

**SERMON: “A Father’s Love.”**

Rev. Geoff Ross. Sunday, June 18, 2017. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Brampton.

[WOW! 2 Weeks: Thank you/faith into action!/great picnic!/RM’s announcement.]

I haven’t spend a lot of time preaching on the subject of fathers – or parenthood – over the course of my ministry: I even checked my files – in 20 years I’ve only preached 3 Father’s Day sermons. Except on Father’s Day – and for Remembrance Day – I haven’t preached on the subject of fathers/grandfathers: what I do/say up here isn’t about me; it’s about God/theology not biography.

[Every day FD/MD: Check 10C. Honour them/their love/influence/lives]

One of the reasons for this is that while I’m a father – and a husband – I don’t consider myself an expert at fathering (ask my kids); but over the years I’ve come to realize – what I discovered other fathers/mothers/parents did – is that there is no manual, no perfect way to be a parent, that nothing – but nothing – prepares you for the rush of panic that you experience when, with a flush of fluid and a cry you become a father/mother/parent.

[HDR: Regan/Pre-natal classes/lies/complications-did what I could/fainted/out of way]

The Mark reading has two healing stories: 1<sup>st</sup> the hemorrhaging woman and the other about the healing of Jairus’ daughter. While we don’t have time to go into her story – or to fully comprehend the pain, suffering, stigma, shame, heartbreak, loss she must have endured; all we need to know about the woman is that she had faith that God – the God who loved her – would heal her. And, knowing Jesus was coming, she came up with a plan: *“If only... I touch him!”* She does, and at once she’s healed/restored/made whole. Her faith/hope/love in a healing, loving, restoring God drove her to do whatever she had to, and it saved her. But let’s get back to the story of the helpless father.

I’ve been there/I’m sure many of you father’s out there have been there too – you child looks to you and you pray you can live up to their trust/hope/love. What’s Jairus to do? Whatever he can – whatever his love for her compels him to do. This is not a position Jairus is used to; he’s a wealthy/powerful leader of the synagogue – a leader of the community, respected, law-abiding – not someone who would normally go begging to a wandering Rabbi for him to help heal his daughter. But he’s desperate/afraid: *“If only....”* And the interruption by this anonymous woman only makes his situation worse – in fact, we quickly learn, it’s caused the death of his daughter! Seeing his despair – his child/daughter/flesh of his flesh/light of his life/eye/his little girl was dead; he was too late! – Jesus echoes what He said to the woman, *“Don’t worry/be afraid, have faith”* and, after arriving at Jairus’ house, He goes in, takes the “sleeping” girl’s hand, lovingly tells her *“Little girl, get up!”* and – to everyone’s surprise – she does!

[39 years ago/broken elbow/“Where is my son!?”/fainted/next bed – would do anything]

A couple of years ago I spoke about my father – Murray Robert Ross, my relationship with him, and how he died of a 2<sup>nd</sup> heart attack 5 days short of my 34<sup>th</sup> birthday, now 21

years ago. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't miss him/that I don't wish he was here, alive. And, while ours was not the greatest of relationships (maybe borne out of his own relationship with his father/only child), I know that I was loved. I will always be his son – the first born to first-time father – who maybe wasn't who/what he expected/who he struggled to understand, but whom he loved enough to allow me to grow – and to fail, whom he wanted the best for, and for whom he would do anything. And he did every day, in his way, unconditionally. [Ross Men picture: When I became a father we had more in common – and the smarter he became!] I'm not perfect/not even close, but God gave me my father's love (love/grace beyond my deserving), a love that God enables me, in turn, to give to my children by doing whatever I can. That's a father's love.

Interesting, the story about Jairus' daughter is the first resurrection account in the Bible: we know all about Jesus' resurrection and about Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead, but we don't even know Jairus' daughter's name! But what we do know about this story is that it is a story of a father's love – of a father who would do anything for the sake of his child, to help her, to cure her, anything because his love for her is so wide/long/high/deep that her life means more to him than his, that he'd give his for hers. And because of his faith – and because of his love for his daughter – God did what any father would do for His children: whatever it would take for them to be safe/healed/restored/made whole. Friends, this is what God did for us: God so loved the people of this world He gave His only Son that we might be saved! This is the breadth/length/height/depth of God's love (Eph 3:18). This is our Father's love. Amen.