

God's First Hope

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True Parents' Day
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Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification USA, delivered a True Parents' Day message at the Boston Family Church.

Happy True Parents' Day! For those of you who are unfamiliar with it, our Unification movement has four big Holy Days a year. We're not satisfied with just one. We have this day, True Parents' Day, which is the first of four Holy Days, and then as you might expect there's True Children's day, then there's a day to honor all things of creation that God made, and finally True God's Day, which is a day to honor God on the first day of the year.

The Most Important Day to God

This is the 56th True Parents' day, and whenever you've been celebrating something for a long time you might start to get blasé about it or kind of familiar. "Oh, it's Parents' day again. I suppose I should go to church and I should make an offering." But this morning I'd like to share with you how very special this day is and how special you are to God on this day. I don't know if any of you've forgotten your birthday; did you ever do that? Or it got late in the day and you suddenly remembered, or maybe you forgot your wife's birthday. I did that one time, and around 6 o'clock I realized and tried my best to make a late recovery. It is easy to forget some things that are very important.

In the Cheon Seong Gyeong, we read True Father saying that True Parents' Day is the royal day among all days, and the year in which it was established, 1960, is the royal year among all the years that ever were—not just the 56 years from 1960 until today, but all the years of human history; that day is the most important to God. So if it is that important to God, then maybe we need a refresher to see why it is important to us, and what does that mean in terms of how we're going to live our life today and each day.

An Unforgettable Dinner

I was trying to think of a Biblical lesson that would illustrate how sometimes it's easy to overlook the things that are really important because we're so focused on the details or the convention of what we expect. The story of the sinful woman at the Pharisees banquet is one that fascinated me and interested me. There are three different points of view within that story, maybe four. On the one hand, there's the Pharisee, Simon. Actually he took a risk in inviting Jesus to dinner in the first place. Do you know why? Because Jesus often did not travel alone.

Last night, Fumiko and I had the privilege to share dinner with Jim and Kimio Edgerly, and it was delightful. I imagine it would've been a little less delightful for Kimio if I had shown up with 12 hungry men as my posse, but that's what happened when you invited Jesus to dinner. He would come along with his 12 hungry disciples. We don't often read in the Gospels that they were hungry, but they were men and they were young, so you can be sure they were hungry.

Often there were other people as well, including Mary Magdalene and Martha. Perhaps as many as 15 or 20 people might come along, and what would you say if you're the host? "Jesus, you can come in, but your followers can stay outside." No, you have to be ready to welcome all of them. So inviting Jesus to dinner was quite something.

The Scriptures don't recall any other of the Jewish leaders or Pharisees inviting Jesus to sit down and have dinner. In fact, they suggested most often they were criticizing Jesus from afar. However there were people like Nicodemus who, in secret, approached Jesus in the nighttime and asked him, "Teach what I must do to inherit eternal life." I think it's fair to say that they were very cautious in their interaction. They wanted to know, but they didn't want to get too close. We can read that this Pharisee who took the risk is shocked and scandalized by what happens. Think about it a little bit. This woman who comes in—the woman who's lived a sinful life—she's a prostitute, most likely. She's dressed by a prostitute, and she's coming into his house at the dinner table and starting to pour oil on Jesus's feet.

Think about that today for a moment. We're going to have a lunch downstairs. It would be scandalous even today; it was certainly scandalous then, and Jesus let it happen. He didn't push her away or move his feet around the other side. He didn't act embarrassed or in any way put out. He just let it happen, and that caused a big reaction in all the dinner guests, especially the Pharisee who said that if he knew what kind of woman this was he wouldn't let it happen, so therefore, he can't be a prophet. He can't be prophet because he's not acting according to what he thinks a man of God should do. To him, a man of God should keep himself separate from sin, and separate from sinful people.

Jesus chose not to do that, and so the Pharisee burned with indignation. As for the woman, she didn't care about any of that. She knew she was sinner who needed forgiveness, and in that moment was willing to let everything else go in order to be close to Jesus.

