

A month ago on Mother’s Day, I shared a few stories about a mother’s love and power and protection and how a mother’s love can be an example of how the Church is called to love. So, in honor of Father’s Day today, I thought I would begin with a few quotes that are messages passed along to fathers.

One person wrote, “Whenever there is some problem in my life, whenever I feel moody, whenever I am sad. I think of you, and that solves all my problems and make me happy. I love you.”

Another wrote, “You are truly my superhero in plain clothes. I cannot recall the number of times you bailed me out of sticky situations. I do not know what I will do without you. I love you so much, Dad.”

A poem about dads reads, “A dad is someone who wants to catch you before you fall, but instead picks you up, brushes you off, and lets you try again.

A dad is someone who wants to keep you from making mistakes but instead lets you find your own way, even though his heart breaks in silence when you get hurt.

A dad is someone who holds you when you cry, scolds you when you break the rules, shines with pride when you succeed, and has faith in you even when you fail.”

And lastly a favorite of mine, “A dad is respected because he gives his children leadership... A dad is appreciated because he gives his children care... A dad is valued because he gives his children time... A dad is loved because he gives his children the one thing they treasure most- himself.”

As you might suspect, I do not just share these quotes and poems in honor of Father’s Day. In the same way we can lean on the positive examples of our earthly fathers and dads, for guidance, protection, problem solving, love, and support, scripture reminds us we can also lean on our heavenly Father. We do not do it so much today in the Christian tradition, but the Israelites, who were Jews, cried out to God by saying *Abba*, a Hebrew word meaning “father”. Through years of theological study and life experience, the translation for *Abba* has expanded from the more sovereign reference of “father” to also include “daddy”, which signifies a more intimate and personal relationship with God.

As we begin with these thoughts, let us now turn and dive into our kingdom story worth telling.

Point #1: This story is a message for those of us who have ever found ourselves in the midst of trouble; a message for those of us who have ever found ourselves in the midst of problems; a message for those of us who have ever found ourselves in the midst of challenging circumstances; a message for those of us who have ever found ourselves all alone with no help. That includes just about everyone, right! We are all on a journey crossing from one side of the sea to another. When we stop and think about it, our whole life is one big journey made up of lots of smaller journeys.

Point #2: This story is a message reminding us that when we are in the midst of the storm, we are to remember that even though we may be panicking, God is not. Something for us to chew on is the verbal tone we think Jesus responded to the disciples. We can hold that up to the verbal tone we think the disciples talked to Jesus in.

I imagine the disciple's voices sounded quite a bit different than Jesus'. The disciples were threatened and terrified. Do you know what I sound like when I am frightened or terrified? It takes a lot to get me there, but it can sound panicked. My voice can rise to the noise level of what is around me and that can be loud and very intense. Anyone else? Jesus on the other hand, who the story shares shows no panic, probably sounded calm and peaceful. The disciples said, "Jesus, do something!!! Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?!!!" and Jesus responds, "Peace, be still." What Jesus said next is also amazing. Not only did Jesus not match the level of panic and fear, Jesus embodies a genuine calm when he asks next, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" Jesus was not trying to show up the disciples and make the disciples feel stupid for feeling afraid. He was saying, "I am with you, and as long as I am with you, there is no reason for you to be afraid." There is a message for us in how Jesus said what he said and in what he said.

How Jesus said what he said teaches us that having a yelling match does not calm a situation, it escalates it, and yet we still try to talk louder and louder thinking the other will hear our point more clearly. I am not sure that ever works. Instead, we are told to "be still and know that I am God." Try that sometime. When the waves are crashing and the storm is raging, take a few deep breaths and think to yourself- or talk out loud- be still and know that I am God. A peace will come over you. This reference comes from Psalm 46, a psalm declaring God as our refuge and strength.

There is a message in what Jesus said as well and that brings us to Point #3: This story is a message for us today and every day of our journey that God is with us always. God may be

silent in the storm, or we may be so focused on the waves that we forget God is there, but God is always there. And because God is there, we can be assured things are going to be ok. God has the power to calm the waves, to still the winds, and to keep us afloat even when water seems to be coming in. In essence, "God's Got Our Back." "God has got your back, and your back, and your back, and my back."

