

Worship for June 17, 2022  
Father's Day  
West Virginia Day Observance

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

\*Call to Worship

Come, sing praises to God!

Rejoice in God's presence,  
for he is our God:

**Father to the fatherless,  
and the defender of all who need protection;  
the One in whom the lonely find a home,  
and the prisoner finds release!**

\*Hymn 370 This Is My Father's World

Prayer of Confession

**God of power and love,**

**we hear the stories in scripture, the ones that speak of your strength and miraculous power, and wonder if you still act to still storms and raise twelve-year-old girls from the dead. We still have storms that destroy and diseases that rob people of life. We still need your help, aware that help may come in ways we cannot imagine or expect.**

**Forgive us when our faith is trembling, when our hearts are troubled and our minds worn out. Help us to believe that we are your beloved children, whom you will never leave nor forsake. Amen.**

Hymn 698 Take, O Take Me as I Am

Assurance of Forgiveness

Fear not! God is always with us, stilling our storms, pointing us in hope's direction, and restoring the joy of our salvation.

Believe the good news of the gospel: know you are forgiven and live in God's peace. Amen.

Old Testament Reading Psalm 133 Pew Bible p.

Time With Our Young Disciples

Gospel Reading            Mark 4: 35-41    Pew Bible p.  
Morning Message

This is a Sunday that is so packed full of good material, I feel like a preacher can't lose. If they are paying attention, that is. This week we celebrate Father's Day, Juneteenth, and West Virginia Day.

I learned this recently: It is believed that the first Father's Day was celebrated in Fairmont, West Virginia, under the direction of a woman named Grace Golden Clayton, who was mourning the loss of her own father in the Monongah mining disaster. That event left over a thousand children fatherless.

Let's just take a beat here and think about it a moment. I can't even imagine the devastation to the community, the grief and pain. Gone were life's companions, gone were a family's provider and protector. Gone was their security. What remained was their faith.

So Grace Golden Clayton asked her Methodist pastor if they might set aside a Sunday to honor fathers, and so they did on Sunday, July 5, 1908. No record remains of the sermon delivered that day, and Grace did not seek to further the observance, so it was two years later that a woman in Seattle, Washington, Sonora Smart Dodd, who wanted to pay tribute to her father, a veteran of the Civil War, and the single parent of six children. Dodd asked her pastor if he might preach about fathers on the first Sunday in June, but he told her he needed more time to prepare for such an important occasion. So, he proposed a special service focusing on fathers on the third Sunday of June and that tradition has endured.

My good mentor and Quaker pastor, Philip Gulley, says we need a new definition, a new image of what it means to be a man, what it means to be a father. I'm a mother, and not really qualified to give my opinion in such a discussion, except to say that, in my own experience, the men who were successful fathers, had two important attributes: they were appropriately strong, assertive, protective, and bold, and appropriately attentive, supportive, tender, compassionate, and the best cheerleader a kid could have.

A snapshot into how that played out in my husband's family: Ed was in the band and played sports in school. Shortly after his father's death he said he hoped to be a dad after the order of his own-a man who proudly attended every game, even if it were to watch his son sit the bench. He was present and involved in every activity Ed undertook, which means other kids benefitted from his attention. Being a good dad to his own children extended to the other children in their orbit.

Philip Gulley believes that the real measure of success for any man, whether or not he is a father, is to consider all the world's children their own. To be as unswervingly devoted to their well-

being as we are to our own. To be an effective parent and role model is to take a long view of life, to care as much for tomorrow's world as today's. It is to measure ourselves, men and women, not by what we accumulate, but by the service we have rendered.

I didn't know it, but I tested this out way back in my freshman year at Marshall. Speech class. The assignment was to deliver a persuasive speech. Is it still called that?

Well I had some great material. I participated in campus ministry and I had just returned from Bluestone where people of faith from all over West Virginia, several college communities, and people interested in the cause of relieving hunger, had gathered for a weekend of education and advocacy. We talked about the importance of nutrition from life in the womb through every life stage. We talked about food deserts and poverty. We read a book called *Diet for a Small Planet* which advocates things like raising grass-fed livestock and how that could improve our health. Plant-based diets were explained in depth. We ate such meals that weekend and survived.

I was excited about delivering that speech. I was 18 and I had a cause. Hank Sullivan was my teacher. Good Presbyterian, he gave me an A for my effort.

The next class day a man delivered a rebuttal to my speech. His argument? He worked hard so he could feed all the appetites his kids had. He would not deny them a thing. Nutrition was overrated and no one would tell him how to eat. If other kids had inadequate food, that was just too bad. Obviously, their parents were deadbeats living off government hand-outs. Let them eat beans and rice. His kids would have steak. This is the truth, I had never heard such an argument in my life and I was shocked.

Later, Mr. Sullivan spoke with me and said I had just learned something important going forward. We might all live on the same planet, but, we interpret it from our own worldview. He encouraged me to continue to cast a wide vision, to learn as much as I could not only from my point of view, but the other side's. He urged me to hang onto my idealism, and try not to get jaded when things got tough. I counted it as valuable fatherly advice and it has served me well.

