

**Christ Presbyterian Church**  
**Edina, Minnesota**  
**June 14 & 15, 2014**  
**John Crosby**  
**A Good Father**  
**1 Kings 15:9-10, 11; 2 Chronicles 20**

His nickname was Josh. He had a really long name but his nickname was Josh. Josh could hear the noise as soon as he woke up. Even from inside his tent, he could hear the noise. As soon as he lifted the flap of his tent, he looked across the valley and he saw them, tens of thousands of the enemy, 20 times, 40 times as many as his soldiers. The enemy had sworn to kill every single one of them and then to take their women and their children into slavery. The battle was going to be today, tomorrow at the latest. He looked around at his soldiers who had trusted him and he knew they were going to die and he wondered to himself, what would my father do now? If dad were here, what would he do?

Maybe not such an odd thought on Father's Day. I have it sometimes, maybe you do too. Father's Day should be more than just heartwarming stories. I love the heartwarming stories, but it should be more than that. I love golf. Today is the last day of the U.S. Open and there's a really neat guy in the lead. I hope he does really well, but I am cheering today for the guy who is in third place. The guy who is in third place is Erik Compton. He is 34 years old. This is only his second U.S. Open because he has taken a different path to get there. You see, when Erik was 12 years old, the heart disease he had had from his childhood caught up with him and he had to have a heart transplant. Then, because he couldn't play other sports, he picked up a golf club and became a great amateur golfer. It looked like he was going to do fine and then in his mid- to late-twenties, his heart went bad again and in his late-twenties, he had to have a second heart transplant. When he woke up in the hospital, his father was there. He came over and sat on the edge of the bed and said, "Son, today you have a choice. You are either going to be a victim or you are going to be really lucky. Which one are you going to choose?"

Today Erik Compton is playing for the championship of the U.S. Open. He has made his choice because his father helped him choose. For better or worse, millions of people will celebrate the man who raised them on Father's Day. Millions of fathers will get cards and all kinds of clothing they will never wear, but on Father's Day, millions more will regret a broken relationship or the absentee father or the heartache that their father caused them. How do you thank someone who gave you everything? How do you forgive someone who hurt you so deeply? How do you recognize someone who shaped you?

Maybe more important today is, how do you become or not become that person who influenced you so much? We talk a lot about a father's legacy. That's important. A father often thinks about leaving a business behind or an inheritance or a reputation, but we also often say, *like father, like son* or *the nut doesn't fall far from the tree*. In many very good ways, that is true, but it's also true in bad ways. A statistic that has stuck with me all year that I just can't get out of my head is that 90 percent of all the people who are prisoners on death row were abused as children. Most of them. Many were abandoned by their fathers.

Today I thought I would tell you a story about a good dad in the Bible. It's simple, right? No, it's not. The Bible has very, very few stories of good dads. As Kari Dubord talked about, there is our Heavenly Father. And maybe, there's the father of the Prodigal Son, the father of the prodigal children, another loving dad, but most of the Bible is filled with bad dads. That's partly because the Bible is there to tell us stories of crisis. Crisis comes when somebody fails, so that means we get more tough stories about dads than good stories, to show us how God can work even in the hardest times. Partly you see these stories about bad dads because most families are broken and the Bible has the strength to show we are all messed up. Moses was a great leader, but he was probably an absentee dad. David is depicted as a king who is "a man after God's own heart" but over and over, he failed to raise his boys in ways that drew them to the God he loved. I had to look hard for somebody in the Bible who was a good dad.

What's in a name? You are associating names with different people, but if somebody calls you and says, "I named my kid this" and you've never heard the name before, what do you say? Bob Seiple is a friend of ours. He used to be the president of World Vision. His son calls him up and says, "Dad, it's a boy, a healthy boy." His dad says, "That's great, son! What did you call him?" "We're going to call him Asa." "Asa?" "Yeah, dad, you know, like in the Bible. We're going to call him Asa." By now, his parents are scrambling and go, "Okay." They look at each other. "Asa is one of the kings in the Old Testament, King Asa, but is he a good one or a bad one? I thought he was a bad one," and so they go to their Bible to find him. **Asa is a hidden gem.**

All this summer we are going to talk about hidden gems in the Bible. We are going to look at the story of the kings. The kings of Israel ruled over 2,000 years ago. They ruled for about 400 years, longer than we have had a country, and in that 400 years, I bet you don't remember a half-dozen of the names of the kings. Everybody remembers King Saul, King David, King Solomon, but all the rest of the kings for 400 years are hidden to us, and there are gems in there. There are great stories in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings you've never heard: ax heads that float; bears that come out of the woods to chase kids away; a pot of oil that will never run dry. A dead soldier gets thrown into a cave where somebody holy is buried and comes back to life. All these are stories you've never heard before. They are hidden gems.

