

Christ Presbyterian Church

Edina, Minnesota

June 16, 2013

John Crosby

Valuable: Men

Matthew 21:28

Perfect day! Let me tell you what is *not* a perfect day. It's toward the end of the afternoon and you get a call at work. Your wife is pretty much in tears and she is saying, "I don't know what to do. One of our daughters, five years old, in kindergarten, has been sitting outside for the last hour and a half waiting for some friends who had said they would come by to come by." Your heart just breaks because you know that this is not the last time that this will happen, but it may be what makes us human. That every human being from at least first grade on has had that time when they felt they are on the outside looking in, that they don't fit, that they don't belong, that they are not valued. Then along comes the church. We have been spending all spring saying, "We value *everybody* here." Except women, you have to stay back here, and except singles, you're over there, and young people can feel like they are here and old people, your time has passed, and does everybody feel valued? Even in church? It's a battle. It's a battle for all of us.

This is a perfect way to end our Valuable series, all together on a beautiful day, eating together and having Communion together, each of us precious to God on Father's Day. Father's Day, actually, is not one of the original Hallmark holidays. In 1909 a young woman is sitting in church in Spokane, Washington, listening to a Mother's Day sermon and she thinks of her dad, a Civil War vet and farmer, who was raising six children as a single dad. She decides to do something and in 1924, President Coolidge recommended that Father's Day be observed, but it wasn't until 1966 when the third Sunday in June became Father's Day. It's a great thing. Fathers, men, we all need to feel valued even if just for a day. Men especially can feel threatened. They don't look like it but they can feel threatened. Young boys, young men, grow up. They are wonderful, cute little children, then energetic teens. Then they turn into young adults and they are Peter Pans. All through their twenties, they don't want to grow up and then somehow, all of a sudden these Peter Pans have kids and they don't know what to be. They wonder, "Should I be Oz?" Dad feels like the Wizard of Oz, the great and mighty Oz, who always has the answer the kids long for. Then all of a sudden, his kids don't think of him as the great magician, and dad struggles to even just stay friends. "Can I be your friend?" "You're not supposed to be their friend. You're supposed to be their dad." It's a hard, hard thing, and Dads need all the help that they can get.

When it doesn't go well, fatherhood can become a source of pain. Many of you had trouble praying the Lord's Prayer, Our Father . . . , with Deb Kielsmeier because your experience with your own father was a source of pain and you need healing and forgiveness. All of us are imperfect men and fathers. Some of us still have a chance to do better, so I'd like to take a couple of minutes to ask, what would Jesus say about fathering? He tells stories as He so often does. In Matthew, chapter 21, He tells this story.

28 "What do you think?"

He starts it out that way.

28 "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' **29** " 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. **30** "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. **31** "Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

The crowd answered, "The first one," and so Jesus used the story to talk about how it is not the person who talks the best, it is the person who does what the Father wants who ends up in heaven. It's a picture of dads and the precarious business of being dad. It's a story about second chances and second thoughts. **There's no time like today for second chances. There's no time like today for second thoughts.** Let's give a second thought to men or the men in your life or to fathers or to you as a dad.

I want to talk about **how you can be a better father or a better mother** in three minutes. Three minutes on how to be a better dad. The first one doesn't take three minutes. It takes three seconds. It's this [cell phone]. **Hang it up.** Hang it up and arrive. When you walk through the door after work or a trip or an errand, don't be on the phone. One of the greatest ways to destroy a little kid who is waiting for you to show up is to stick your arm out to your daughter and say, "Just a second. I'll be off in just a second," instead of letting your child come up and hug you. It's the easiest one to do, and you only have a certain amount of time to do it. If you are still on the phone when you're at the driveway, park in the driveway. Don't go in. I used to park in the garage for the last five minutes of a phone call, and the only reason I knew how to do that was that I did it wrong a million times. Hang it up and arrive.

The second piece of advice is a little different. It is "**Say yes more than you say no.**" It is hard, especially for young parents to learn that, saying *yes* more than you say *no*. Everybody has to say *no* all the time to their kids and that's right, but too often we say *no* to our kids no matter what their ages because we are overprotective. Frankly, it's because we don't want to go outside again. We don't want to clean up the mess again. We don't want to see them fail again. We don't want to do it again, so many opportunities to make memories get lost because we say *no*. We are supposed to be the ones who fertilize our kids' dreams and not kill them. We need to say *yes* and pick them up.

The third lesson I'd give about how to be a better dad or a better mom in three minutes is to ask you this question. **When was the last time that you spoke any spiritual wisdom to your children?** I don't mean giving them the God-hates-that-kind-of-stuff lecture. I don't mean the now I lay me down to sleep. I mean, when was the last time you asked them a question about God or shared with them a question you had about God or planted a little seed or did something and pointed and said, "God . . ." and then didn't finish the sentence? You are so important! Research shows that kids still look to their parents as the biggest influence in their lives by far. By far! The Book of Ephesians, chapter 6, quotes the fourth Commandment,

2 "Honor your father and mother"

and attaches the first promise to go with a Commandment,

3 "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

How do you do that? I think on a beautiful day like this, you take stock. You take stock and you look at that relationship with your father, as hard as that relationship or as complicated as that relationship is or was. You look for one thing of value and you try to communicate one thing of value that your father tried to do, and you make sure he knows that.

My little girl got married two weeks ago today. It was a great time. We had a wonderful experience, and so the week afterward, I wrote a letter to the Crosby clan, thanking them for coming. I wrote it out by hand the way my father used to write these huge, long, crazy letters to me in college in huge block letters a dozen pages long. I said this.

Hello Crosbys,

As the oldest member of the Crosby clan, I take up the pen in memory of Thomas Francis Crosby III, whose written rambles were epics, filled with whimsy, craziness, sage golf advice, craziness, rose-colored memories, and did I mention craziness? And only visible from this distance filled with incredible love. I hope I do as well!!

I have just honored my father. May you find a way to do the same.

Lord Jesus, You have the only perfect Father. The rest of us are trying to love and trying to *be* the best we can. I pray, on this beautiful day, that You would bring healing where it is needed, forgiveness where it is hard, and an affirmation of love that is a small copy of Your love for us, so that people will hear, Dads will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." In Your great Name. Amen.

The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.