

Bob the Father

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

God's grace and peace especially to you, Bobbi, Bob, Sandy and Brian, and to your families, and to all of Bob's friends who are gathered here today to mourn his loss, remember his life, but also to celebrate his new life in heaven with Jesus.

TEXT

The text for today's message is the Gospel reading from St. John, the fifth chapter.

INTRODUCTION

In Jesus' name. Amen.

The importance of fathers. It seems to be one of those things our culture is losing sight of—the importance of fathers. Children need their moms, but they need their dads, too. Research shows that a loving, active father is a positive role model for his children. Children from homes with an actively involved father do better in school and demonstrate greater stability in life. It's from their fathers that girls learn what to look for in a potential husband. And it's from their fathers that boys learn how to be men. They learn from their fathers what men like and don't like, how men behave, and how to treat women—hopefully with honor and respect. All we have to do is look around to see what happens when children grow up without influence and discipline of loving and involved fathers.

If you still wonder about a father's influence on his boys, guys, just ask yourself this question: Did you grow up wanting to be exactly like your dad—or exactly the opposite of your dad?

Bob, Sandy and Brian, God ordained that husbands and fathers be the protectors and providers for their family. And from what I gather from listening to you and Bobbi—and from my own personal experience with your dad, your dad took quite seriously his role as husband and father, as protector and provider.

One of the most touching stories that you told me was how your dad, while working for the parts department of Werner Motor Company, would get up at 2 in the morning and get parts for farmers with broke down equipment. His boss said to charge them whatever he wanted for the 2 am parts run—and to keep that money for himself. You said that your dad usually charged \$20 for his time, plus the cost of the parts. Then he used the \$20 to help a boy scout go camping who otherwise couldn't afford the camping fee. And why \$20? That's how much the camping fee was. And of course, your dad did everything in secret—swearing the families that he helped to keep things confidential. He didn't take money from your family to do this—but the extra money he earned he used to help scouts go camping.

And not that long ago, I was visiting Bob and Bobbi at home when Bob's phone rang. It was you, Shannon. You were stranded somewhere down south in Atlanta (?) with a broke down car. And your grandpa didn't hesitate to whip out the credit card and so that you could get your car fixed and get back on the road—and get home safely.

But not only did Bob like being your dad and your grandpa. He liked being dad and grandpa to lots of kids, at least in a father-figure sort of way. We have men in this congregation who look

up to Bob as a father-figure, such are Ray Waters. Our own Anna Kammerlohr calls Bob, papabob.

And as far as being a protector and provider, Brian, one of the most important directives you received from your dad is to make certain that Bobbi is well cared for. And that reminds of another story I'd like to share. Do you know how Bob and Bobbi met? At Joe Hohimer's viewing at Staab Funeral home several years ago. What's interesting about that, is that Bobbi had told Joe that she wanted a little fat man and a red car. And Joe said he would arrange it—and he did—at his viewing! Thus the you got Bob and that little red car that Bob said didn't have enough power to go uphill in a windstorm!

Bob the father loved you, his family, he loved his grandchildren, And he loved being a father-figure and a grandfather-figure. And because of that, lots of people all over Springfield looked up to your dad. All fathers are called to be a reflection of God the Father in sacrifice, love and care for their families. Do you want to make the world a better place? Be a faithful, loving, active husband, father and grandfather.

But because of sin, no earthly father is perfect. All fathers fail to be that perfect reflection of love, care and protection that God the Father gives to all people. That's why there's another aspect of fatherhood that's important: a life of faith lived in Christ. In other words, a life lived under the cross of Jesus Christ where we find forgiveness and hope as sinners.

One of the things that Bob asked me two days before he died was if he had been a good witness of Christ. The day before that, he told me he was ready to be with Jesus. I don't think you could ask for a better witness than that! Leading your family to Jesus is the greatest gift a

father can give his children, because through faith in Jesus there is forgiveness of sins, life and salvation—and a real and true hope for eternal life and a grand family reunion in heaven.

The apostle Paul said that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God—God the Father—is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. And like any of us Bob needed the gift of forgiveness. When we fail to be the fathers or mothers, sons or daughters, husbands or wives, brothers or sisters that God expects us to be, we need a Savior who is faithful. Jesus is that perfect Son of God. He said in our text: “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” And one of the things that God ask His Son to do was to make the greatest sacrifice of all—to die in our place on the cross for our sins.

You see, as the Perfect Heavenly Father, God is just and righteous in His anger against sin. I’m sure there were times when your dad wasn’t right in his anger against you—perhaps that’s why, Brian and Sandy, that you wanted to run away to your aunt’s house two doors down! But God the Father is always righteous in His anger. But your heavenly Father is also merciful. And in His mercy, God put His righteous anger on Jesus on the cross, so that from Jesus’ death and resurrection, the penalty for sin is paid for, and you could have mercy and forgiveness.

And that’s what Bob wanted—God’s mercy and forgiveness in his last moments. When I communed Bob last Tuesday, after I said, “The body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you both in body and in soul unto life everlasting. Depart in peace,” Bob did this.... To me he was celebrating the gift of forgiveness and his victory over in and death in Christ Jesus.

That’s why I’m confident, that as God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, He will do the same for Bob! Because God the Father keeps His promises, promises sealed by His Son’s life,

death and resurrection. So when Jesus says, “²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life,” you can be certain these words are true for Bob and for all who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior—the Son of the living God! Indeed, Bob already knew eternal life when that Word was spoken with water at his Baptism, where He became part of God’s family. There in the font, Robert Nicholson passed from death to life as he was raised with Jesus to newness of life—a newness of life that moved him to love and serve his family, his church and his community, in response to the great love that God the Father showed him in Christ Jesus.

And because of God’s promise and gift of life and faith in Christ in baptism, your dad’s soul is resting with Jesus, just as he wanted last Tuesday when he told you all he was ready to be with Jesus—when he told you he’d been talking with Jesus all day, and when he told me he could see Jesus there in the room with him. But for now, we lay Bob’s body to rest in the grave, commending him to his heavenly Father’s care, and waiting for that hour when Jesus returns, and summons all the dead from their tombs, and takes His people home to their eternal rest.

In Jesus’ Name. Amen.