Let's think a moment about the other dinner guests. Let's say you and I were among the dinner guests that day... you could imagine how we would feel pleased to make the A-list, right? I'm on the guest list, I'm going to have dinner with Jesus at somebody else's house, to come to the door, the big guy's there and he's checking down—yup, your name is there, Mr. Edgerly, go right on in.

You're sitting there hoping to have an unforgettable experience with the Teacher, but what happens is very different from your expectation, and you're challenged, actually, not only to know who Jesus is, but who am I? How do I stand before God?



Boston Family Church community gather on the 56th True Parents' Day early in the morning on Sunday, April 19, 2015 to hold morning Family Pledge Service (Core pledge of Unificationists).

An Unforgettable Lunch

The circumstances are kind of different, but I had an experience like this with True Father and True Mother one time in Korea. It was a big banquet—and don't worry, no feet were washed with perfume—but True Father had invited maybe 50 or 100 VIPs to join him for lunch. There was, for example, the First Lady of Nepal, I remember particularly, several Prime Ministers of countries in Africa, and some very prominent scholars who had actually been with True Father for a conference two or three days before.

True Father invited them all to come up to the Cheon Jeong Goon Museum, and everyone sat down to

dinner in a room about the twice the size of this room. You know lunch is followed with certain convention: there's music—this string quartet in playing in the background—and the silverware is spread on the table, with white linen, an elegant glass of water and four or five forks that you don't really know what to do with, but assume you'll figure it out; you're just feeling good to be there. You're dressed in your best suit and it just looks like it's going to be a wonderful day.

There was a prayer, and then somebody asked True Father, "Would you like to say a few words before lunch?" As it happened, True Father *would* like to say a few words before lunch. Five hours later, he was still saying the words before lunch, and it's interesting to see in those five hours how people reveal themselves before God and before each other.

The first hour, everyone's thinking surely he's going to finish soon, yeah a few minutes. Okay this is long, but it's still kind of okay, and in the first hour, True Father actually was speaking about world peace and interfaith, but then as we moved into the second hour he felt it would be good to chastise some people who'd annoyed him 10 or 15 years ago. He called them up and right there in front of all the VIPs, he just sort of pointed out a few of their significant failings, and they kind of stood there and took it. He told them to sit down, and went on for another hour.

At the two-and-a-half hour mark, the staff of the banquet, which was being catered by the very high class Lotte Hotel, tried to bring in some cold drinks to give everyone some relief. True Father saw the drinks coming in and he said, "No! Take them out!" They'd already put them on the table, so they took them all out again. You could see people kind of looking longingly at the cold juice like, "That's gone."

At three and a half hours, the First Lady of Nepal, may God rest her, said, "I've had enough! I'm the First Lady; nobody treats me like this." She made a storming exit from the room, but guess what? The building is on top of a mountain, so there's nowhere to go. An hour later she quietly came back in and sat down in her seat.

After five hours, with lunch turned to dinner, True Father sat down and the food was served, and I was really interested to know how people would be when we went back to the hotel that night. After those five hours, everyone gathered on the bus and I was nervous to see this reaction. To my surprise, almost all of them were very, very happy. They said, "Wow, we will never forget today."

Somehow True Father didn't feel they'd suffered enough, so that night at 3:00am, True Father calls. He said, "I want to see everyone tomorrow morning at 5 o'clock for Hoon Dok Hwe (scripture reading), but not in the hotel you're staying. No, I want you to go to another hotel on the other side of Seoul." So, we got up and we started knocking on all the doors of these VIPs at 3:00am. They probably thought it was the fire department of something.

We said, "Guess what, Rev. Moon would like you to join in for sunrise service at another hotel and the bus leaves in half an hour. Can you make it?" A few people said no, but most of them said, "Yeah, okay, if Rev. Moon calls I'll come." We traveled across Seoul with no traffic, arrived at another hotel, and we all sat down ready for morning prayers at 5 o'clock. Five o'clock came, but True Father didn't come. Six o'clock, and 7 o'clock, and 8 o'clock, and at 9 o'clock Rev. Kwak said, "Sorry to tell you this, but he's not coming. Let's go home and have breakfast." Again, without complaint, everyone got up, went back, and had breakfast.

