

Father's Day Sunday, June 21st, 2026 –BELOVED AND WELL PLEASED– Pastor John Henry Raskin

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”— Matthew 3:17

1. Identity Before Activity

- Jesus had not yet begun His public ministry when the Father declared His pleasure.
- God's affirmation came before the work.
- Truth: We are loved by God first—not because of what we do, but because of who we are in Him.

Takeaway:

Stop striving to earn God's love; begin living from it.

2. Beloved: Rooted in God's Love

- “Beloved” means deeply cherished, chosen, and accepted.
- Through Christ, this identity is extended to us (Romans 5:8).
- God's love is:
 - Unconditional
 - Unchanging
 - Personal

Takeaway:

Your worth is defined by God, not by your success, failure, or others' opinions.

3. Well Pleasing: A Life of Response

- We don't live to earn approval—we live in response to it.
- Pleasing God flows from relationship, not obligation.
- A pleasing life includes:
 - Faith and trust in God
 - Obedience shaped by love
 - Humility and surrender

Takeaway:

Obedience is not pressure—it is an expression of love.

4. The Tension We Feel

- We often swing between:
 - Trying to earn God's approval, OR
 - Ignoring how God calls us to live.
- The gospel holds both:
 - Secure identity → “Beloved”
 - Purposeful living → “Well pleased”

Takeaway:

Rest in God's love while growing in faithful obedience.

5. Living as God's Beloved

- Daily remind yourself of your identity in Christ.
- Reject lies of unworthiness and performance-based acceptance.
- Walk in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).
- Seek to honor God in:
 - Your Relationships
 - Your Words
 - Your Decisions
 - Your Character

Questions for Reflection

- Do I truly believe I am loved by God apart from my performance?
- Where am I striving for approval instead of resting in God's grace?
- What step of obedience is God inviting me into this week?

Our identity is not earned through performance but received through God's love. In Christ, we are called beloved and live to please God—not to gain approval, but because we already have it.

BELOVED AND WELL PLEASED

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every year on Father's Day we celebrate earthly fathers and rightly so. Fatherhood is a gift from God.

So, whether you are a biological father, a stepdad or a spiritual mentor, we celebrate you today.

But this morning I want to take us somewhere deeper than Hallmark cards can reach.

I want to take us to the Jordan River, to a moment so simple and so glorious that if you understand it, it will change the way you parent, the way you relate to your own father, and the way you follow Jesus.

Matthew 3:16–17 (NKJV)

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

No crowds had applauded Jesus yet.

No sermons had been preached

No miracles had been performed.

No disciples had yet been called.

Jesus had not yet healed one blind man, raised one dead child, or turned one jar of water into wine.

He was thirty years old, largely unknown, a carpenter's son from a backwater town.

And yet the Father in Heaven tears open the sky to say: This is My Son. I love Him. I am pleased with Him.

The Father's declaration was not a reward for performance. It was a proclamation of identity.

This is the message I want you to hear today.

We are going to unpack that one truth which will, I believe, speak to every soul in this room, regardless of your story with your own father, regardless of what kind of parent you are or were, regardless of where you are in your walk with God.

Let's pray, and then let's dive in.

There is something we must understand about the relationship between the Father and the Son before we can understand anything else.

The Gospel of John gives us a window into it that Matthew's baptism scene only hints at.

John 5:19–20 (NKJV)

Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.'

Jesus is not speaking here as a subordinate soldier following orders.

He is describing a relationship of intimate discipleship and apprenticeship rooted in love.

The Father shows the Son. The Son watches. The Son does what He sees.

This is not coercion, it is communion.

The Greek word for "loves" in verse 20 is "phileo"... a love that is affectionate, warm, familial.

The Father does not only agape-love the Son from a sovereign distance.

He phileo-loves Him. He delights in Him, He shares with Him, He brings Him close.

φιλέω (phileō) means to have affection for, to delight in, to express love through nearness and shared life.

This is the model of fatherhood displayed in the Godhead. And it is breathtaking.

The Eternal Father, before the creation of the world, in the fellowship of the Trinity, was already fathering, already giving, disclosing, sharing, and delighting in the Son.

Fatherhood is not an accident of biology. It is a reflection of the inner life of God.

When the Father spoke at the Jordan, He did not say: 'This is My Son, now here is your job description.'

He said: 'This is My Son, I love Him, I am pleased with Him.'

The declaration came before the ministry.

The affirmation preceded the assignment.

This matters enormously.

We live in a world where identity is earned.

Where love is conditional.

Where approval is a currency traded for performance.

Children grow up learning to associate their father's voice with correction, comparison, and disappointment.