"I've got your back" is a saying we hear associated with sports often. Maybe as a service man or woman or emergency responder you have heard it too. In essence, it is used to describe our relationship with our teammates or players. It works great for marriages as well. It means we are in this together. It means that no one is alone. If something happens, we will be there to help each other out. Not only is it referring to us having someone else's back, but it is assurance that we are not alone. Our teammates "have our back." They are there to help us out. Help us up off the ground. Encourage us. Teach us. Work with us. Sounds like a good motto for the church as well, doesn't it?

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With as much assurance that one of our friends or teammates or family members has our back, we are to be assured and rest on the promise that God has our back in any and every situation. No matter what happens throughout a season of life, at school or at home, God has our back. God will always be there to encourage us, pick us up, and strengthen us.

The book of Isaiah shares the prophecy of God... "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10) Translation: God is saying, "I've got your back."

Hillsong United sings a song entitled "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" and it hit me like a ton of bricks when I heard it this week. Especially considering our kingdom story worth retelling today.

Verse 1

You call me out upon the waters... The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery... In oceans deep my faith will stand

Chorus

I will call upon Your Name... And keep my eyes above the waves...
When oceans rise... My soul will rest in Your embrace... For I am Yours and You are mine

Verse 2

Your grace abounds in deepest waters... Your sovereign hand will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me... You've never failed and You won't start now

Bridge

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders... Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me... Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger... In the presence of my Saviour

Last Chorus

I will call upon Your Name... Keep my eyes above the waves
My soul will rest in Your embrace... I am Yours and You are mine

When life presents itself with ever-changing variables, crashing waves, rocky boats, the promise we have got to realize is that we serve a God who is stationary in Godness and goodness. God is present in power and passionate in peace! God is the unmoved Mover!

Point #4: This story is a message challenging us to act against our fears. Sometimes, our fears seem like they are anything but an illusion, right? So, what does act against our fears look like? More importantly than simply facing our fears, we must work against fear by building faith. As children of God, we are called and equipped to live in faith not fear. *Coming off a year of COVID concerns and precautions brings that challenge to the forefront, doesn't it?* When things get tough, our natural tendency may be to shutter in fear, but with the peace of Christ with us, we can put faith into action and be at peace. That is just that easy to say and that much harder to do. To have faith takes courage and hope. And when we live in faith, we stand against fear and overtime we build up enough confidence to overcome our fear with faith.

Like I just mentioned, it is often easier said than done, but we must try to have courage to break up with our fears, so that we can free ourselves to lean on God who has got our back. Consider the battle with fear Francesca Battistelli portrays in her song entitled "The Breakup Song."

Sick and tired of being sick and tired... Had as much of you as I can take
I'm so done, so over being afraid
I've gone through the motions... I've been back and forth
I don't know how to say it... So I'm just gonna say it

Chorus: Fear, you don't own me... There ain't no room in this story
And I ain't got time for you... Telling me what I'm not...
I know who I am... I know I'm strong... And I am free
Got my own identity... So fear, you will never be welcome here

Something's gotta give so I give up you... There's no room for you here
I've had enough... The "No Vacancy" sign on my heart is lit up

Is there anybody out there just like me?
Anybody needing fear to leave?
If you don't know how to say it Sing along with me- *Chorus*

To close, maybe we can think of it this way... What would we do differently today if we believed that God really has our back? I have heard it another way too, "What would you attempt today if you knew you could not fail (would not perish)?"

Scripture provides for us words we can let wash over us and remind us of God's watchful care over us and those we love today and always. **Psalm 121** says:

**I look to the mountains—does my help come from there?
My help comes from the LORD, who made the heavens and the earth!
He will not let you stumble and fall;
The one who watches over you will not sleep.
Indeed, he who watches over Israel never tires and never sleeps.
The LORD himself watches over you
The LORD stands beside you as your protective shade.
The sun will not hurt you by day, nor the moon at night
The LORD keeps you from all evil and preserves your life.
The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.**

Let all God's people say... **Amen.**