That evening, I had an opportunity, a rare opportunity, to ask True Father, "What are you doing? Why did you do that to people?" He said, "You know, think about who they are: Heads of State, First Ladies. They go to 100 banquets a year. They go to three conferences a month, and they don't remember any of them. The same speech, rubber chicken, and they fly home. I wanted to give them an experience that they would never ever forget." I said, "Well, True Father, you surely did that. They will never forget that." Then he said, "You know, meeting me, the True Parents, is not only the most significant thing that could happen in their lives, but in all their ancestries and lineage, to this day this is the moment, and if they're not ready for that essential moment, I have to do something about it. I have to give them some challenge that helps them to remember me, and maybe in the future they can remember my words."

When you first hear that you might think, "Well gosh, that sounds awfully proud and arrogant, True Father. Are you so special that you can make hundreds of people wait hours and hours and hours just to make a point?" As if reading my mind, True Father said, "No, that's not really it. You have to think, what is the purpose of all of this? Why are we here? Why am I here? What am I trying to accomplish? Have you forgotten what it is that God wants to realize to bring this world back to Him?"

God's First Hope

This brings me back to the main topic of my message today: God's first hope. What was it that God first hoped when He created the universe and all of us? The answer is right here in the Cheon Seong Gyeong, page 1222. It explains the concept of Parents' day, that this day was originally God's central concept in

His ideal for the Creation. After creating all things, God created human beings to take dominion over this world, and God blessed them to govern all things for no other reason than to make it possible to establish the True Parents.

Originally, Adam and Eve should've become the True Parents by uniting with each other centered on God, and then Parents' Day would've been naturally established and the universe hymns in the name of parents. So Parents' Day should've been the first day of joy with the universe offering songs together in the name of the True Parents.

Parents' Day was never meant to be a day just for the Unification Church, nor can we be satisfied with a Parents' Day that is just for Korea, nor could it manifest its full meaning if it is only for the earthly world. It must be a day when the entire cosmos could come into harmony, the physical and spirit worlds together rejoicing with God.

Wow. It means that this is the day that God had in mind when He began His creation. Why? Because God wanted Himself to be a parent. One of the things that True Father and True Mother taught us is God cannot be a parent unless God has children. Yes, when God began His creation He wanted to be a Parent, but actually He didn't know what that would be like. In His mind, He had a concept, but it remained a concept until the day He has His real children.



True Parents' Day Sunday Service was attended by 130 Unificationists from Boston, Gloucester and Rhode Island.

When God Became a Parent

Every Father's day, my eldest daughter, Kaylin, who's now coming up on 28, calls me and says, "Hi, it's me. I'm the one who made you a parent. Don't forget that." When she was really small, I thought it was cute, and for most of her teenage years I thought it was presumptuous, but now I'm beginning to see that it's really true.

Before I had children, I had no idea what it meant to be a parent. I had no idea of the trials and tribulations, the joys and the struggles that would come from parenthood. Neither did God, and this is important to understand. Even God, the Creator of the entire cosmos, couldn't know what it means to be a father without having children. Each of us is so important to God, because we're all unique. Therefore, in a sense, each one of us can awaken a certain part of God's parental heart that nobody else can do. Katherine can do it in a way that no one else can do. David can do it in a way that is entirely closed to everybody else. This is a day when we're supposed to awaken something in the heart of God that no one else could do.

That's really an important thing to know, but then what happened when God did become a Parent? True Father says, almost at once God began to experience things that He never expected. He began to experience heartbreak and sorrow because He could not realize His ideal with His children. He wanted to. God not a God happy on His throne, but a God with a family full of broken, hurting children that He wanted so much to love, but could not.

God has been waiting for a day when He could start again when there would be an opportunity to make things new and to be refreshed, and that day is Parents' Day. When God established Parents' Day, when

True Father and Mother established Parents' Day in 1960, it meant that the long wait was over, that at last God had the belief that He could experience what it means to be a real parent, that He could be liberated and freed. Think about how He did that. I'm always amazed, you know.



