



**Message Brief**  
**Sunday, June 21, 2020**

**By R. Keith Howard**

Selections based on Psalm 86:1-10 – The Prayer of David

Happy Father's Day!

Today we celebrate Fathers. It does not matter if it was your biological father or stepfather or grandfather that you consider to be your father. Perhaps the father-figure in your life was an uncle, coach, or teacher. We acknowledge that for some people, the person who was your father was not a genuinely nice person and that perhaps the celebration of Father's Day is painful for you – and that is okay. Your "father" in whatever form, is someone who cares about you, cares about the person you will become, and is there for you when you need him.

We know that Father's Day is different this year. We might not be able to visit our father because he is in a nursing home that is not permitting visitors. Dad may be in a high-risk group and does not want visitors. For some, it is the first Father's Day without Dad while for others, this is their first Father's Day as a Dad. Whatever the case, we can celebrate God the Father.

Here is the Prayer of David revised for what we might say to our own father.

"Dad, do you have a second? I'm going through a rough time. Can you help me? — haven't I been a good kid?? Help me Dad—I'm depending on you! You're my Dad; please help me. I count on you from morning to night. Give me a happy life; I really trust you Dad! You're well-known as good and forgiving, bighearted to all who ask for help. Pay attention, DAD, listen to me; bend down and listen to my cry for help. Every time I'm in trouble I call on you, confident that you'll answer. There's no one quite like you Dad, you are not like those other Dads, and nothing compares to what you do or how you do it. The entire family feels this way, ready to put your thoughtfulness, kindness, laughter, and care on display, shouting your greatness, and the great things you do— Dad, you're the one, there's no one but you!"

Whether it is sitting on the beach listening to the ocean roar or listening to the waves come in on Lake Michigan, I can hear God. If we sit and listen, we can truly hear God everywhere. It does not have to be the sounds of nature in which we hear God either. The

protests of the last few weeks is God speaking as well. While we might disagree with what we think He is trying to tell us, what we are hearing is that people are in pain and that people are not always treated the same way in society. While that focus has been on Black Lives, people whose ancestors were forcibly brought here to work as slaves and treated as less than human, we hear those cries for help for others as well, whether it is the LGBTQ community, those without insurance, or those without homes or jobs, but especially good jobs that provide a living wage. If we listen, we can hear God calling out to us to help our brothers and sisters. We must work together to make necessary change. It is a disgrace with all the wealth and technology in our country that food banks are vital for so many American families. It is a disgrace that children and adults do not have access to affordable housing and medical insurance. Isn't that what mothers and fathers the world over want is to raise their children in safe neighborhoods, with plenty of healthy food, a solid roof over their heads, and decent clothes? We are all human and all with faults and frailties. I surely know that I am. But I am also a firm believer that Heaven is here on earth. It is how we treat one another. It is what we do here on earth with our time that matters. We need to stop the divisiveness. We need to learn to work together for a common good. We need to remember what Mom said that if we do not have anything nice to say, don't say anything. We just need to be better.

No matter who you consider to be your father. No matter if your father is still with us or not. Today, we remember and honor the person who was the father figure in your life. For new or relatively new fathers, you have a lifetime of fun, adventure, frustration, anticipation, sometimes disappointment or sometimes despair, but it will be completely worth it. I am both a son and a father. I am so thankful for my Dad and the lessons he taught me. I am so thankful that I was given the opportunity to be a Dad and to be a role model for my son and his friends. And I am thankful for all the others who played the role of father in my life.

As you celebrate Father's Day today, remember to thank God the Father as well. Look for him in the rustling grass, the ocean roar, or the sweet sweet spirit in your place. Amen.

Keith