

**Warm Father, Hugging Every Child, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 05080615**  
**Genesis 18:1-15 and Matthew 9:35-10:8**  
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“Good news! The kingdom of heaven has come near!” That is what Jesus tells us, as his disciples, to proclaim.

“Good news!”? How are we supposed to believe any good news when the price of gasoline is driving up the cost of travel, air fare, and vegetables? How can we proclaim good news when we see dear ones we love suffering from cancer or heart failure, when wars in Iraq and Afghanistan show no signs of drawing to a close, or when people’s homes are devastated by tornados and flooding?

From the start, Jesus was different than what we expect from people. Listen to Matthew’s account: We see four major points:

- 1) Jesus went about all the cities and villages,
- 2) Teaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom,
- 3) Curing every disease and every sickness.
- 4) When he saw the crowds, he had compassion because they were harassed and helpless.

Jesus went about all the cities and villages. He did not stay cloistered in Capernaum or in some church building. He made himself available. He was visible and vulnerable. He was among the people.

He taught about the good news of the kingdom. This was a different kingdom than what the peasants were used to. This was God’s kingdom, not Caesar’s kingdom. Whereas in Caesar’s kingdom, the peasants were forced to give much of their earnings over to the rulers, in God’s kingdom, each person counted. Each person had enough.

Jesus cured disease and sickness. He saw the need, the hurt, and the confusion of the people, and he did something about it.

He could see how oppressed the people were. He saw they were harassed and helpless. He never said, “These people should know how to get a job and do for themselves.” He had compassion.

Jesus shows us what God is like and what God wants. God is not aloof or punishing. These are fallible human traits. Jesus showed a God who embraced all.

The account in Matthew continues. He called together the twelve and gave them authority over unclean spirits and authority to cure disease and sickness. And, who were the twelve? They were common folks, untrained, workers and peasants. One of them, Matthew notes about himself, was a despised tax collector! Another one was Judas who betrayed Jesus. These twelve went out and did the same things that Jesus did.

You and I, Jesus’ disciples today, are called to do the same. This is good news: the kingdom of heaven has come near. Not Caesar’s kingdom, not a kingdom of power and wealth and class, but the kingdom of heaven where everyone has worth.

On this Father’s Day, we can be reminded that Jesus called God “Father.” He did not call him Judge, Ruler, or even Creator.

Too many folks’ image of a father has been tarnished. We have seen earthly fathers neglect their children by running off. We have seen too many avoid child support. We have seen too many beat their children – “Give ‘em a whuppin’!”

We have seen too many fathers hold to such high standards that their children always felt

inadequate. We have seen too many fathers sexually assault their children.

These tarnished images of father make it difficult for these children to think of God as a loving and kind parent. In spite of poor human examples of parenting, God is the perfect parent. We will sing, “Bring Many Names,” our hymn number 11.<sup>1</sup> The hymn samples varieties of images of God. Verse 3 says, “Warm father God, hugging every child, feeling all the strains of human living, caring and forgiving till we’re reconciled: Hail and Hosanna, warm father God!”

Oh, how good it feels to be held and hugged and loved. The knowledge that God loves, holds, and hugs us, is freeing. That image helps us overcome our jealousies, passions, and insecurities. We don’t have to worry about someone else getting more love than we. We are loved by the God who created us, and calls us by name— the God who counts the very hairs on our heads.

A father hugging a child is the image for this father’s day. This is a different image than the macho man who goes off drinking in a bar with the guys, who goes off racing cars over the weekend, or who buries himself in work. This is a different father than the man who tries to show he’s a man by holding his feelings in where they eat away at his insides, rotting his heart and soul.

A real father, a real man, is in touch with his pain and his joy, and is not afraid to express those feelings.

Our children need fathers who will hug and embrace, not simply when they are pleased with their children, but also when their children are hurt or torn, or do things out of anger.

What our children need is not more toys, computer games, or TV, but time— good quality time from their parents.

And, we need time from our heavenly father God. The irony is that God gives us the time. The only reason we don’t feel God’s love is that we don’t take the time to receive it.

Spend a little time with God to experience God’s love and care.

Enjoy your heavenly father. Happy Father’s Day!

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<sup>1</sup>*New Century Hymnal*, © 1995, The Pilgrim Press, “Bring Many Names,” by Brian Wrenn, 1989