Community members enjoyed a wonderful lunch and lingered well into the afternoon enjoying each other's company.

Innocent, Pure and Strong

In 1960, for those of you who don't know True Father's biography, he was already 40 years old. He had already been imprisoned and tortured and released, and imprisoned again and tortured again and released and imprisoned again, and tortured longer and released. He had seen the destruction of his country, the murder of his relatives, the persecution of Christianity—all of that—and he'd overcome and God put him with a woman who'd experienced none of those things, who was less than half his age, 23 years his junior, young, fresh, innocent, naive, and as far as many people could see it, entirely unqualified to be there. Kind of like the woman at the Pharisees table. Who is this person here?

We are expecting someone of equal stature to be with the Lord. A lot of women thought, "Like me. I'm ready, I'm prepared," but God thought differently. God put someone who was completely innocent and young together with True Father 56 years ago.

Today, True Father has gone to the Spirit World, and our True Mother continues to lead us. I'm really amazed at her character and her strength. Two years ago, when True Father passed, I went to see her, and I think many of you know she had a choice then. She had a choice: "I can either continue leading this movement forward, or I can take advantage of the opportunity to mourn, to reflect, to be quiet, to let others take the running."

That would've been perfectly acceptable. When you lose your spouse, no one would be surprised if you take it easy for a while. She didn't choose that. She chose instead the difficult task of investing fully to make things happen. As you know, it hasn't been easy, but that's not what today's sermon is about.

Today's sermon is about how do I become a True Parent on True Parents' Day? Now you might think to yourself, "Well I don't have any children, so I can't be a True Parent," or maybe, "I'm young, I'm not even married, so I can't be a True Parent," but that's not true.

A Heart of a Parent, in the Shoes of a Servant

True Father gave a clue to what's needed in a very famous kind of slogan, or statement, he had that I remember from the 1970s: To restore the world, let us go forward with a heart of a parent, but in the shoes of a servant, thinking that I will become the parent of love by serving others, by walking in the shoes of a servant who wants nothing else than to serve others, and make them happy and rejoice.

This is where we're going to have a little activity right now. I'd like you to divide into pairs. It could be the person you came to church with or the person sitting next to you. I want you to answer, "If I walk in the shoes of a servant this week with a heart of a parent, who does God want me to serve the most?"

It will probably be a challenge. The person that God wants you to serve the most is maybe the person you want to see the least. Maybe, but for certain God will like us to leave this building feeling we're ready to

serve, and by doing so to become a parent in heart at least. In your pairs, for this one week until April the 25th, in the shoes of a servant, who is it that God will like you to serve most? It might be more than one person.

All right, thank you so much everybody. You look somehow happier now that you've spent four minutes thinking about who you're going to serve, and how you're going to make somebody's life better.

How could you do something to serve that was so dramatic that people would be reading and writing about it 2,000 years later? For that woman with that box of ointment washing the feet Jesus, 2,000 years later people still think about that act of extraordinary service and self-denial. It would've been forgotten if Jesus had responded differently. It might have been thought of differently if the Pharisee hadn't allowed his feelings on the matter to become known. But one thing is sure, True Parents came not to do ordinary things, not to do simple things that people can forget and move on.

I told you just one simple example from True Father's life, a funny example, of how True Father determined he would make an impact on people, and he did and they all came back. Almost all of those people were back for True Father's Seong Hwa (ascension ceremony).

I asked them, "Do you remember that day?" They said, "Yeah, it was the most remarkable day of my life. When I went back, I couldn't stop thinking about the kind of relationship I had with God and with this man," and True Father was right. An ordinary challenge would've been forgotten. I'd like to leave you today with not an ordinary challenge, but an extraordinary one, since it is True Parents' Day, to do something, if not this week, this year, an act of service so extraordinary that people will remember it years later, even 100 years later, and it will never be forgotten.