And then we hand them a Bible and say, 'God is your Father,' and we wonder why they flinch.

Jesus shows us what a child looks like who knows who their Father is.

He was not anxious.

He was not approval-seeking.

He did not need the Pharisees to validate Him.

He did not perform miracles to impress the crowds.

In John 5, He says plainly: I only do what I see My Father doing.

That is the freedom of a son whose identity is secure.

I want to speak directly to parents for a moment.

Your most important task is not to make your children successful. It is to name them.

To speak their identity before they have earned it.

To tell them 'You are loved. I am glad you exist and that you belong to me.'

These words, spoken early, spoken often, form the architecture of a soul.

Ask yourself honestly: Does my child know, without performing for it, that they are loved, that they are delighted in?

Now I want to speak to those who are children of parents...

If your earthly father never spoke those words over you...hear them now from the Father who created you.

“I love you. I am glad you are mine.”

He is not waiting for you to get it right.

Before your first success and after your worst failure, the same voice says: You are Mine. I know you. I love you.

The Father's declaration over Jesus was meant to show you what He declares over all who are in His Son.

And here is a word for all followers of Jesus...

You came to Jesus in the abject need of your spirit. You were baptized into His name.

Romans 8:15 says you received the spirit of adoption... the spirit by which we cry 'Abba, Father.'

The same voice that spoke over Jesus at the Jordan speaks over you.

You are not a servant trying to earn a wage. You are a son. You are a daughter. Your identity is settled.

Now we must sit with something that might feel uncomfortable at first.

Jesus — the eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father, the One through whom all things were made — submitted to His Father completely.

Not reluctantly. Not as a performance.

He submitted because He understood the nature of love within the Trinity.

He submitted at the Jordan, accepting a baptism He did not need, to identify with sinners He had come to save, because the Father had ordained it.

He submitted in Gethsemane, where His sweat fell like great drops of blood and the prayer was: 'Not My will, but Yours.' Not with gritted teeth, but with outstretched hands.

And the writer of Hebrews gives us perhaps the most astonishing verse about this submission:

Hebrews 5:7–9 (NKJV)

Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

Did you catch that phrase?

'Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience.'

The Son of God — the perfect Son — learned. He grew. He was formed through suffering.

This is not a theological error. It is a theological wonder.

The fact of His birth and terrible death as a human being means that Jesus, the 2nd person of the Holy Trinity, in His humanity, grew in wisdom and stature.

And the path of that growth ran through surrender.

In the scripture you see before you, the writer of Hebrews uses the Greek word “hypakoē” for obedience.

It literally means 'hearing under'. To listen attentively and act accordingly.

“Hypakoe” is the obedience, the posture of one who places themselves beneath the word of another.

Submission did not diminish Jesus. It perfected Him.

And most crucially, the Father was pleased by it.

Not because the Father was a tyrant delighting in power.

But because the Father's glory and the Son's joy were, and are, perfectly aligned.

Submission in the Trinity is not hierarchy by force.

It is harmony by love. Harmony through loving obedience.

This harmony by loving submission is the goal of every true follower of Jesus.

When we consider what Jesus did on the Cross, the perfect Son shows us what submission to a perfect Father looks like.

Jesus never did what the Father said because He was afraid.

He did what the Father said because He trusted Him.

Because He knew the Father's heart.

Because He had been shown all things.

Because the relationship was one of transparent, unbroken, joyful love.

And herein lies the rebuke and the invitation to each and every one of us.

We have, in our fallen nature, distorted both sides of this relationship. Fathers have used authority to crush their children rather than to form them by loving correction.

Children have used rebellion against correction to wound their fathers rather than to accept it and grow.

And followers of Jesus have turned discipleship into either a performance of obedience or a declaration of independence either striving to earn God's love or ignoring His word entirely.

But Jesus shows us a third way. A better way.

The way of a Son who was so loved that He could afford to submit.

Who was so secure in His Father's delight that surrender was not a threat to His identity but an expression of it.

So again, to you fathers and mothers...

Your children are watching how you relate to authority, including God's authority.

When you submit to the Lord, when they see you open the Word and say, 'Not my will but His,' you are modeling for them what it looks like to be a child of God.

The father or mother who cannot humble themselves before God cannot teach their children what holy submission looks like.

You cannot give what you have not received.

And again to children of parents...

Submission to loving authority is not weakness. It is the pattern of Jesus.

If your father is imperfect, and he is, you are not submitting to his perfection.

You are practicing the posture of sonship that will serve you when you stand before God.

The commandment is to honor your father and mother.

Honor is not blind trust. Neither is it earned or necessarily deserved. It is obedience to the commandment of love.

