

1st Pres San Bernardino

“Song of Fatherhood”
Matt. 9:35-39, Gen 18:1-15

6/15/08 Father’s Day,
MusicAppreciation

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It is Father’s Day, and I am thinking of fathers this morning. I’m mindful of the way that we as a congregation are grieving this spring, at the number of ‘fathers’ we have lost in recent weeks.

Paul Mordy, Bill Newman, Dick Coffin, Duke Cox, Bill Leonard- these were all men who were fathers to us as a community-

- we looked up to them,
- they gave themselves freely to us, to help us grow
- they loved us, and we loved them in return.

One of you said to me this past week, “I know it sounds sacrilegious, but **it feels like God has died**. It feels like the one person you knew you could look to when you were in trouble, the one person you knew you could count on for strength and steadiness- is suddenly gone.”

I don’t think this is sacrilegious at all.

God lives, by the Holy Spirit, in each of us. And when we are at our best, we are God’s hands and feet in one another’s lives.

In our best moments, the light of Christ really does shine in and through us,

And the things that God the Father wants to give the world-

A hug, a bag of groceries, new light, fresh courage-

God gives through us.

God gave us those things through them.

They were, most of them, Greatest Generation- irreplaceable

They gave generously to the mission of this church.

They taught kids, gave scholarships, worked for global understanding.

They built high schools and freeways and Universities and community,

They invested, to a person, in young people.

So in some ways it does feel like God has died- and it should. A really good father- either biological or borrowed- should **have qualities that point to God**: love and compassion, strength and joy, trustworthiness and steadiness. A really good father is someone you can depend on- and heaven knows we need it, for we are harassed and helpless, **like sheep w/o a shepherd**.

In the Narnia stories, **God sings the creation into being**.

The Father, the Creator, sings: and everything beautiful comes to life.

The melody, made of the very breath of God, calls forth land and sea, sky and stars, rippling grass and roaming creatures.

Calvin Miller wrote a fable entitled **‘the Singer’**. In the story, Earthmaker sang the creation into being, and it resounded in harmony. But little by little, the creation- and especially its people- forgot the melody and lost track of the song, became discordant.

And so the Earthmaker sent the Singer to earth- who came and **sang** to us, reminding us who we are and who the Creator calls us to be, and inviting us to join the Song.

Does your father sing? Or did he? Is there a song- meaningful or silly- that he hums when he was working or whistles when he drives?
(my grandfather: Bonnie Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond)

Some of these guys sang the Pacific High fight song, the Battle Hymn of the Republic, silly campfire songs.

But more than that- what kind of music did their *lives* make?

What did their actions sing and proclaim? What echoes can we still hear?

“I would be true, for there are those who trust me...”

“Eternal Father strong to save, whose arm has bound the restless wave”

“Do not be afraid, I am with you. I will call you each by name...”

“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound.”

It has been pointed out that there are not real **Qualifications** for fatherhood. Anyone, a bumper sticker has observed, can be a father-

I think about Abraham- old, unlikely, so often full of doubt.

And I suspect, if these ‘fathers’ I am talking about were here, they would laugh like Sarah laughed, at the unlikelihood of all I am saying, at their own deep knowledge of their imperfections, at their inadequate qualifications for sainthood.

But imperfections and disbelief aside, we know that God has used them. We have heard the melody of their lives.

Duke and Paul were in our choir- they sang with us and for us and to us, week after week.

When we sing, we make something beautiful for God with our body and our breath and our being together.

We need breath to do it- the stuff of our life

And we need to be present: body, and mind, and spirit.

And we need one another.

In some ways it feels like God has died.

We are harassed and feel helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

We will miss these ‘fathers’- who have helped us become who we are, who have sung so bravely and beautifully the Song of the Father of lights.

How will God help us?

God will send us ‘other fathers’- men and women on whose strength and love and compassion we will be able to depend. And God will be, for each of us, the father we have always needed-

And **God will keep the song of faith in our hearts**, remind us of the tune, hum it in our ears- so that we can sing it with our lives and keep the song alive. So that the things that God wants to give the world might be given- through us.