I have no idea what grade the other student received, but he never spoke to me after that day and went out of his way to huff past me on his way out the door most days. I guess I really offended him.

My friend Philip says he has been thinking a lot about the emotional aspects of being a man and being a father. He says he has been thinking about the dispensing of affection and why it has taken him so long to appreciate its value. He credits this epiphany with becoming a grandfather.

He says when his sons were little, it was very important to him to teach the boys about strength and discipline and how to face a hard and difficult world. So, he raised them with rules and expectations and demands. Now, he says, he's a grandfather and sees matters differently. For example, Philip was given a red goose made of plaster used in a shoe store promotion for Red Goose Shoes. He says he admired it because it reminded him of his mother taking him to shop for shoes in Plainfield, Indiana when he was a kid. It was nostalgic.

So, the plaster goose took up residence on their fireplace hearth and Philip told the boys to never pick it up. He didn't want them to drop it and break it. It survived nearly 15 years without a scratch. Then one day, his little granddaughter, Madeline, picked it up and you know what happened. It broke into several pieces.

His son, Spencer, came to him, and apologized. "Dad, don't be upset, but Madeline broke your red goose."

The reaction was priceless: "Wow, how about that! I can't believe she was strong enough to pick it up."

Spencer just shook his head, mystified, and said, "You would have killed us if we had done that."

And he's right. He would have. But he has changed.

Phil says he once thought the most important thing to teach children was responsibility and obedience and how to make it in this cruel world. But being a grandfather has taught him that there is more to manhood than that. It has mellowed him.

I relate. Our younger grandson spent several days with us awhile back. We found all sorts of surprises after he left. I have some large lanterns that we fill with candles at Christmas. One was sitting empty on the dining room floor. Tad turned it into a garage for his hot wheels! Our kitchen floor was as sticky as fly paper from all the milk, cereal, and ice cream spills. Our creaky joints were protesting all the extra physical effort involved in keeping up with a five year old.. We were in recovery for a month, but wouldn't miss that time with Tad for anything in the world.

Time. The older we get, the faster it seems to fly. It is a precious gift and one we shouldn't waste. My dad died when I was forty one. Our children were ten, fifteen, and twenty. They have great memories of their grandfather, but we all expected more years to make more memories.

Which is why we planned our recent trip south around our grandchildren's schedules, so we could see all of them, if only briefly, and remind them how much they are loved. And to acknowledge the good ways their parents are loving, teaching, and nurturing them.

For some, this day is one to dread. The experience with their fathers are full of pain. A friend of mine posted something to that effect on Facebook a few days ago. The best advice I can give is to urge you to break the pattern, and set your intentions to do better in your own relationships. And that goes for all of us, whether or not we are parents. We are all children of God. God is the father who doesn't fail, but is always present, always loves, is always gracious, and always welcomes us home.

To all of you who are sons, brothers, fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and friends, your lives and contributions are important. The memories you make with those in your orbit, related or not, will be cherished.

May God bless you this day and every day with both strength and tenderness. It's what the world needs now.

\*Hymn 630 Fairest Lord Jesus

\*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles' Creed

\*Hymn 581 Gloria Patri

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns  
Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

\*Hymn

\*Prayer of Dedication

**All that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours, O Lord,  
and of your own, we give you.**

**Use us, and what we have gathered,  
in reaching the world with your love,  
through him who gave his life for us,  
Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.**

\*Hymn The West Virginia Hills

Music: H. E. Engle

Lyrics: Mrs. Ellen King

Adopted in 1961 as an Official West Virginia State Song  
We will sing verses 1 and 4.

The West Virginia hills,  
how majestic and how grand,  
with their summits bathed in glory,  
like our Prince Immanuel's land!  
Is it any wonder then,  
that my heart with rapture thrills,  
as I stand once more with loved ones  
on those West Virginia Hills!

Chorus

Oh, the hills, beautiful hills.  
How I love those West Virginia hills!  
If o'er sea or land I roam, still I'll think of happy home,  
and my friends among the West Virginia hills.

Oh, the West Virginia hills!  
I must bid you now adieu.  
In my home beyond the mountains  
I shall ever dream of you.  
In the evening time of life,  
if my Father only wills,  
I shall still behold the vision  
of those West Virginia hills. *Chorus*

\*Blessing

Shine, O Lord, upon the homely mosaic of West Virginia's land: upon her steep-hewn hills and angled draws, her maple-strewn valleys and ridges clad in mountain rhododendron.

**Shine, Lord, upon her citizens, armed only with freedom, scrappers all for such measure of dignity as fearlessness and faith may win.**

Shine, O God, into those deep recesses where thou hast abundant riches, that those who dig in the earth, and those who watch for their return, may know the radiance of thy light and the safety of thy love.

**Bright be the cleaning fire of thy truth in the hearts of the people, and in the public weal of their common life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Washington National Cathedral, prayed for the week starting March 1, 2020.

\*Postlude

