

“What We Do for Love”

Sermon, Sunday June 20, 2010

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### **Luke 12:32-40**

***‘Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

***‘Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.***

***‘But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.’***

### **Father’s Day**

Today marks the 100th anniversary of Father’s Day. Sonora Smart Dodd was the daughter of Civil War veteran William Jackson Smart, whose wife died in childbirth leaving him to raise six children. On June 19, 1910, the first Father’s Day celebration was held in Spokane, Washington, at Sonora Dodd’s urging.

Unlike many widowed men of his day, William Jackson Smart chose not to remarry. In the eyes of his daughter, he was a courageous, selfless, and loving man who made all the sacrifices expected of a loving, concerned parent. Smart put his children’s needs ahead of his own to ensure that they grew up to be responsible, productive adults. He was born in June, so daughter Sonora chose to hold Father’s Day observances during that month.

A four year old daughter, came up to her mother and said

"It's Father's Day."

"Yes, I know" she said, smiling.

"And Daddy is a Father." Again mom smiled.

"He is a **True** Father." She said, and left it at that.

Later that day after telling her husband what their daughter had said, he asked her "What makes me a true father?"

"Because you love me. That's what makes you a true father."

A father may not necessarily be a biological parent. Stepfathers, uncles, cousins and grandfathers may be father figures, as well as neighbors, teachers, coaches and others who play significant roles in a child's life.

### ***What we do for love.***

Raising a family can be a demanding and self sacrificing labor of love.

Many of us find ourselves in jobs that provide an income to care for our families, but may not be quite how we expected our lives to turn out. The demands for a steady income can keep us trapped in jobs that don't quite develop our full potential.

Maybe you are one of the lucky people who actually love your work and are doing what you feel called to do. It happens! But others do what they must.

For instance, consider these occupations presented on the Discovery Channels TV show "Dirty Jobs"

Hot Tar Roofer,

Pig Farmer,

Chimney Sweeper,

Sewer Inspector,

Storm Drain Cleaner,

Plumber,

Garbage Pit Technician,

Fuel Tank Cleaner,

Septic Tank Cleaner,

Coal Miner,

Oil Rig Operator/Driller,

Penguin Keeper,  
Mosquito Control Officer,  
Chinatown Garbage Collector,  
Bridge Painter,  
Alligator Egg Collector,  
Steel Mill Worker,  
Cave Biologist,  
Floating Fish Factory,  
Leech Trapper,  
And here's one of my own additions to the dirty job list;  
Oil Sludge Cleanup in the Gulf of Mexico.

My father, Ronald Dale Hunt, born September 30, 1930, died January 11, 2005. I carry his name as my middle name. Ron worked in the insurance industry as an insurance adjuster for many years. He often traveled around the state of Oregon testifying in court about insurance fraud claims. He saw the worst of people as they engaged in embezzlement and deception.

Dad gave up a lot of joy in life by staying in this job, working the 9 to 5 grind to provide for his family. Because of his job, he had a particularly cynical view of people and their motives. But he was a good man, who believed in the need for corporate responsibility to help care for the common good.

Dad was a republican. I grew up during the social tumult of the 60s and the need for social reform. So while in high school, I grew my hair long and became...a democrat. I would make him so mad at times yammering on about the need for social reform while he stressed the need for individuals to take personal responsibility.

Yet I was his first born son and there was a bond of love and trust between us that went far beyond verbal arguments and power struggles. I don't know if any of you heard threats from your parents like "So help me, if you don't straighten up I'll send you all to a military academy. They'll teach you how to behave!" My brothers and I knew it was an empty threat. My sister for some reason, probably because she was daddies little girl, was exempted from this particular expression of parental exasperation.

Dad had enlisted in the Army and served in Korea. His older brother fought in Italy in WWII, and his father had fought briefly in the trenches in WWI. As I became a young man preparing to leave the nest, I knew that by enlisting I would make my father proud, while at the same time giving

myself a couple of years to grow up and figure out what to do with the rest of my life.

When I told him of my decision to enlist, he was surprised that his proud and rebellious son would do such a thing, and he was proud that I would make what he considered would be a responsible choice.

Dad had given a lot to his family out of love. I was surprised that I would want to give anything back, and that his respect would mean so much to me.

The little girl was sitting in her father's lap as he read her a goodnight story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. By and by she was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again.

Finally she spoke, "Daddy, did God make you?"

"Yes, sweetheart" he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh she said," then "daddy, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed honey" he assured her. "God made you just a little while ago."

"Oh" she said. Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it now isn't he?"

### **A Fathers Unfailing Commitment:**

*From Chicken Soup For The Soul*

In 1989 an 8.2 earthquake almost flattened Armenia, killing over 30,000 people in less than four minutes.

In the midst of utter devastation and chaos, a father left his wife securely at home and rushed to the school where his son was supposed to be, only to discover that the building was as flat as a pancake.

After the traumatic initial shock, he remembered the promise he had made to his son: "No matter what, I'll always be there for you!" And tears began to fill his eyes. As he looked at the pile of debris that once was the school, it looked hopeless, but he kept remembering his commitment to his son.

He began to concentrate on where he walked his son to class at school each morning. Remembering his son's classroom would be in the back right corner of the building, he rushed there and started digging through the rubble.

As he was digging, other forlorn parents arrived, clutching their hearts,

saying: "My son!" "My daughter!" Other well meaning parents tried to pull him off of what was left of the school saying:

"It's too late!" "They're dead!" "You can't help!" "Go home!"  
"Come on, face reality, there's nothing you can do!"  
"You're just going to make things worse!"

To each parent he responded with one line: "Are you going to help me now?"  
And then he proceeded to dig for his son, stone by stone.

The fire chief showed up and tried to pull him off of the school's debris, saying, "Fires are breaking out, explosions are happening everywhere. You're in danger. We'll take care of it. Go home." To which this loving, caring Armenian father asked, "Are you going to help me now?"

The police came and said, "You're angry, distraught and it's over. You're endangering others. Go home. We'll handle it!" To which he replied, "Are you going to help me now?" No one helped.

Courageously he proceeded alone because he needed to know for himself:  
"Is my boy alive or is he dead?"

He dug for eight hours . . . 12 hours . . . 24 hours ... 36 hours . . . then, in the 38th hour, he pulled back a boulder and heard his son's voice. He screamed his son's name, "ARMAND!" He heard back, "Dad!?! It's me, Dad! I told the other kids not to worry. I told 'em that if you were alive, you'd save me and when you saved me, they'd be saved. You promised, 'No matter what, I'll always be there for you!' You did it, Dad! . . . "

"What's going on in there? How is it?" the father asked.

There are 14 of us left out of 33, Dad. We're scared, hungry, thirsty and thankful you're here. When the building collapsed, it made a wedge, like a triangle, and it saved us."

"Come on out, boy!"

"No, Dad! Let the other kids out first, 'cause I know you'll get me! No matter what, I know you'll be there for me!"

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."  
-Deuteronomy 31:5

This is the kind of love God gives to us; an unending love that goes on hour after hour, day after day; week after week, month after month, and eon after eon. God's is a self-sacrificing love that never ends. God gave up something extraordinarily precious to him by giving us the life of his only son.

This is the kind of love Jesus the Christ gives us; out of love for his father, God the creator, Jesus followed his father's bidding and gave to us his most precious life. As the virtual embodiment of God's will, he taught us, healed us, cared for us, lived for us and then gave himself willingly over to humiliation and death for our sake. That we may no longer fear death, but find courage and hope for a better day.

*"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* We are God's most precious treasure.