It is the willingness to stay in relationship even when it is uncomfortable or when you disagree.

Jesus stayed in submission and a relationship with His Father even in Gethsemane when He accepted the Cross.

And again, to all followers of Jesus...

Discipleship is not adherence to a set of rules. It is an apprenticeship with a Father who loves you.

When Jesus says, 'Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me' (Matthew 11:29), He is inviting you into the same dynamic He lived with the Father.

Come close. Watch. Learn. Do what you see. This is the life of the Spirit. This is what it means to take up your cross daily.

We have seen the Father who names His Son and is pleased.

We have seen the Son who submits.

Now let's look at the glory that follows — because the cross is not the end of this story.

In the Gospel of John chapter 17 we see what is often called the High Priestly Prayer:

Jesus, on the night of His betrayal, praying to the Father. And the first words out of His mouth are these:

John 17:1, 4–5 (NKJV)

"Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You... I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.'"

I want you to hear the confidence in that prayer.

Jesus does not apologize for asking.

He says: Father, I have finished the work. I have been faithful. Now glorify Me.

This is what secure sonship looks like in its fullness.

The Son who left His place in Glory in obedience to the Father.

The Son who submitted to His Father's will at Gethsemane.

That Son now asks boldly for restoration.

For glory. For the joy set before Him.

And the Father said yes.

Emphatically. Joyfully, proudly, "yes".

The empty tomb is the Father's answer.

The ascension is the Father's final affirmation.

The right hand of God, where Jesus now sits, ruling and reigning, is the Father's eternal, irrevocable “yes and Amen”.

What the Father required of the Son, the Father also restored to the Son... with glory added.

This is the Gospel in miniature.

The Father does not strip His children and leave them bare outside of Paradise.

He calls. He gives life through the Word, His Son. He guides us by His Spirit. He forms us through suffering.

And then, because love always moves toward restoration... He raises, He glorifies, He seats us at His right hand in Christ.

Parents... You will fail your children.

You will speak harshly when you should have been gentle.

You will be absent when you should have been present.

You will project your wounds onto innocent souls.

And in those moments, the Gospel must be your compass home.

Confess. Repent. Ask forgiveness. Restore.

The Father who raised Jesus from the dead is the Father who can restore broken relationships.

He can take what is broken between you and your child and make it a testimony.

But only if you are willing to die to yourself.

To your pride, your defensiveness, your need to be right... so that something new can arise.

The finish line of parenting is not children who perform well.

It is children who know they are loved by God.

Pour yourself out. And then trust the Father with what you cannot fix.

Children... I know that some of you carry wounds from your father that have never healed.

Some of you were never told that you were loved.

Sadly, some of you were told the opposite.

The church has handed you this sermon every June and asked you to celebrate something that still hurts.

I want to say something carefully and clearly:

Your Heavenly Father does not expect you to pretend that your wound is not real.

Or to forgive with an earthly forgiveness you have never received.

He is not asking you to honor what was absent without offering you His Presence.

What He does say is this: Come to Me. Let Me show you what a Father was always supposed to be.

Let the relationship between Me and My Son be the picture you carry in your heart.

The one that is already yours in Christ.

Let that be the template, the relief for the longing for love, your north star.

All He asks from you is for you to come home to what is always available in Him.

Learn forgiveness and honor from your Heavenly Father so that you can give them freely to your earthly parents in obedience to Him.

Jesus, as your Lord, walked the path ahead of you as the first among brethren.

He was beloved. He submitted. He suffered. He was glorified.

You will walk this same path... not alone, but in Him.

And finally, to all of us as followers of Jesus...

Romans 8:16-17 says:

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

The same Father who glorified Jesus intends to glorify you.

Not because you deserve it. Because He loves you. That is what fathers do for sons.

That is what the Father does for His children.

Let's go back to the river.

Jesus steps out of the water. The Spirit descends. And the Father speaks.

'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

No performance. No curriculum vitae. No list of accomplishments. Just: You are Mine. I love you. I am pleased.

This is the heartbeat of the Trinity.

This is the pattern for every healthy family.

This is the life you were made for.

Fathers... go home and find your children. Tell them: You are mine. I love you. I am so glad you are here. And mean it.

Children... hear the voice of your Heavenly Father speaking the same words over you right now. He is not distant. He is not disappointed. He is leaning toward you.

Followers of Jesus — this is our identity: beloved sons and daughters of the Living God, co-heirs with Christ, adopted into the family where Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

We are not orphans. We are not servants. We are not strangers.

We are children of God in a family of God. Beloved of the Father.

Let's pray...