

## A Father's Love Is Zealous

What are Fathers supposed to do? What is their role in life? More and more today, the answer to that question is: "I don't know." Or, sometimes the answer is even worse. Sometimes the answer is: "nothing." In Canada a couple of months ago they were writing a welfare bill into law. And, the law read that if a woman wants financial support for her unborn child, then she must write down the name of the father so that he too can help support the child. It didn't make it very far until they dropped that part of the bill. They dropped that part of the bill because, you don't need a father to raise a child, right? That was their reasoning.

In our world today there is very little room for fathers. And if people make room for fathers, then what are their roles? In the gospel for this morning, Jesus shows us a paternal, father's love. He shows us in action the sort of role a father should have and the sort of love a father should have. And it's a zealous sort of love. Mark tells us: *"Mark 3:22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul ! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.'" Mark 3:23 So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come."*

Notice how the sort of love that Jesus shows here is not a wimpy sort of love. It is a zealous love which protects. When the Pharisees come to him and tell him that he is serving **בְּבִעַל זְבוּב**, the Lord of the flies, the Prince of demons, what does Jesus do? Does he cower in a corner and say: "yeah, I guess you're right. There's all these people possessed by demons. But I shouldn't heal them." No! Jesus' love is zealous. He drives the demons out. But then what does he do? He confronts the Pharisees and shows them how wrong, sinful and stupid they are. What good would a general was in command of a brigade and then he went out with his gun and killed half of them. Any idiot could see that that general is stupid or crazy or both. Even more so then, when it comes to Satan and his armies, why would Satan drive his own demons out of people? He'd be shooting himself in the foot. Jesus jealously and zealously shows his love for all the people he has driven demons out of by *protecting* his own actions and by protecting their reputation.

That is a father's love. His love is zealous—zealous enough to protect those whom he loves. How many of us who have had fathers have experienced the same thing. Sometimes that zealous love protects us from the sin of others. Sometimes that zealous love protects us from the sin inside ourselves. I remember a time when I was in High School when our family was having Thanksgiving dinner with another family in our congregation. I opened my mouth and said: "this is freaking stupid." My dad looked like he was about to explode. And then, in a way, he did just that. He exploded all over me. He said: "I don't ever want to hear you using that word ever again. You don't say 'freaking' because you know what that word really means."

That is a father's love. It was zealous to protect me from my own sin. It was zealous to show me that sin, any sin was serious. And, isn't that what the writer to the Hebrews describes: *"Heb. 12:10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."*

What I find fascinating about these words isn't just what the writer says, but also what he does not say. He does not say we have all had fathers and *mothers* who have disciplined us as they thought best. No doubt we have all had mothers and they have disciplined us. But again and again in scripture we see that it is the father's main responsibility to discipline his children. That is one of the ways fathers show their love.

I remember a family in one of the congregations I served. There was a girl in catechism class. She absolutely refused to do his homework and memorize the parts of the catechism. So then, I talked to her father. In love for her he showed her that what she was doing was wrong. And the strangest part of the whole event was that he was not a member of the church. But, he knew his role as a father. He knew that this was the way he showed his love to his daughter.

How sad it is then, men, when we either as fathers or just members of our church see members of our church who sin and then we turn away and ignore their sins. That is not a father's love. That is not love at all. That is

convenience. Our lack of love moves us to go to our Father above. For we know that he always loves us, always loves us enough to show us our sin. He always loves us enough to us the Jesus we find here in these words. In these words we find a Savior whose love was so zealous that he showed the Pharisees their sins out of love for them and out of love for everyone else. It is his obedience which takes away our disobedience. Through him we know our sins are forgiven.

A father's love is zealous. It is zealous to protect. But it is zealous in another way as well: *"32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, 'Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.' Mark 3:33 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he asked. Mark 3:34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'"*

Here, in these words we see a zealous love again. But Jesus was *not* zealous for himself. He was not zealous for his mother or brothers. He was zealous for his father above. Men, learn from Jesus. The best way you can show love to those around you is to teach them to follow our Father above. Fathers, there is nothing wrong with buying your children an ice cream cone or even a car if God blesses you with that sort of money. But, do not be mistaken, the best way you can show love to your children is by bringing them to your Father above. The best way you can show them love is by reading God's word to them so that when they grow up and are old and grey, they might forget about you, but they still remember their Father in heaven. Bring them to Sunday School. Do not teach them that growing in God's word is only something we do for part of the year. It is a sinful and odious lesson to teach your children, that we don't need God's word during the summer. In truth, they don't need ice cream every week of their life. And fathers, they may not even need you every week of their life. But they do need God, the Father in their lives every week and even every day.

Fathers show that sort of zealous love. Protect your children by showing them their sin. Teach them not to do what you want. No, instead, teach them to do what your Father in heaven wants. Amen.