



MEN'S DAY

LECTIONARY COMMENTARY

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Lection – 1 Chronicles 28: 6-10, 19-20 (New Revised Standard Version)

(v. 6) He said to me, “It is your son Solomon who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be a son to me, and I will be a father to him. (v. 7) I will establish his kingdom for ever if he continues resolute in keeping my commandments and my ordinances, as he is today.” (v. 8) Now therefore in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God, observe and search out all the commandments of the Lord your God; that you may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you forever. (v. 9) “And you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with single mind and willing heart; for the Lord searches every mind, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will abandon you forever. (v. 10) Take heed now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house as the sanctuary; be strong, and act.”

(v. 19) “All this, in writing at the Lord’s direction, he made clear to me—the plan of all the works.” (v. 20) David said further to his son Solomon, “Be strong and of good courage, and act. Do not be afraid or dismayed; for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished.”

I. Description of the Liturgical Moment

Historically, the church has used “special days” to highlight and emphasize and encourage particular components of its constituency. These “special days” are intended also to extol and highlight particular aspects of the black family. The most well-known days of such celebrations are Women’s Day, Youth Sunday (sometimes referred to as Children’s Day) and Men’s Day.¹

We can never do enough to address the condition and circumstance of black men in our culture. There are too many studies that assert the problems and challenges of black men and black fatherhood. For the most part, we are inundated with statistics and studies that are partly designed to make us believe the worst about our own men. But, there are men who know that the challenges before us to live godly lives of unconditional love for our families and communities must be met with equal resolve to be “mighty men of valor.” A proud young father having breakfast with his four young sons once said to me, “In order to be a man, they have to see a man.”

II. Biblical Interpretation for Preaching and Worship: 1 Chronicles 28: 6-10, 19-20

Part One: The Contemporary Context of the Interpreter

As men, far too often, we are defeated by a spirit of competition and machismo which undergirds “man” and “maleness” in our culture. It is most tragically realized when fathers and sons compete for prominence with each other. I have a son who, at birth, was given the name of royalty, David. I refused to give him my name, Gary, because I did not want him to have to live up to or live down the reputation I may leave. He is every bit of me, yet he is distinct from me.

I am also blessed, to have had a significant relationship with my late father; although we were not buddies, we were friends. He understood intimately that his life was the foundation on which we all stood. I remember him saying, “If you only measure up to where I have come, you have not done anything, because you have my shoulders to stand on.” What a wonderful challenge. At the same time what a wonderful relief. Out of this context of strength and pride, my life and ministry have been shaped. My father left me a great legacy.

Part Two: Biblical Commentary

From the outset, we cannot miss the power of the setting of this text. God is speaking both to David and Solomon. Whereas the context is distinctively “male,” it is also intentionally intergenerational. How often do we get the opportunity for fathers and sons to be in conversation with God together? The text sheds light on the benefits that can happen when fathers bring their sons into relationship with God; this is how men can begin to find their real strength. What a great legacy for every man to leave his children.

Verse 9 says, “*And you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with single mind and willing heart; for the Lord searches every mind, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will abandon you forever.*” This verse suggests that the relationship between fathers and their children is fragile and, often, we are reminded of this through the brokenness that far too many in our churches face. This text can serve as a guide for how to live in relationship with God, never forsaking our families or God.

As a faithful servant to God, David is promised “good land that may be left as an inheritance.” God’s promise to David was just as much a promise from David to God. For these blessings, of which fatherhood is included, God will give favor to David and Solomon. Notice Solomon’s duties as son are not without their own qualifiers. *Be strong and of good courage, and act. Do not be afraid or dismayed; for the Lord God is with you* (v. 20). For God, it is not enough to simply be a son and, therefore, be the inheritor of wealth or a good legacy. David remarks that Solomon must also be strong and courageous, not afraid of anything. How often do we fear those events and acts that make us men? Not the acts of aggression or sexual prowess, but the important activities such as mentoring a child so that they learn early that violence is a dead-end or that our heritage must be revered and preserved. These are the types of issues that God is concerned with...for David and Solomon, and for us.

Also in verse 20, David admonishes Solomon to be strong, courageous and take action in the name of God. “He will not fail you or forsake you.” This is an irreplaceable life lesson about the faithfulness of God. It is good news when heard in words. It is great news and fulfilled legacy when seen in a life lived and passed from fathers to sons.

