here's the second truth that Christianity has not proclaimed. And that you love them even as you have loved me. Can you tell me anywhere outside of our church, you heard that? I've never heard it.

I've been a Christian 52 years. I've never heard a single preacher in my life say that. And it's not something we just have to proclaim.

We have to demonstrate. It says here that these disciples of mine will be so perfectly one, like a body where there's no competition, there's no jealousy, there's no strife, there's no scheming, there's no right hand backbiting against the left hand. There's such perfect unity so that the world may know, boy, the father loves these people just as he loved Jesus.

And in practical terms, that means when I come to that understanding that the father loves me as he loved Jesus, I will have no more competition with any other person in the body of Christ. I can stand before God and say that today. I couldn't say that some years ago.

I can say that today. I am not in competition with anybody in the world, either for my life or my ministry. I don't want to prove I'm holier than anybody.

I don't want to prove my ministry is better than anybody. I'm not proud of my ministry. I'm not.

It's all gone. It's all gone. Otherwise, I'd have destroyed myself.

The father loves me as he loved Jesus. And I can rejoice to see a younger brother go way ahead of me in character and in ministry because I'm secure in my heavenly father. Zero jealousy.

Can you say there's zero jealousy in your life? Anyone? Anyone? I can say that before God. I'm not saying it to boast. I'm just saying the results that come when you know God loves you as he loved Jesus, and you come to that unity in the body of Christ where it doesn't matter if other people consider you their enemy.

And a lot of people in the world hate me. A lot of Christians don't like me, but I like them. They can't make me hate them.

That's impossible. You know, you can come to a place in your life where it's impossible for you to hate another child of God, no matter what they do, whether they harm you or any such thing. You can come to that place because your reaction will not depend on the way they treat you.

If you can say that I have come to the place where my reaction to people is not at all dependent on the way they treat me, you probably know God is your father. But can you honestly say that? Can you even say your reaction to your wife is completely independent of the way she treats you? There are people who have been sitting here 20, 30 years who can't say that. You know what the reason is? The problem is not your wife, brother.

The problem is you don't know your heavenly dad. The God of the world has blinded your eyes. And you think all you keep concentrating a problem is with my husband or my father or my relatives or my wife or problem is with my son.

It's got nothing to do with any of them. It's got to do with you. You got to know God is your father who loves you.

See, we live in a world where many, many of you sitting here, it's possible that you never had a good relationship with your dad with whom you could confide everything and talk everything. I mean, tell me honestly, you people look back to your time when you were at home with your father. When you had a sexual problem, would you go to your dad with that? No, you don't talk to your dad about such things, right? What does that prove? You can't talk the most difficult things with your father, with your earthly father.

Oh, you could hug him and love him and say, I love you and all that. But you had a sexual problem, you wouldn't go to him. Same here.

I wouldn't go to my dad with that. So what I'm saying is hardly anybody has had a really good father. Most of us have had fathers who are distant, whom we respect and care for.

Maybe when they were old, we care for them. And we think that God wants to be a father like that to us, because when we hear the word father, we think of our earthly father. I want to tell you, God's not like that.

He wants you to be very intimate with him. And I thank God for that. He doesn't come to me with a whip.

It's very, very important that all of you from a very early age, some of you young people are very fortunate to be able to hear these truths when you're very young, to know God as a father. As a daddy. That's the basis for faith.

See, repentance and faith are the two legs we stand on in the Christian life. Repentance and faith. And faith begins with knowing, of course, knowing that Jesus died for our sins.

But then that leads to knowing God is a father. That's so important. So we need to go.

And the first step in knowing, I mean, the first place we know God as a father is a father who forgives us and welcomes us. And that's why Jesus spoke the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. That's the first way we need to know the father.

That he welcomes sinners. He welcomes backsliders. See, actually, strictly speaking, the prodigal son story is a story of a backslider who was in the father's house once upon a time and sought his own and went away.

