



Date: June 19, 2016

Title: "Man-Made"

Scripture: Luke 11: 6-13

Description: Boys are born; men are made. Most men have a father-hunger remaining inside them. What do we do with that hunger? Men are made, not through sermons or books but through relationships and example.

Sitting on the deck of the mountain home near Blue Ridge, we men began to talk about our fathers. Most of us had good memories of our dads; some of were blessed to still have good relationships with their dads. Still, with only one exception, each of us described our father with the words, "I knew my dad loved me, *but...*" "But he wasn't able to show me," or "but he didn't spend much time with me or "but he didn't tell me he loved me until he was an old man." Then each speaker finished with identical words, "but that's okay."

Most men grow up with a father hunger inside them. Few of us acknowledge that hunger. Most of us remember fathers who worked regularly, put food on the table, and paid for our education. They taught us how to operate a jigsaw or how to drive a car; they shared opinions on how to vote and who served the best barbeque. They passed on money, opinions, and skills, but they didn't pass on who they were, what it feels like to be a man.

"My dad did okay. He did the best he could." Yes. And today we pause to honor our fathers. But I want us to do better. No child wants an "okay" dad. So many men—grown men with children of their own—so many men have a hunger that remains inside them, a hunger for what they didn't receive about being a man. The most common words people use to describe their relationships with their fathers are "absence," "sadness" and "I don't know him." Many have a profound, usually unspoken longing for affirmation and blessing and limits from male authority figures.

We often know what makes fathers angry, but not the deep desires and dreams of their hearts, much less their loneliness and hurt. Dad is an un-nameable mystery, which calls forth fear, doubt and sometimes endless rebellion.

Dad taught us so many things: how to bait a fish hook, how to respect our mother, how to stand up to a playground bully. The one thing we longed to know, however, remained a mystery: how it feels to be a man. What is inside a man that steadies him, gives him courage, guides him in appropriately using power and strength? If fathers could pass on their values, their excitement, their grief, their touch and their own struggles to become real men to their sons and daughters, I believe that we would have a very different world. There would be less mistrust and anger toward power and maleness. There would be much less need for war and competition, much less random and senseless violence, much less making demons of the unknown enemy.

I want to talk about this to give some men the courage to be true fathers and mentors, to start walking the inner and outer journeys so they have something to pass on to the next generation of the sons and daughters of God. The young need the wisdom and the blessing of their fathers who are truly fathers for them. To offer that, we ourselves need to grow, because we cannot pass on what we don't have. We cannot lead someone on a spiritual journey we have not walked.

Chris Bruno, a counselor in Colorado, says, "If I have any hope of ushering my son into his manhood, I must believe that God will also continue to usher me into my manhood. The more I can engage my own story, my own journey, and my own masculine heart, the more I can provide my son the freedom to discover his."

Boys are born; men are made. . . Being a father is like shaving: no matter how well you did it today, you have to do it again tomorrow. It is far easier for a man to have a child than for a child to have a father. Manhood is gained through relationship and experience. It isn't learned through books. It isn't taught on-line.

Remember how Jesus shaped the lives of his disciples? We can read all the words of Jesus in a few short hours. But Jesus spent three long years shaping the lives of the men who followed him. What he gave them was not so much his words but his time, his energy, his presence. "Where do you live?" was the initial question of his first two disciples. (John 1:39) "Come and see", he replied, "so they went and saw where he lived and stayed with him the rest of that day." They knew how life was passed, and it was not through sermons and books, but through relationships and presence. To discover manhood, we need to know a man. We need to be mentored.

We don't always get that from our biological fathers, but we can receive it elsewhere. It happens all the time. Have you noticed how many men hold an intense loyalty and love towards a good boss, coach, or teacher? The biological father hardly

ever can be the only who has that role in the life of his son. There is too much tension in the relationship.

His name was Bill. He was my high school youth leader. During my senior year, Bill would pick me up at school on the afternoon before a basketball game. He realized how difficult those pre-game hours were as I dealt with butterflies and game-day jitters. We'd drive to the Krystal (the ideal pre-game meal, right?), order a coke and fries, and he would lead me in a Bible study.

Sitting in his car, we'd read a passage from scripture. Bill would ask, "This is more than Paul urging his friend Philemon to free one of his slaves who had become a brother in Christ. It's about something deeper than that. Can you see what that is, Fry?" We'd sit there in silence, often for two minutes at a stretch. I had never put so much effort in simply thinking. But Bill would patiently wait, refusing to spoon-feed me an answer. Suddenly, "Oh, I see..."

Bill taught me so much more than the Bible. He trusted my ability to think for myself, and slowly I began to trust that ability myself. He allowed me to live with unanswered questions and not settle for easy clichés. When he was with me, he was in no hurry. Then he would drop me off at the gym with the instructions, "Score twenty tonight," with confidence that I would.

Bill moved away the next year, but he was followed by a man named Roy, who showed me how to respect authority and use authority without resorting to unbending rules and intimidation. Then Jim, who was the first to respect me, not as someone with potential but as a grown man. Then Doug, who challenged me so fiercely for two years, then set aside that role so that we could become life-long friends.

Boys are born, men are made. Men are made through relationships. We get the fathering we need from someone other than our physical father. Men of Pleasant Hill Church, on this Father's Day, I urge you to grow aware of your own father hunger, then to offer your guiding friendship to the children of this church. Our sons need to know what it is to be a man; our daughters need to recognize a real man when they meet one.

In Luke's story of the man with the withered hand there are three kinds of men. The man with the withered hand is typical of what so many men deal with today. Did you notice it was his *right* hand that was withered? Sorry, lefties, but the right hand is a symbol of power, of getting things done, making things happen. With men, power is a huge issue. Power isn't always about domination and greed and control. Power can be for good, for life, for creativity. How power is good, how power is contained, how it is

shared and used for others, what's the difference between moral power and selfish power—these are important for people and central to men.

This man with a withered hand represents those who are unable to use their power. He doesn't make life happen, he waits for life to happen, then maybe reacts. Sometimes he is such a stranger to his power that he reacts in explosive, violent ways.

The Scribes and Pharisees represent another kind of man today. They have transformed power into rules and authority. They need someone to tell them what to do, or they need to tell others exactly what to do. All they can do is quote clichés, obey legalities, and enforce the rules. And they use religion to do this. The best way to be a hateful person and not feel an ounce of guilt about it is to be hateful for God.

Finally we see the man, Jesus. He was a man who confidently used his power to heal others. That confidence came from within him. He isn't threatened by those around him; he doesn't demand recognition and applause; he simply acts out who he is and what he can do and accepts their silent fury. Men and women with masculine energy are willing to do what they know they have to do regardless of the price, and without having to be assured from the outside that it's okay. They know that they have life for others and are confident of it.

Where does Jesus get that ability to be a true man? Look what he did immediately after this encounter.

Luke 6:12-13. ¹²Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles..."

He finds it, first of all, in communion with God. He does his maintenance work on his own soul. Then he also makes it happen by forming a community of men around him. Because the only way men are made is through relationship.

Go thou and do likewise.