

Galatians 3:23-29

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

“Growing Up As God's Children”

Once upon a time there was a little girl who peddled her bike so mightily that, one day while she was on her way home, the chain slipped off. She tried hard to fix it, but it was broken and beyond her repair. So with a sad heart and discouraged spirit she pushed her bike home and parked it in the garage. The next morning as she went through the garage to go outside to play, she noticed that the bike chain was back where it belonged. “That’s cool,” she thought. “I wonder how that happened!” She was so happy that she jumped on it and went for a good long ride. A couple of months later, her doll suffered a broken arm. She tried hard to fix it, but it was beyond her repair. So with a sad heart and discouraged spirit she brought the doll out to the garage and laid it on top of the trash can. The next morning as she went through the garage to go outside to play, she noticed that her doll’s arm was fixed. She laughed and gave her baby a big hug and played with her all day. After that, every time something needed fixing, she brought it out to the garage, placed it in the center of the room, and left it there overnight so that it would be mended by the morning. It wasn’t until years later that she discovered that it was her father who had done all the repairs. Not surprisingly, this was the same father who, when his teenage little girl came to him full of fear over mistake a she had made and with a broken heart that needed mending— took her up in his arms, gave her a big hug, cried with her, and said reassuringly, ” I love you.” More importantly, this father was the same father of faith who brought his girl with him on Sundays to church so that she might hear all the people in the church pray together, “Our Father, who art in heaven . . . “

Modern psychology teaches us that the first image of God that develops in our minds’ eye is birthed out of our loving relationship with our parents and family. Later our image of God changes as we learn more about God through our life experiences, relationships with lovers, life mates, and friends, nature, culture, events, social groups, sacred writings, and religious community. The names and attributes that we learn of God in church are especially important

because they become invested with the feeling of sacredness, love, and power.

In the Christian religion, one important name that we have for God is ‘Father.’ We use it because Father was one of the names that Jesus said that his disciples could use when they corporately approached God in prayer. Actually, the word that Jesus used was the Aramaic word, Abba . . . daddy. More specifically, his daddy whom he knew as protective, forgiving, healing, loving, compassionate, judge, strong, creator, just, steadfast in faith, promise maker and promise keeper. . .

Father is also one of the names that we use in Christian Baptism. We baptize persons into the Church Universal in the name of the “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Father here refers to Jesus’ Heavenly Daddy who called the world into being, who invited Abraham and Sarah and all their offspring to live in faithful covenantal relationship with God, who gave Moses the Ten Commandments of Law for God’s children, who spoke through the prophets, apostles, and saints, who stepped into the shoes of Jesus so that human beings might be more like God, and who, in every generation gathers---sustains---renews the church so that it might be the Body of Christ for the world.

Cameron, Duncan, and Mia today is your baptismal day. In your baptism, God promises many things. God gives you a name so that you can have a personal relationship with God. God gives you the name of Jesus Christ. God promises new life in Christ. God promises forgiveness. God promises a new family. God promises the gift of the Holy Spirit. After today, when someone asks you, “What is your religion?” You can say, “I am a baptized Christian.” You can also say, I was baptized by the First Church of West Bridgewater where people join hearts and hands to help God’s dreams and promises comes true.

In honor of father’s day today, I will read Rev. Martin Copenhaver letter: *A Letter From a Father to His Son* (Getting Ready For Baptism, p. 8-9)

Dear Todd,

I want you to understand how significant it is that your mother and I brought you to the church to be baptized. Like most parents, we feel protective of you. A day or two after you were born we brought you home in a big plastic bucket they gave us at the hospital. It was battleship gray and seemed as sturdy as a battleship also. It was filled like a nest with brightly colored blankets so that you could stay warm and your head wouldn’t flop around. I’m sure that, if we had any, we also would have used some of those Styrofoam peanuts that are used for packing fragile and precious items. We buckled that car seat in just right and made sure that it was secure, as carefully as if we were sending you to the moon in a space capsule. And then we drove home more slowly than you have ever seen me drive since. For the most part, that loving, protective concern doesn’t change all that much as you get older. So, for instance, before we drop you off somewhere, we want to know something about who will be in charge. After all, in some way we are entrusting you to their care, if only for a time. We won’t entrust you to just anyone. So it is significant that, on the day of your baptism, in the most profound way, we entrusted you to the God we know in Jesus Christ. We love you so much, and so want good things for you. We also want you to be safe and to be cared for. And on the day of your baptism we said something like this: “We entrust this little one to Jesus. In this dangerous and treacherous world, it is to the care of Jesus that we entrust this beloved son of ours.”

Love, D.