And finally, when he made a mess of his life, he came back. It's a dual picture of sinners coming to God and of backsliders coming to the father. And, you know, the way Jesus portrayed it, it's like saying rock bottom.

It's hitting rock bottom. It is being so utterly rotten. Why do I say that? Because it says about this one sentence about this child when he went, this boy, when he went away.

It says in verse 10 of Luke 15, sorry, 16, Luke 15, 16, he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating. No one was giving anything to him. To paraphrase that, in terms of your experience of mine, it means we feel rejected by others.

Do you feel rejected by others? You're not the popular type, rejected. No one was giving anything to him. And I'll tell you honestly, I have never in my life met or seen, even seen a man eating what the pigs are eating.

I mean, even the beggars won't do that. If you see a man in a farm sitting down with the pigs and eating what the pigs are eating, boy, if there's any description of rock bottom, that is it. Jesus took that picture to show the utter failure and rottenness of this boy, this young man.

It's a picture of a person whose life is messed up with sin, abominable sin to the level of the pigs, whatever we, you know, we would put pigs as the lowest level of culture and hygiene and everything else. And spiritually speaking, that is the picture of a sinner or a backslider who's gone way down so much that you can't sink lower. Any of you like that? There, from there, that boy got up and with all that filth and torn clothes and everything else, he came back to his father and he said, okay, maybe my dad will at least give me a room in the servant's quarters and I'll get a little food there.

And he came back and he said, father, I've sinned against heaven. I'm not worthy to be called your son. But it says here in verse 20, so he got up and came to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, felt compassion for him and ran and embraced him and kissed him. I wish we could grasp what Jesus is trying to show us here about God as a father. What does it indicate when it says the father saw him in a long distance? How did he know he was coming back that day? He hadn't gone away for two or three days.

He hadn't gone away for two, three weeks. Remember the father was a multimillionaire. And when a multimillionaire divides half his property with his children, with two sons, each son gets, becomes a

multimillionaire.

So it was with many millions of rupees that he went away from home and he could not have spent that in two weeks. I don't know how many years he took to spend. How many years would you take to spend millions of rupees? It was many years away from the father.

How did his dad know that he was coming back that day? He never sent any message ahead. It shows me something that all those years his dad would be looking out of the window every now and then. Is my son coming back? That's how he spotted him one day at a long distance.

That's the first thing you need to see about God. That when you go away from him, he's looking out to see whether you come back every single day. He sees you going and using all his gifts for yourself.

He sees the consequences you're going to face from that. He sees you sinking to the level of all types of terrible sins. He's still looking for you to come back.

That's a father. And if there's anyone here like that today, I want you to know God's still looking out for you to come back to him. And the other thing is, do you think this boy, this look when he came back, looked anything like he was when he went out? Healthy, robust young man, went out, coming back after so many years, skin and bones, dark and working in the sun, ragged clothes.

He didn't look anything like the young son who left the home. And the father recognized him. I mean, I met people after a few years and I hardly recognized them.

Particularly, they were sick. Haven't you said sometimes to sick, skinny people, I hardly recognize you. What happened? But the father recognized him.

That's the other thing I see about God. That even when we have messed up our life in sin, he recognizes us. He says, I know who you're supposed to be.

You're supposed to be my son. You're not behaving like that right now, but I want you to come back. I want you to see God like this.

Don't let the devil hide from you what a wonderful father we have in heaven. I thank God that when I hit rock bottom in my life as a preacher and a backslider, 38 years ago, I came back to God and he accepted me. And instead of sending me to hell, he filled me with the Holy Spirit.

That's the last thing I expected. I'd have been glad just to get forgiven and sit in the servant's quarters for the rest of my life, but he put the ring on my finger, new clothes, the fatted calf. And he's been feeding me with a fatted calf ever since in all these 37 years.

Life has never been the same. I've been sitting at the father's table. And if you were to ask me, where did you get that revelation? I say, I just picked up a dish from the father's table and shared it with you.

