

Date: May 14, 2023 (Mothers Day...)

Texts: II Kings 18. 5-8 / Mark 14. 32-36

Title: "A Brief Statement V: Father"

Intro - (per Fulghum, and Mothers Day...)

let's begin by addressing the elephant in the room...

namely - that on this Mothers Day, we consider that part of the
Brief Statement that focuses on trusting God...

whom Jesus called Abba, Father

cf. - didn't plan it this way...

don't know of any minister who would...

anyone who dare...

cf. - several options occurred to me:

1 - skip it...

2 - balance it out with God's mother-like love on Fathers Day...

3 - try and come up with some convoluted theological, historical / contextual
hermeneutic expanding on the term "Abba" to include

a Mother's love - while being sensitive to the prevailing threat
of faith practices of the peoples around the Jews -
which largely centered on female deities and
ritualistic sex practices

- I could...

or...

it is what it is...

and it reminds us that while we love and honor mothers -
not just on a special day, but - always...

- we revere... are humbled before... and -
trust - God...

whom we Jesus called Abba, Father...

and with whom Jesus would have us experience the same kind of
close... intimate... relationship

cf. - how does that play out...?

I) Trust

as with Hezekiah, in the passage we read from 2 Kings -

it begins when we trust God...

when we realize and enter fully into...

a relationship with God that is like unto

the relationship between a parent -

a father... a mother...

and a child

listen to how this is described in our text -

that Hezekiah trusted in the Lord...

and that in this - there was no one like him

among all the kings of Judah -

either before him or after him

he held fast to the Lord...

he did not cease to follow him...

he kept God's commands...

unfortunately...

it seems that trusting in the Lord - as outline here -

is as rare in our day as it was in his

trust...

so much more than just a platitude

in Hezekiah, we see it was an active way of life

it involved holding fast to... following... obeying...

it went beyond words -

and resulted in a lifestyle that could be seen

cf. - per Henri Nouwen:

Optimism and hope are radically different attitudes.

Optimism is the expectation that things -- the weather, human relationships,

the economy, the political situation, and so on -- will get better.

Hope is the trust that God will fulfill God's promises to us
in a way that leads us to true freedom.

The optimist speaks about concrete changes in the future.

The person of hope lives in the moment with the knowledge and trust that
all of life is in good hands.

All the great spiritual leaders in history were people of hope.

Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Mary - all lived with a promise in their hearts
that guided them toward the future without the need to know
exactly what it would look like.

(because they knew and lived...
as if that future were in God's hands...)

relate per an old story:

Drought threatened the crop in a village of Crete. The priest told his flock:
"There isn't anything that will save us, except a special litany for rain.

Go to your homes, fast during the week, trust in God,
and come on Sunday for the litany of rain."

The villagers heard him, fasted during the week and went to the church

on Sunday morning, but as soon as the priest saw them, he was furious.

He said, "Go away, I will not do the litany. You do not trust in God."

"But Father," they protested, "we fasted and we trust."

"Trust?" he said. "Then where are your umbrellas?"

trust is seen... is experienced... makes a difference -

in what we do

and results - as with Hezekiah -

that we find that "the Lord is with us..."

we find that our trust brings to us the very real and

tangible effect of God's presence -

as a daily reality

cf. - as a living part of our faith... our experience of faith...

that is best understood and appreciated in the

intimate language used here of Abba... Father -

II) “Abba”

cf. - re: first words -

dada... mama...

the “easier to say” options that come early in life

when trust is not something we have to parse or
work at understanding...

- it just is

later, some children take on formal affectations, and parents become

Mother... Father...

and in that, it's just not the same

Abba... Mama...

Daddy... Mommy...

- the cries of dependence...

- the visceral expression that this is where comfort is found...

this is where security is sought...

this is where we belong

relate - what we affirm here is this:

Jesus creates stories to communicate that God is

good, faithful, and merciful

(i.e. the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, etc.)

Jesus exemplifies biblical faith, which is not trust in ideas;

it's trust in a person —

God, his Father, whom he trusts so much he calls him

Abba, Daddy, Papa.

Jesus knows that God is always with him and in a caring way.

and -

Jesus wants to communicate that to us in a way that

that draws us into the same sort of relationship

consider what's going on... where Jesus was...

as he prayed this prayer:

he was in the Garden of Gethsemane...
he is troubled deep down in his soul...
his friends can't stay awake to offer support...
he cries out to God
and in the cry - he reminds us that God is Abba... Father
God offers comfort as a mommy comforts her child...
and because of the relationship that we share with him...
the relationship that can best be pictured as a loving parent
holding an infant in the warmth of a
tender embrace...
because of this -
we trust
and -
we show that trust
(by bringing umbrellas...)

III) Loved and Supported

relate - Jesus' prayer also tells us something of what this love is...
how this love works...
and - where it leads us
i.e. - as with a father... a mother...
Jesus knew he was loved...
Jesus knew he was supported...
and - Jesus was able to do what he had to do
"Please... take this cup from me. Yet - not my will, but yours..."
Jesus was not kept from suffering
he was not coddled...
rather - he was loved in such a way that strengthened, and -
freed him
he trusted God... he knew what it means to be grounded in his love...
and that gave him what he needed to do what he came to do

- have we come to this same experience of grounding in God's love...?
 - do we show the same level of trust as that which Jesus showed...?

- do we offer the same "no holds barred" love to those around us - especially, to those in our families...?
 - do we return that love, as children of many and varied ages, to the parents, and especially - the mothers who guided us on our way...?

i.e. - when you know you are loved...

when you are able to live in that knowledge (as shown by a natural embrace of the intimacy with God that Jesus shows here...)

then - you can show that love...

you can more fully return that love...

you can trust that God will make something wonderful of that love...

you can be a mommy... an abba...

you can be a child - who knows the security and the hope of living in that embrace...

you can find the peace that God intends for you...

as you trust in him in the way he makes possible.