We want to spend the summer walking through the lives of the kings. They are found in the Books of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles, and King Asa's story is one of them. This is his story in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, chapter 15.

**9** In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah, **10** and he reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years.

Now Asa is the son of King Abijah, the evil one, the grandson of King Rehoboam, the prideful one, and the great-grandson of King Solomon the Great, who becomes double-minded at the end. He is the descendant of three generations of father-kings, each of whom wandered away from God. Then it says, Asa became king and it says,

**11** Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done.

His great-great-grandpa King David was the spiritual father of King Asa. This is what it says about King Asa.

**12** He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his ancestors had made. **13** He even deposed his grandmother Maakah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah. **14** . . . Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life.

**24** Then Asa rested with his ancestors

He died.

and was buried with them in the city of his father David. And Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king.

So we only know three things about King Asa, right? He became king after three bad kings, he is the first one to be God-honoring, and the third thing we know is, he is a father. What kind of legacy did he leave, because there are often great fathers who have terrible sons? Asa's legacy is more than a good reputation and four lines in the Bible. It's what happens next. Listen to what happens to Jehoshaphat, the young king whom his friends called Josh. When Josh steps out of his tent, he can hear the noise of the enemy across the valley. When he looks up, he sees thousands and thousands of enemies coming to crush them. 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 20 says this.

**4** The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. **5** Then

Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard **6** and said:

"LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.

**12** . . . . For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

**13** All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.

Asa's son Jehoshaphat prayed to God. Then the answer came from God.

**17** . . . stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you . . . . Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you." **18** Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD.

The next day God led them to victory. Victory did not start that day. It started in the childhood of Jehoshaphat, not when he was a king but when he was a prince watching his dad, hearing his father pray, watching his father act with faithfulness and integrity. It started by having his dad there, showing him what to do when bad times came. That made him a very special kind of king because he followed in his father's footsteps. This is what the Bible says.

**1** Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king and strengthened himself against Israel [2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 17:1].

**5** He appointed judges in the land, in each of the fortified cities of Judah. **6** He told them, "Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for mere mortals but for the LORD, who is with you whenever you give a verdict [2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 19:5-6].

**8** In Jerusalem also, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites, priests and heads of Israelite families to administer the law of the LORD and to settle disputes. And they lived in Jerusalem. **9** He gave them these orders: "You must serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the LORD [2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 19:8-9].

**3** The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him [2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 17:3].

5 . . . . he had great wealth and honor. 6 His heart was devoted to the ways of the LORD . . . . [2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 17:5-6].

Now you know about King Asa, who overcame a legacy of unfaithfulness, and his son, Jehoshaphat. **When crisis came, Jehoshaphat remembered the God of his Father.** That's your first hidden gem. How about you? Some of you have a legacy of faith. You grew up in a God-loving family, and others of you represent the very first generation of people who are trying to follow God consistently. There's a new path before you and a faith that you are trying to pass on to your children. Will it be *like father, like son* this Father's Day or will we break the pattern and raise boys and girls with love and faith and joy so that they turn to each other and say, "Do you remember how Dad would . . . ?" "Do you remember when Dad would . . . ?" "I remember that Dad would pray for us."

We are going to have a picnic now. We are going to play games and fill the table with people we don't know. We're going to eat way too much food and celebrate together. Here's my charge for you at our Father's Day picnic. Before you go to sleep tonight, tell a dad one thing you love about him as a father. Whether it's your dad or another dad, say one thing you love about his influence, about the way that he is a dad. And if you are a dad or you are a grandfather, tell your children one prayer you have for them. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, my children are scattered to the ends of the earth today and I pray for them. I'm not asking You to keep them safe. I'm asking You to send them where they can do dangerous things for You. I'm asking You to give them dreams and courage to fill those dreams. God, today I'm asking You to help them make choices, even hard choices, that will lead to life that will lead to You. I thank You for all the dads within the sound of my voice who have loved their kids well. I thank You for all the people who did not have a good dad but who now have a choice to bless those who will follow them, to influence them and pray for them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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