I didn't cook it. I got something and I shared it with you. I didn't want to eat it all myself.

Somebody else made it, brother. It's wonderful sitting at the father's table. There's such a spread of dishes there.

And there are new ones coming all the time. He's a wonderful cook. Amazing.

Do you know your father like that? He wants you to know him like that. The son didn't even have to beg and plead for the ring. He didn't even want the ring.

He just wanted some food. God filled me with the spirit when I was least expecting it. And I didn't deserve it.

I know why so many people don't receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It's exactly the same reason why so many people don't get the forgiveness of sins. Listen, they are trying to earn it.

You'll never get it. You can't earn God's gifts. They are trying to pay for it.

Like Simon, the sorcerer told Peter, how much money do you want? We don't say money. We say, Lord, how much do I have to pray? How much do I have to fast? How much do I have to give up before you give me the Holy Spirit? And the God says, no, you can't get it. It's worth far too much than you can pay.

You keep seeking like that, like Simon came to Peter in Acts chapter 8. You know what Peter told him? Your money perish with you. You're not even converted, he says. You think you can buy the gifts of God with money? You think you can buy the gift of God with prayer, with all-night prayer? You think you can buy the gift of God with days of fasting, three days of fasting, God has to give it to me? You're no better than Simon, the sorcerer.

Your money and your prayer and fasting perish with you for thinking that you can buy the gifts of God with anything. I did not pay anything for the forgiveness of sins. I did not pay anything for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I did not even pay anything for the ministry God's given me. It's all been free. It's all been free.

I didn't even pay anything for the character I have. It's been free. Dear brothers and sisters, when we understand that, that the only way you can get anything from God is freely, you'll get things quickly.

But as long as you follow this route that the heathen follow, pursue and do this and do that and do that and earn your salvation and earn the baptism in the Holy Spirit and earn this, you'll never get it. What did this son pay for the clothes or the ring or the food or the room he got or whatever else he got in his house? What did he pay for it? He had nothing to pay. He had ruined everything.

That's the first way you need to know God as a father, way beyond what you think, how much he loves you. He says he embraced him and kissed him with all his dirty face and dirty clothes. He's just so happy.

And not only that, it says put the best robe on him, put sandals on his feet. And it says, let's have a celebration. My son is lost and he's been found, verse 24, and they began to celebrate.

And I want you to see the goodness of God's heart in another area. The older son, verse 23, he's a picture of the self-righteous Pharisee. There are some people like that too.

You know, the type of people who, you didn't sin so much, right? You never went to the level of the pigs, at least you think so. You say, well, I never messed up my life like some of these other sinners. I was brought up in a God-fearing home and a God-fearing way.

Okay. That's good. But I hope you don't end up like the older son.

He never reached the level of the pigs. He didn't become skinny and ugly like the younger son. He remained good-looking, healthy, and he never ruined his father's property or money.

And that's why, and how do you know whether you're like the elder son? Do you look down on any believers? Let me ask you honestly. Don't answer me, answer yourself. Do you look down on your wife? Because she's not as spiritual as you are, the elder son.

Do you look down on your husband? He's not so holy as you are. He doesn't read the Bible as much as you, doesn't pray as much as you. Do you look down on some other brothers in this church? Or maybe some people who messed up their life.

Oh, thank God you didn't do that. You're the elder son. I hope you see that.

I can stand before God today and say, I think it's right. And I say, it is impossible for me to look down on another believer, no matter how much they have messed up their life. Because I've tasted the goodness of God in my own life.

I remember once seeing someone who was brought up in a very God-fearing way and looking down on some other believer who had messed up their life. And the only thing I felt I could say to that person was, I wish you had sinned more in your life. What a terrible thing to say.

I wish you had sinned more in your unconverted days. You'd be more compassionate towards this person. Now that's not the way, it's not the right way.

