

Reading: from UU minister Elizabeth Tarbox

...a day set aside to recognize and praise all fathers. It is easy ...to thank our perfect father, the one who was unfailingly wise and kind, who worked hard all day and still had time to play baseball or take us out for ice cream in the evening. We are eager to thank the father who showed us by example what responsible citizenship is, who laughed and cried with us as he read us our bedtime story, who shared his problems with us and trusted us with his feelings, who set us firmly on the road to adulthood and knew just when to hug us close and when to let us go.

But we have a harder time knowing what to say to our imperfect father-- the one who struggled and fell short or didn't seem to care at all. There are no cards to tell the father who treated us unkindly that the wound is still open. We are hardly granted permission on Father's Day, or at any other time, to tell our father that we really wanted to love him but he wouldn't let us get that close, or that we really wanted his love but he hurt us instead.

...Today, [may we be] granted a measure of peace with our memories and our feelings. If there can be reconciliation with our imperfect father, honesty, forgiveness and healing, then let it be so; but if that is not possible, then at least let us find peace with ourselves. Let part of our maturity be the acceptance of the reality that father-son and father-daughter relationship can be destructive, and that is not our fault. If our father was or is a source of discomfort for us, then let us know that that is a truth which may not be changed. We cannot change our father; we can only change ourselves, and then only after we have understood the truth and grieved over our hurts.

So, today let us bless our fathers--all of them. Lead us to a true appreciation of their qualities and a recognition of their frailties. Let us stop expecting more than our fathers can give and start giving what we can to them. And let us remember that we can learn how to parent from all the examples shown to us, the good and the bad.

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**For millennia, cultures** around the world have propagated a myth.

The new religions come and call the old ones savages, but they are actually selling the same archetypes, dressed in slightly different clothes.

**We are sun worshippers,** plain and simple.

Perhaps there was a time, before we began to plant, when the sun was not so important, when the cycles of the moon determined how dark was the night, and many were the things that would frighten us.

But since we begin tilling soil and planting seed, the seasons of the Heavenly Father have held primacy in our minds.

At the time of the solstice, we see God in all his glory. And the archetype of the Father follows the sun. He is a hero. He comes to divide light from dark, good from evil, and to show us the way.

Sure, sometimes he's far removed, sometimes he's a little colder than we wanted. But he's the only hero we have.

**And maybe, in our minds, there is an idealized Father.** One who we hold all images of fatherhood up to for comparison.

Like it said in the bible "Be ye therefore Perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect"

And I don't think this is a bad idea, necessarily - we need ideals to look to when determining how we will act, what we will support, what we can condone.

In this gathering, there are certainly some who have known fathers that gave them shining examples of what to do, and others who have known fathers that have shown them definitively what *not* to condone.

[Show of hands]

**We're all grown ups here ("but I don't mean that in a bad way!").** and It can be hard to have a real, grown up relationship with our Fathers when we've got this image in our minds of how they are *supposed* to be. **And maybe this is something of what has always rubbed me the wrong way about our modern "Hallmark" holidays like Father's Day.**

Father's day started with a church service. [Slide]

**In the ancient days, we would worship the [slide: Stonehenge] sun in all his splendor, like a golden king sending down blessings.**

And for we in the clerical profession, that makes our job easier - because we can always resort to talking about high, abstract spiritual principles - or sending the young people out to the fields for some fertility rite!

But when we have to talk about dear old dad, it makes our jobs a lot different. We come to a group who have gathered to celebrate something deep and meaningful that we all share, but must work with a thousand different images of the Father.

One has the father who taught them to throw, catch, and ride a bike. Another has the father of uncaring discipline. Others have fathers who it is nearly impossible to forgive.

And when we are focused on these diverse Fathers, what one thing are we to take as our spiritual food?

**And so, I propose to you this. that the “spiritual realm” of ideas, and the physical world in which we walk are *different* realms.**

This may seem obvious, but how long have we compared our fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters to an ideal that they *could not* live up to.

Someone once taught me that you could know you were finally becoming a grown-up because you started to realize that your parents were not omniscient beings who were *choosing* to make bad, or even good decisions all your life, but were merely human beings - doing the best that they could.

they are not far-removed, spiritual beings, without needs of their own. They have just as many longings and stories as each of us do.

