

Throughout my life I have been blessed with an amazing father. My dad, Dean Squires, has always been an incredible role model for me. He taught me the virtues of patience, hard work, compassion, and the value of each person. My dad was always actively involved in my life growing up. Although he worked full-time, he somehow always made it to my soccer and field hockey games. Also, my dad helped around the house and became affectionately known as “Mr. Clean.” Due to my dad’s passion for cleaning, I always had a clean car. I unfortunately did not inherit this clean gene.

Most of all my dad taught me how to be a Christian. He showed me how to love people, especially people who were different than me. He was active in church serving on various committees and ushering every week. He always harmonized to all the hymns and although he did not sing out loudly, he had a beautiful voice.

My father has always embodied his faith both in family life, his friend life and his work life. I named my son after him, because I wanted to continue his legacy of family and faith.

Today we are all thankful for the fathers in our lives, both biological and spiritual who invited us into their legacy of faith.

Today we celebrate our spiritual father Noah. Now this is a story we know. God told Noah to build an ark. So, Noah built an ark and put on it two of every animal and his family. When the flood waters came Noah and his family floated safely above the water for 40 days and 40 nights until they sighted land and were safe. Then through our Scripture today we see that God made a covenant with Noah and his family marking this significant moment with a rainbow, a sign of the covenant.

We read this Scripture a lot as children, but often we do not go deeper to see and understand the important legacy of faith left by Noah.

There are so many significant parts of Scripture that we often overlook. First, we have to commend Noah’s faith. The ark was not built quickly. Scholars believe it took Noah 20-40 years to finish the ark.ⁱ Think about the painstaking time it took to do this arduous task, especially without the technology that we have available to us today.

If you are interested, you can go to Northern Kentucky for the “Ark Encounter” where you can see a scale replica of Noah’s ark. The ark exhibit was finished in 2016 and is the largest timber frame in the world.ⁱⁱ

This just gives you a glimpse of how much work went into building this massive structure and Noah wasn't a spring chicken either, at that time he was over 500 years old.

He turned 600 when the flood came, then had to withstand 40 days of bad weather, talk about cabin fever. These 40 days are significant, because in these 40 days amazing transformation occurs.

We see that in the New Testament in Matthew 4, Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, a time where he wrestled with the devil and prevailed. During this time Jesus was preparing for his ministry.

During these 40 days Noah was preparing to continue to do the work of God. I am sure Noah had some doubts about what was happening. I mean how long was this flood going to last anyway?

So, what was the end result of the 40 days of the flood?

The world that had become immersed in sin, now had a second chance. We remember that in the fall of humankind that humans' relationship with God was broken and human beings' relationship with the land was broken as it was cursed and would not produce food.

After the flood, humanity got a second chance through Noah and his family. Through the covenant that God made with Noah and his family, sealed with a rainbow, humanity was now invited back into a relationship with God.

After the flood, the land which had only produced thorns and thistles for Adam began to produce food that would help the people not only survive, but thrive.ⁱⁱⁱ New life was springing forth everywhere.

Noah is certainly an important spiritual father, and although he was not perfect, he was faithful.

This has been a common theme for the spiritual fathers in the Bible and in my own life. I was blessed with amazing Sunday School teachers and youth pastors, these men of God who shared their wisdom about the Bible and important life lessons and were authentic as they shared that following Christ could be hard and required sacrifice.

As we celebrate our spiritual fathers today, within these walls we are surrounded by a legacy of faith. The faithful men who came before us who built these walls, who put up this steeple which represent a beacon of hope to the community.

The men who embodied their faith by the supporting the ministry that happened inside these walls with their gifts both monetary and embodied.

Just as we celebrated our spiritual mothers a couple of weeks ago with these same sentiments, today as we celebrate our spiritual fathers, we will take a deeper look into the Bible and be thankful for the faith of the fathers that came before us.

We also celebrate the fathers in the Bible who are sometimes overlooked. Today we are thankful for spiritual fathers like Mordecai.

The beautiful thing about the church is we are gifted with spiritual fathers, people who embody to us the love of God. Mordecai was one of these people. Although he was not a biological father by blood, he became a spiritual father to his cousin Esther and the Jews.

In the story in the book of Esther we see that Mordecai used his position of power and his familial relationship to Esther to save the Jews from the evil Haman. We see in this scripture that Mordecai goes through great suffering as he participates in God’s saving action in the people’s lives.

He spends time in sackcloth and ashes, and at one point thinks all hope is lost. Then he works in partnership with Esther who uses her power to save the Jews. All in all, it is this pair’s partnership with God’s help that saved the people.

The legacy left behind by our spiritual fathers is one of partnership. It is one where they uplifted the gifts within the church and worked together to make sure that the church would have a future.

We see many of these spiritual fathers in the Bible, and although they did not have children of their own, they equipped and empowered young people to lead on. We see this in the relationship of Eli and Samuel in the Old Testament. Samuel kept hearing God’s call, but he needed Eli to affirm what was happening. We also see this in the relationship of Elijah and Elisha that we talked about a couple of weeks ago. We see that Elijah equipped and empower Elisha to lead on in his absence.

Part of the job of a spiritual father is to affirm the gifts of others and to equip them to make disciples of Jesus Christ: this is why mentoring is so important. Perhaps you are sitting here today and have someone in mind who is in need of a spiritual father, maybe it is a family member, maybe it is a friend or co-worker, maybe it is someone who you know require a lot of your time and you are weary to take on this awesome responsibility, but this is exactly what God is calling us to do. To have a mentor and be a mentor.

Our greatest mentor is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father showed his love to us in the giving of his son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ had a beautiful relationship with God the Father. He obeyed God, even during his most difficult time before his crucifixion, he trusted in God’s plan for his life.

With Christ as our mentor we know that God continues to give us hope through our faith in Christ. We know that we will continue to be equipped to serve and do the work of God through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is also our mentor, the one who helps us discern, the one who leads us and guide us to do the will of God. So, know that we acknowledge our mentor as God, three persons in one, we take on the call to be a mentor.

Being a mentor can be scary. You are giving another person access to your life, your gifts and your flaws. You are modeling for them what embodied faith looks like. Being a mentor can be exhausting as it requires time and much sacrifice. Being a mentor is vital as we, with the help of God, continue to build up the kingdom of God.

The good news for our lives today is that we too have been invited into this legacy of faith through the power and presence of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We hear this call to unity in our Scripture today from John which celebrates the three-fold nature of the holy Trinity.

We are called to unity for such a time as this. Just as Noah and his family entered into a covenant with God, just as Esther and Mordecai worked together to save the lives of the Jews, and just as Jesus Christ invited us into this covenant with God, now more than ever we are called to be united in our faith.

We can only be united when we are rooted in our faith in God. Another one of our great spiritual fathers was the Apostle Paul. In Colossians 2:6-7 he gives us valuable wisdom when he says:

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

We remain rooted in our relationship with God when we take time to spend with God, when we study the Bible, when we spend time in prayer, when we participate in the ministry of the church.

As we go forth from this place today, may we remain rooted in the love of God. Today we give thanks for our spiritual fathers and continue to take up the charge to be part of this legacy of faith. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Endnotes

ⁱ <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-timeline/how-long-did-it-take-for-noah-to-build-the-ark/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXlsOS23 II>

ⁱⁱⁱ Sakenfield et al. The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible. Vol. 4. Abingdon Press. Nashville, TN. 2009. P. 278