Jesus was the most compassionate, but he never sinned. You don't have to sin to be compassionate. You don't have to mess up your life to be compassionate to others who have messed up their life.

Why did the sinful adulterous woman feel more free to come to Jesus, who was the holiest person on earth, than to these Pharisees who were not at all holy? I mean, if you got dirty clothes, wouldn't you like to sit around in a room where other people's clothes are also dirty? Would you like to go and sit with the person whose shirt is the cleanest of all? No. Why did this woman with dirty clothes feel like coming to the one whose clothes were spotless white, but not to the other Pharisees whose clothes were dirty like hers? There you see compassion. And that's what many Christians lack.

And that's what his elder son was like. He was so upset. And he tells his father, you know, the father says, verse 24, this son of mine has come back.

But the elder brother says in verse 27, this brother, you know, the father says, your brother has come and he says in verse 30, this son of yours. He doesn't say this brother of mine. He's ashamed to call him a brother.

He tells his father, this son of yours has come back. I can imagine him pointing his finger like this at his dad, saying this son of yours has come back and you celebrate. He doesn't say this brother of mine.

Did he ever volunteer to go and look for his lost brother? No. How much of a compassion do you have to seek out the lost? No. Maybe you seek out those who are culturally your level.

You have Bible studies with people who speak the same language and who are the same level of education and prestige. And there are a lot of Bible study groups like that. I've seen them all over the world.

I never joined them. I'm sick and tired of those groups that don't understand the body of Christ. It's a cultural unity.

Unity of people who are the same educational level, same salary level. Rubbish. Yeah, there's some CFC people who meet like that.

I'll never join them. I'll never join them in a hundred years because I don't belong to that type of religious clubs who come to pat each other on the back once a week and think they are studying the Bible and praying. You don't know God.

You don't know the Father. Think of the type of people Jesus mingled with. That's the first way we need to know the Father.

And Jesus said once in Matthew chapter 5, verse 48, He said, You must be perfect like your heavenly Father is perfect. Have you ever read that verse? You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. What a word.

Now, if it had said one day you will be perfect like your heavenly Father is perfect, I can understand that. But this is not a promise. Distinguish between a promise and a command.

How many of you can honestly say you have taken Matthew 5, 48 seriously and you have decided to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect? I'll raise my hand before God and say that because I take every word of God seriously. My goal is to be perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect. You are to be perfect.

I take the words of Jesus seriously. I try to understand that, Lord. Father, teach me.

Lord Jesus, teach me. What did you mean when you said this? How am I supposed to be perfect like my heavenly Father? I can't be perfect like Him in wisdom. I can't be perfect like Him in power.

I can't be perfect like Him even in love. I can't even be perfect like Him in holiness. How am I supposed to be perfect? And the Lord prompted me to compare scripture with scripture.

There are two places where the Sermon on the Mount is written in scripture. One is in Matthew chapter 5, 6, 7, and the other is in Luke chapter 6. When you compare the two, you learn some wonderful things. There are things which God has hidden in scripture, but those who are hardworking will search it out, and they'll discover some treasures.

So I discovered a treasure in Luke chapter 6 where the parallel passage comes. It's not written in the same way. Then I understood it.

In Luke chapter 6, Jesus said, in the same type of context, He was saying about loving your enemies, etc., and verse 27, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you, etc. It's just like in Matthew 5. And then He concluded by saying in verse 36, be merciful as your Father is merciful. Ah, then I understood.

I am to be perfect in one area in my earthly life. All other areas will be when Christ comes again. I'll be perfect like Jesus in love, holiness, wisdom, everything when Christ comes again.

But one area I must be perfect now, and that is mercy. And there's one area I can be perfect. That means to treat others the way God has treated me.

I remember when we built this meeting hall in 1981, we thought of a verse that we should put behind here on the pulpit. We were preaching holiness, and I knew the biggest danger of people preaching holiness is, I learned that from the Pharisees, is being unmerciful to others. So I said, we need to put a verse up here called be merciful to others, just as God has been merciful to you.

