

Earlier in the service three children had shared 50 words beginning 'My Dad....' Several people share a sentence beginning My Dad...

My Dad.... As some know I've thought a lot about my Dad this year; we marked the 50th anniversary of his death by going to Collingwood. One of the fortunate experiences Trudy and I have had in our journey is that I knew Trudy's mother and she knew my Dad even though both died well before we got married.

Part of my thinking has been remembering the good times, the laughter, and the sport, my Dad's integrity, his interest in serving Jesus, the positive and the shared experiences. Oh yes there was other stuff – like being sent home to Mum when I misbehaved at school, a fate worse than execution.

For some reason I was singing to myself this week, 'My Dad, now here is a man....' - probably because Fathers' Day was coming.

My Dad, those two words bring to the surface such a range of emotions.

For some it's such a warm expression (we've had expressions of this today), my Dad can do this; my Dad loves me; my Dad encourages me; my Dad fixed my bike; my Dad took me fishing; my Dad coached me; what my Dad doesn't know isn't worth knowing, my Dad cooks our meals; my Dad does the vacuuming and dusting; my Dad washes the clothes and folds them up, my Dad treats Mum like a queen etc. etc.

For some it's such a cold expression – my Dad left us, my Dad was too busy working; my Dad used to hit my mother; my Dad couldn't care what I did; I last saw my father when I was 4 – as someone told me this week; my Dad was my father in name only and far, far worse....

Well I'd like to set all that aside for a few minutes today and think about Jesus' heavenly 'Dad'

Jesus spoke about his Father in close terms

In John 17 Jesus speaks with his father in terms that are close-up and personal. In Mark 15 he says, '**Abba**, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.'

Great debate rages around how we translate '**abba**'. People write books or articles about this.

Joachim Jeremias, the famous German theologian, *explained* in his *New Testament Theology* that **abba** was 'the chatter of a small child. It was a child's word, used in everyday talk' and it was unthinkable that Jesus would address God his father with this familiar word.'

Someone else wrote that in the Aramaic language of the time of Jesus, there was absolutely no word [other than Abba] available if Jesus wished to speak of or address God as father. So rather than necessarily being childlike, it was the only option Jesus had.

Further reading helped me discover that the best translation of abba is not Daddy but Father or My Father. So Jesus wasn't being childlike when he used the word abba.

It's usually easier to think of God as My Father if we have good experiences and memories to build on - as I've said this isn't true for everyone.

So if Jesus had this unique relationship with his Father what did God think of Jesus. I'd now like to turn this discussion on its head and look at it from Father God's point of view; what did he think of his son?

From NIV - UK

Matthew 3:16-17 As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'	Mark 9:7 Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'
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Twice God the Father expresses 'This is my Son whom I love'

And that's God's assessment of his son. Much loved. You see Jesus' response in statements like:

27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one.'

I and the father are one. That's pretty cool. I'd like to do a Rick Warren and look at another translation of the passages we've seen.

From the Message

Matthew 3:16-17 The moment Jesus came up out of the baptismal waters, the skies opened up and he saw God's Spirit—it looked like a dove—descending and landing on him. And along with the Spirit, a voice: 'This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life.'	Mark 9:7 Just then a light-radiant cloud enveloped them, and from deep in the cloud, a voice: 'This is my Son, marked by my love. Listen to him.'
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Chosen and marked by my love; marked by my love

This is how God saw Jesus

But wait there's more – delight of my life; listen to him
God's estimate of Jesus is that he was loved, he was unique and he was special to God because God was pleased with him.

So what does God think of you?

'See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!' 1 John 3:1

How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son. Ephesians 1:3-5 (Message)

I had an interesting experience recently – in the space of a couple of hours I spoke to someone who doesn't believe the God who loves like this exists, reason - there's too much cruelty in the world – and to be fair to them, they've experienced much suffering over many years. And then to go from there to speak with someone who senses they are both sustained and loved by God was an amazing contrast.

We live in a world where it seems fewer and fewer sense they are loved, sense that God is, sense that God is for them.

Yet we have been made these extravagant claims that God loves you and me; that we are special to him, that God delights in us as he does in his own son Jesus.

What I've wanted to do today is for you:

To consider the Dad in your life - and if it was a positive experience for you to be grateful for that; and if 'Dad' fills you with negativity, that you will seek someone to walk with you through that pain and seek healing in your spirit.

To know that God's assessment of his Son Jesus marks him as being unique – and able to be the one who saves us for life.

To know that God's assessment of you is profound and deep:

You are God's sons and daughters

You are loved

You are special to him

And above all God is your Father!