What is the best inheritance that a man can leave to his child or to his community anyway? Do we really think that God was concerned with material wealth for Solomon or David? Even if David thought that himself, God surely did not think material wealth was the legacy of Israel. God is in conversation with David and Solomon, because the people of Israel and the legacy of Israel need to continue. The legacy includes bondage, a wilderness sojourn and, ultimately, freedom. It is a legacy of strength against odds, and power in struggle. This is the “inheritance” with which God is concerned. God cares that we, as men, teach our children of our rich heritage and the beauty of our legacy. Ultimately, the legacy we must teach is that, just as Israel’s legacy is bound by God, our legacy is inextricably linked to God. Through all the struggle and strife faced by Israel, God is there. In all the pain and overcoming that our people historically faced, God was present. God is still present; God is still a way-maker. This text is a grand reminder that men have a special role to play in letting their children and communities know that our legacy is still bound to God.

Because the Christian faith is highly relational and communal, the practices of the faith are passed on. In our text, David sets the example of communicating earnestly with God, creating a life of holy dialogue with God, speaking to and listening for the voice of God. This relationship David creates lasts through generations, with each generation building on the relationship between their predecessor and God. Ultimately, this relationship depicted in 1 Chronicle 28 allows for God to bring about the New Law in Jesus Christ. Had it not been for the blueprint left by Solomon and David and God, Jesus would never have had a strong role model in Joseph who, with Mary, helped to transform Jesus into the Savior of the world. Though David and Solomon were mere men, they were part of God’s plan, and that knowledge of our own place in God’s plan must never be forgotten.

Celebration

Modernly we have “Take a Child to Work” days in order to give our children insight and inspiration into the careers we pursue. Men’s Day can be a day to inspire our sons into the faith and to celebrate the joys they bring to the life of the Church. We commend, celebrate and thank God for all of the men who have and who daily live in a manner that provides a rich legacy for their families, their communities and the world.

Descriptive Details

The descriptive details in this text include:

Sights: Solomon’s facial expression when receiving advice (v. 19); all the work for the service of the house of the Lord (v. 20). The temple Solomon built was an amazing edifice that required the contributions of countless skilled laborers. Imagine the builders’ sweat and tears carrying heavy, stone materials to the jobsite. Picture the imaginative concentration of the artisans and sculptors that contributed to building; and

Sounds: David’s voice (v. 19). I suspect David’s tone of voice to have been filled with seriousness and concentrated intensity.

III. Additional Material for the Sermonic Moment

- This passage is sobering in that David has to come to grips with the reality that he will not get the chance fulfill all his personal dreams and ambitions. No father will. But David rejoices in knowing that his son will be able to accomplish some things that he will not do himself.
- If at all possible, encourage fathers and sons to sit together during your Men’s Day services. Where natural fathers are absent, give young boys an opportunity to sit with spiritual surrogates and celebrate the significance of Men for the life of the Church and for teaching so many about our relationship to God.
- If the insight of our text today is that our sons, as a part of our spiritual legacy, will lead their own unique lives before God as we have led them, and if my son is not to be merely the replication of my life or the living out of my unfulfilled dreams, what can I do as a father to encourage him? Here are some helpful suggestions.²

1. Show love and respect for his mother and other women in his life.

Inevitably our sons will be what they have seen in us. Much of the cultural disrespect and disregard for our women would be greatly diminished if our sons see us interacting positively with love for their mothers.

2. Create some family rituals.

Our family covets the opportunities we have to sit down together at a meal.

We have a responsibility to pass on a godly legacy to our sons. Video games and sports activities are fine in moderation. But, let them see you read a book. Let them see you deal with hurt and frustration in healthy ways. Let them watch you manage money well.

3. Pay attention to your Health.

Again the statistics are alarming concerning the life expectancy of black men. You owe it to your sons to be responsible about your own health. Eat right! Exercise! Your son deserves to see that you understand that your body is a temple.

Your approach to sexuality is a part of your understanding of health. It is not solely the mother's responsibility to educate sons about sexuality. Men must teach boys that women are not receptacles for their organ and fluids. Sons need to know of the dangers of uninformed sexual activity, empty relationships, and the roulette of multiple sexual partners. Teach him that his manhood is not determined by how many women he has had, but by the genuine value and respect he shows to the women he encounters. He should also know that sexual preparedness is not the sole responsibility of the woman.

Notes

1. It should be noted also that before many churches moved to systematic programs of tithing, these special days were also used as a means of fund raising. In many churches, this is still the case.
2. Powell, Kevin, Ed. The Black Male Handbook. New York, NY: Atria Press, 2008.