It used to be here. It's over there now. That's the verse we've had here for 31 years, because that is the greatest need of those who preach and practice holiness.

Many of you are preaching and practicing holiness, right? You know what you need, brother, sister? To be merciful to other people, for not as holy as you think you are. Otherwise, you'll be an elder son. I've often thought, supposing that younger brother had heard that his dad had died, and the elder brother had taken over the house, he'd never have come back.

He'd say, it's better to be with the pigs than with my elder brother. You know, in my work with 70, 80 elders in our churches, I always tell them this. Are you like the elder brother, or are you like the father? Some elders are like the elder brother.

They look down on sinners. Some elders are like the father. And I say, when people in the church are reluctant to come to you, why? Why do they feel more free to go to another elder brother than to you? Why do people feel more free to go to Jesus than to the Pharisees? Do people feel free to come to you, even though your standards of holiness are very high? Now, I'm not bothered if the hypocrites don't come.

The Pharisees never went to Jesus. And there are hypocrites in the church, and I'm glad they are scared to come to me. Because, like one brother said to me, Brother Zach, I was scared that you would see through me.

That's why I didn't come. So I'm glad if the hypocrites don't come. I have no time for them.

But sinners who are repentant, who really want to live a godly life, I hope they see in us the attitude of the Father, and not the elder brother. Jesus also spoke, you know, that's the first step, as it were, coming to know God as a Father like that. But we shouldn't stop there.

We must move on from there to know the way Jesus spoke about Him as a Father who cares for us more than He cares for the birds. You know all those passages in Matthew 6 and Matthew 10. Read them when you have time.

Who cares for the birds, that the birds get food. I don't know how many billions of birds there are in the world. They don't have bank accounts.

They don't have stores where they can keep food. But it says your heavenly Father feeds them. So don't worry.

It's a wonderful thing to know God is a Father like that, who will take care of me. I can trust Him to provide my needs. I don't have to get into credit card debt by keeping on buying things which I cannot afford.

If you get into that type of stupidity, don't say, my Father will take care of me. Then you have to reap what you sow. But if you humbly trust your Father and you're satisfied with what He has given you, I believe you

can live without debt in this world.

I've lived without debt for 72 years, and I've always, not always, had plenty. It's possible, definitely. If you trust your Father, He'll provide for you.

If you're satisfied with what He gives you, and you're not coveting what somebody else has, and as your needs increase, I assure you, He will make the circle of your finances grow larger. Sure, I can tell you that. I can tell you that.

As the need increases, He takes care of it. Not by begging and getting into credit card debt, but trusting our Father. He does it.

We have to be living demonstrations to the world around us that we have a Father in heaven who cares for us more than He cares for the birds, who will clothe us more than He clothes the flowers. Yeah. I often think of these legalistic people who say that Christians should not wear certain colors.

I sometimes feel like wearing a red shirt someday. I'm coming up here to deliver people from legalism. Maybe I'll do it one of these days.

I say, did the Father make red flowers or not? Are there any red flowers? I think red roses are some of the most beautiful ones. Jesus said, your Father will clothe you like that. What a lot of legalism there is in the world, I tell you.

Certain colors you should not use. Holy people will wear white. I used to wear white, but it used to get dirty so quickly, so I had to change it.

When I get to heaven, I'll wear it, okay, because it don't get dirty there. So I'm saying there's so many things like that. Your Father cares for you, my brother.

Don't be anxious. Don't be worried. There's no need to fear.

That's the other way we need to know the Father. One who welcomes us and takes care of all our needs, anticipates the problems that will come in the future and prepares for them before we ever get there. And one more thing, one very blessed thing, which I'm sure you'll love.

He's a Father who disciplines us and spans us when we go astray. Don't you love him for that? I do. It says in Hebrews chapter 12, it says in Hebrews 12, verse 6, those whom the Lord loves, he disciplines.