From this perspective, perhaps we can finally *get real* with our fathers. And that’s a pretty manly thing to do, i think. A lot of Dads don’t seem to need flowers and brunch (or am I just hypnotized by the cultural trance?). I don’t know that many men remember cards sent for very long (my step-father and grandfather didn’t seem to). But they do seem to appreciate getting real.

So let's start now - taking our heads down from out of the clouds and starting to understand who the people are in front of us.

Meditate with me - first on the places where dad didn't meet your needs. Inhale into the beauty of your *having* that need, and as you exhale - let go of continuing expectations - let go of the tension of trying to reconcile a *human being* with an *unreachable archetype*. Inhale into the strength you now possess, and as you exhale, let go of striving to make the past different in the present.

Now think of the needs that *were* met - maybe by a father, or maybe someone else. Again, inhale into the beauty of that longing. And as you exhale, begin to hold your joy for them lightly. Inhale and feel how you were filled up, and as you exhale, imagine that your gratitude can flow to them.

**A teacher I used to like to read spoke about reaching a state where you could see reality as *magical, numinous, filled with wonder and mystery*. And what is it that puts you in touch with such a mystic reality? It is letting go of our**

expectations, suppositions, and perhaps accusations - about how reality *should be*.

Gosh, that's the only overarching *spiritual* principle I could come up with for this Father's Day, but I think it's a good one. Because if we do it, we don't have to worry about whether *this* is the year where we're supposed to finally forgive, or whether *this* is the year where we should finally make a boundary. Or if *this year* we can find a way to express our gratitude enough this year to Dad.

Dads are wonderful, they are weird, they screw up royally *all the time*. And in that, they are just like everyone else.

I think that the real message in becoming a grown up and finding out your parents are just humans is that when we stop wrestling with where we wonder how much was our fault, or why in the world things weren't how they were *supposed to be* we can settle down into the ground of *this is how it is*.

And though it maybe sounds boring, there's magick there. Because if we do need to draw a boundary, or learn to forgive - we can do it better if we've settled in to reality - as it is - plain and



simple. And if we want to give our love, respect, and gratitude, we can do it better - not by letting our Fathers know how well they matched some external ideal, but how meaningful it was that they are *themselves*.

A magickal thing can happen then. You can start to let them off the hook.

And like Jesus said (paraphrased) when you let other's off the hook, you can let yourself off the hook too.

Jesus is often also quoted as asking us to "Be therefore perfect, even as our Father in heaven"

Now, this starts to sound like the myth of the perfect being again, doesn't it?

but really, the aramaic sounds more like

"Be fulfilled in all of your selves, know them until they cease to know themselves, grow with them until they outgrow themselves in a reborn "I am." The Knowing, Growing, Parenting of the cosmos completes itself through you."

What perhaps this means is that we can be **whole**. When we come down to earth - when we drop our assumptions

and comparing, and requiring, and our conditions on when happiness is allowed to arrive, we can finally be **healed**.

It's not that we were not destined to be perfect, it's that **you can *only* get there from here**. And the more we rope others into roles in our myth-making play, the less we can touch down to reality, here and now.

What if everything about your father was somehow "perfect"? Even the gnarly stuff? What if it was perfect just because it brought you *here* today? What if even your own unmet needs were perfect, and the met ones too - because they are what's real for you?

For a long time, when I was a theist, I wondered, how could a god who is perfect create such a messed up place. I still haven't figured that out, but the closest I've come is this - when we are able to let go of our myths of what perfection was supposed to be like, our hearts become compassionate and easeful. When we start to see the world as perfect, that is the very moment that we can start to *create* the world as perfect - because our hearts will be abiding in an authentic place of love.

**That compassionate and easeful heart is one that shines like the sun.** When we've learned to forgive and

appreciate - not from a contrived place, like clothes we'd put on, but from a depth of inner quiet - then we can begin to approximate this mythic god of the sky. And like the sun, the energy and light available to us is infinite.

Thank you fathers for doing your best for us. We know it's hard for you sometimes, and sometimes it's rewarding, we appreciate all you've done and continue to do!