

## My Father Is ...

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Jesus revealed the Father by living as a Son. So do YOU!

*<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5-NIV)*

*<sup>21</sup> Not everyone who calls out to me, "Lord! Lord!" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. (Matthew 7-NLT)*

One of Mark Twain's most famous quotes, gets right to the heart of our theme today, there are 2 important days in your life, (1) the day you were born, (2) the day you discover why you were born.

You were born to make a difference for eternity, by bringing glory to your Father in heaven. I know 4 things about a person who wants to make a difference for eternity.

- (1) You are not interested in pleasing people.
- (2) You don't live for the applause and accolades of people.
- (3) You don't live for the temporal; you live for the eternal.
- (4) You are not sidelined by struggles, hardships and pain.

Now, keep these qualities of a person who wants to make a difference for eternity in mind. We will circle back around to them in a few minutes.

And for so many of you this has become a landmark series, because you have learned, discovered, and become committed to living to please God as your Heavenly Father. That is why you were born!

To bring glory to your heavenly Father. That is why you were born!  
To honor your heavenly Father in all you do. That is why you were born!  
You have discovered in the series, that Jesus favorite name for God, is Heavenly Father.  
You have learned that your heavenly Father wants to hug and kiss you back into a relationship with him, when you blow it.

You have learned for many there is a gap between wanting a Father's blessing and really experiencing it. And God as your Heavenly Father, is wanting to fill that gap.

This message is 9 months pregnant with dozens of scriptural verses about, God as your Heavenly Father. And our opening verses sets the table like eating on fine China.

Our first verse, that we read responsively, reminds us that your life carries with it the illuminating effect of light, and those good deeds you do, can bring glory to your Father in heaven.

*<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5-NIV)*

I think this verse which places priority on your good deeds, is expressed perfectly by the Fruit of the Spirit of goodness. The “*fruit of the Spirit,*” is so different than the “*feelings of the Spirit.*”

The fruit of the spirit has to do with choice. The feelings of the spirit have to do with chance.

The fruit of the spirit has to do with timing. The feelings of the spirit has to do temperature.

The fruit of the spirit has to do with inward excellence. The feelings of the spirit have to do with external appearances.

John Wesley put it so well, when he said,

...do all the *good* you can,  
...by all the *means* you can,  
...in all the *ways* you can,  
...in all the *places* you can,  
...at all the *times* you can,  
...to all the *people* you can.

But it is that second opening verse that rattles me. I am reminded, as the country music world sings, one day I am going to stand before my Maker.

*<sup>21</sup> Not everyone who calls out to me, “Lord! Lord!” will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. (Matthew 7-NLT)*

On the day of reckoning, so many will be shocked, surprised, and completely dumbfounded, because they lived in such a way that they will miss heaven.

The Western World can take insurance out to protect against any mishap, disaster, or storm. Almost anything. Do you want to know what some of the most surprising items are to ever be insured?

- (1) Twentieth Century Fox once insured Betty Grable's legs for a staggering \$1 million each. This was during the 1940s, and a million dollars was equivalent to about a billion dollars in today's money.
- (2) The American game show, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," is actually insured against the possibility of a contestant winning.
- (3) Around the nation, more than \$10 million dollars in alien abduction insurance has been written, with higher payouts available for people who are abducted frequently. Keep in mind: Proving that you were abducted will be necessary before you collect.
- (4) Keith Richards, the guitarist for the hit rock band The Rolling Stones, has his middle guitar finger insured for more than \$1.5 million dollars. Not the whole hand either — just a single finger.
- (5) Bruce Springsteen, well known for his unique vocal qualities, has his voice insured for an impressive amount. If something should happen to Bruce's voice, he stands to gain an impressive \$6 million.

I am sure, if an American could insure, and receive a guarantee, they could ensure their standing before God, after death...that insurance would be purchased by many.

But **you can** ensure against that day.

Jesus provides the example. For those who sometimes get a little shaky about your standing before God, as you stand before God, don't be anxious another minute. Don't wring out your hands, another time. Don't live in fear about that day. Live like Jesus...

Like Jesus, you too have decided, *I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. (John 14:31b-NIV)*

Is that you? I hope it is. This verse also provides a glimpse of the relationship a father has in parenting.

It is the bullseye of parenting. A son or daughter that loves dad and does exactly what dad have asked them to do. This is the illustration of Jesus pleasing his Father. Few joys in life bring as much satisfaction as knowing your child gets the family values.

For the next few minutes, let's build, or to say it this way, all together... We can build a case like a lawyer that Matthew 5-8 provides a blueprint for pleasing your Heavenly Father.

In these 3 chapters, you will find 16 references to God as your Heavenly Father. This really matters to God, and it should matter to you, that you build your life, on the truth that Mark Twain suggests...

... there are two important days in your life: the day you were born and the day you discover why you were born.

Beginning in Matthew 5 and ending in Matthew 8, 2 verses bookend each other. We read the first, then people will see your good deeds, and glorify your Father in heaven.

It is this next, verse that reminds, me there is a correct way to build a life and an incorrect way to build a life. If you are going to heaven, then you have to go it, God's way. Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his on the rock.

And the consequences of building your house(life) wrong, have devastating effects.

And here is the foundation, to build your one and only life on. God, your Heavenly Father, wants your life to make a difference for eternity.

And I know 4 qualities that exist in a person, who wants to make a difference for eternity. And each of these qualities comes right out of Matt 5-8. The Sermon on the Mount. In the first series of sermons that Jesus teaches on the Northern Shore of the Sea of Galilee, he makes sure that those first disciples get introduced to God as their Father.