Hebrews 12, 6. If you ask me, how do you know your Father loves you? He feeds me, clothes me, he disciplines me. You want to leave out that part? Then he doesn't love you. Listen, it is for discipline that you endure.

God deals with you as with sons, verse 7. What son is there whom his father does not discipline? I remember one brother here many years ago, very educated, capable, come very, but would never submit to authority, independent, rebellious. He finally left. Such people usually leave CFC.

And I wondered what his problem was till one day I met his father who was a nominal Christian and told me, his father told me, you know, Mr. Poonen, I have never punished my sin once. I said, ah, now I know why he turned out like that. He's drifted away.

He's a loner, lone wandering star. I don't know where he is today. Which son is there whom his father does not discipline? And if you are without discipline, when you do something wrong, my brother, sister, and God doesn't discipline you, you are not a son.

There's so many children down the street when my children were growing up who did 101 wrong things. I never disciplined them. But boy, did I discipline my four sons.

I was very strict with them. I remember one particular, I don't mean just spanking, the very, very many ways of discipline. I remember once when one of my boys, about five years old, playing with the neighbor boy around same age, and they were fighting with each other, hit each other.

And I called my son and I said, did you hit him? And he said, he hit me. You know, the usual answer, children give. And he's right, both hit each other.

I said, well, you got to come with me now. I'm going to take you to our neighbor's house and you're going to apologize to him. And the children are smart.

What about him, dad? Is he going to apologize to me? I said, that's none of our business. We are Christians and we apologize. Whether he apologizes or not So I took him, knocked at the door and the man opened and I said, my son wants to say something to your little five-year-old boy.

And I said to my five-year-old son, that's discipline. Say, I'm sorry. I said, I'm sorry.

That boy said, thank you very much and walked away. I know where my son is today. I don't know where that boy is.

If you are without discipline, you're not a real son. If you can do something wrong in your life and you don't find the father's hand coming heavily down on you, I tell you, I feel sorry. You're probably just imagining that you're a son or a daughter sitting in CFC.

You know how the father has dealt with me? A small little slip up in some one word, I may have spoken rudely to someone or something and boy, I get a spanking and I lie down in my bed and say, Lord, what's the reason for this? I always ask them and he reminds me of one word and I turn around in my bed and I put my face down and I worship my father and I say, Dad, please treat me like this always. I never, never want to be treated any other way. I really weep and I say, Dad, I thank you that you love me so much, that even a small slip up, you won't let me go.

I want to be like that. Dear brothers and sisters, it is this that has changed my life. It is from this that I have a ministry today.

I know my dad and he knows me and I wish you would know him. He's the most wonderful person in the universe. If you get to know him, he's not boring.

He understands, he's compassionate and he cares so much that we become like Jesus. Let's pray. If you're a child of God, if you've received Jesus as Lord of your life, if you've not surrendered areas of your life, will you say, Lord, to the best of my knowledge, I want to surrender everything.

And there's one particular thing I'd ask you to surrender. Surrender this attitude of despising other people who you think are not as spiritual as you think you are. Say, Lord, I lay that down at your feet.

I've had that attitude for years. I never even realized how un-Christ like it was, but I laid it at your feet. I'll never pick it up again.

Burn it up. Say, Lord, I surrender everything, my ambitions, my plans. It's all yours.

You say, Dad, I want to know you intimately. I want to sit on your lap like a little child, be free from the anxiety and tension that fills my mind so much. I want to do your will on earth.

I want you to fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I can know you better and live for you all the days of my life. Heavenly Father, thank you for hearing us. We know you care for everyone here.

There are some who have needs which they may be too ashamed to mention, but you know them, you love them. Help them to know that you care. Lift their burden, Lord.

Let them go with a song in their heart as they go from here, knowing that you care. A spring in their step, because they know you as their Heavenly Father. Pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/uF_WIBKyUbl.mp4

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