Not just, the God of the OT, but the Heavenly Father, who Jesus will spend the next 3 years introducing. Only one time did the disciples ever ask Jesus to teach them something. Jesus, will you teach us how to pray....

This is the only request the disciples ever made from Jesus, about what to teach them. They did not ask to be taught how to heal. They did not ask how to cast out demons. They did not ask Jesus how to walk on water. Here it is, straight from Luke's writings,

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." <sup>2</sup> He said to them, "When you pray, say:*

*"Father,<sup>[a]</sup> hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.*

So, we have circled back around, let's look closely at making a lasting difference for eternity. In our lives and the lives of those around us. I love being around people who are committed to that.

These are people who are not interested in the status quo.

These are people who do not want to drift along into mediocrity.

These are people who do not just passively parrot the party line.

These are people who want their lives to count and make a difference that lasts. And I have feeling that is many of you, and I can tell you 4 things about yourself.

Even though we may not be that acquainted, each of these qualities are true of those who want to make a lasting difference. And each of these qualities is spelled out in the sermon on the mount, in Matt 5-8.

Difference Makers Possess These Four Qualities:

1. You are not interested in impressing people.

*Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. (Matthew 6:1-NIV)*

2. You don't live for the applause and accolades of people.

*<sup>5</sup> When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you that's the only reward they'll get. (Matthew 6-CEB)*

3. You don't live for the temporal; you live for the eternal.

*<sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> Which of you, by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? (Matthew 6-NKJV)*

4. You are not sidelined by struggles, hardships, and pain.

*<sup>9b</sup> Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name,  
<sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
(Matthew 6-NIV)*

Only one thing matters to you, that you please your heavenly Father, and that your life counts for eternity. Such a life never just happens, you are not born with these qualities.

In fact, ingrained in you is the complete opposite. It is all about you. Since you are not born like that, where do you pick up these qualities?

Here is the answer: God orchestrates circumstances to build that kind of character and you search God's word on a daily basis to allow yourself to be transformed into the image of Christ.

## Circumstances and Scripture

And each of these qualities (circumstances and Scripture), determine who you are, what you do and why you do it.

"Tis Grace that brought us safe thus far

And grace will lead me home. (John Newton -1779)

One of the most unique stories about Amazing Grace is told as a film documentary that takes place in Wembley Stadium, in London. (2) In recognition of the racial changes in South Africa, London held a music festival and filmed and filled the stadium with rock groups. The closing act was Opera singer, Jessye Norman. The documentary films back and forth between the rowdy concert goes and Jessye Norman telling the story of Amazing Grace ship captain John Newton.

The filming took place over twelve hours as groups like Guns and Roses blasted the crowd with ear splitting rock and roll, as the blasted crowd swayed and danced themselves into a religious frenzy. Backstage Jessye Norman sits in her dressing room being interviewed by Moyer about the meaning of Amazing Grace.

The hymn was written by ship captain John Newton. Newton was born in London July 24, 1725, the son of a commander of a merchant ship which sailed the Mediterranean. When John was eleven, he went to sea with his father and made six voyages with him before the elder Newton retired. In 1744 John was impressed into service on a man-of-war, the H. M. S. Harwich. Finding conditions on board intolerable, he deserted but was soon recaptured and publicly flogged and demoted from midshipman to common seaman.

Finally at his own request he was exchanged into service on a slave ship, which took him to the coast of Sierra Leone. He then became the servant of a slave trader and was brutally abused. Early in 1748 he was rescued by a sea captain who had known John's father. John Newton ultimately became captain of his own ship, one which plied the slave trade.

Although he had had some early religious instruction from his mother, who had died when he was a child, he had long since given up any religious convictions. However, on a homeward voyage, while he was attempting to steer the ship through a violent storm, he experienced what he was to refer to later as his "great deliverance." He recorded in his journal that when all seemed lost and the ship would surely sink, he exclaimed, "Lord, have mercy upon us." Later in his cabin he reflected on what he had said and began to believe that God had addressed him through the storm and that grace had begun to work for him.

Newton came to see the light only gradually as he continued to haul slaves even after his conversion. Years later he renounced his profession and became a minister of the Gospel. He joined William Wilberforce in the fight against slavery in the English parliament.

In the film Jessye Norman tells Bill Moyer that Newton may have borrowed an old tune sung by the slaves themselves, redeeming the song, just as they had been redeemed.

Finally, the time came for her to sing, "Amazing Grace." A single circle of light follows Norman, a majestic African American as she takes center stage wearing a flowing African dashiki. No backup band, no musical instruments, just Jessye. The crowd is restless. Almost no one recognizes Jessye Norman. A scream from the crowd declares more Guns and Roses.

Others start to chant. The concert venue turns ugly and out of control. Alone, acapella, Jessye Norman begins to sing, very slowly.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now I am found-  
Was blind but now I see!

Then an amazing experience in the stadium, 1000's of people start to listen. They fall deafly silent as an aroma of grace fills Wembley.

By the time Norman reaches the second verse, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved....," the soprano had the crowds mesmerized.

As she starts the 3rd verse, "Tis grace has brought me safe this far, And grace will lead me home," the stadium is filled with rock and roll concert attendees singing Amazing Grace. How many had to dig deep into a childhood past that included Sunday School and Amazing Grace? Words long forgotten but surfaced as grace appeared.

Jessye Norman finishes her interview by stating she had no idea of the power of grace that descended that night on Wembley.

*<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. (Eph 2:8-9-NIV)*