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If Your Dad Were a Monster

John 5:18-30

Peter Hiett @ The Sanctuary Downtown

March 14, 2010

Imagine if you were dating this guy ... or if this lady was your mom ... or this man was your brother:

Video clips – *The Hulk*, *Terminator*, *Wolfman* are shown.

That first clip was from the movie *The Hulk*. The green guy was Bruce Banner. In the movie, a gal named Betty is dating him, but they have real relationship problems, due to the fact that when Bruce gets angry; he turns into a green monster.

That second clip was John Conner's foster mother and father in the movie *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. John already finds it difficult to trust his parents, but once he suspects his mom of being a terminator sent from the future to issue final judgment on all humanity ... their relationship is pretty much over.

That last clip was Anna Valerious and her brother Velkan. Velkan is a good man. The only problem is he's also just the opposite: a wolf in human clothing ... a monster.

Last week, I took my kids to see the new movie *The Wolfman*. In *The Wolfman*, Lawrence Talbott already has a very strained relationship with his father, but the relationship becomes entirely dysfunctional when Lawrence discovers that his father is a wolfman. His father has already devoured his mother and brother, and has even bitten Lawrence, so that he is turning into a wolfman too.

Now, I'm not a mental health care professional, but I think it's safe to say that even if you **only suspected** your father of being a wolfman-terminator-from-the-future, or even someone who turned into a monster when angry ... well, even that suspicion would have a profound effect on daily life. You might appear very obedient, respectful, well-adjusted, and even compliant to those around you. And yet your heart would be emotionally isolated, trapped within a prison of fear and unable to love.

I think popular movies express our deepest fears, and perhaps our deepest fear is that someone we love and trust is also a monster ... not one nature, but two.

In seminary, I took a course on alcoholism and its effects. (I hesitate to use this example, cause I don't want you to think I'm just talking about alcoholics. Because we're all addicts. We're all divided. All what the Bible calls "sinners." When we sin, we are divided: Love and not Love; Truth and untruth; Light and Dark; Substance and the void.

Well, when an alcoholic gets drunk, he or she is divided, and it's literally like someone else shows up. So the child of an alcoholic doesn't know what to expect, and so learns not to trust.

Now, if you're an alcoholic, or an adult child of an alcoholic, please understand that all of this can be redeemed... and I believe it will be. I just want us to see that anytime we're two rather than one, or anytime our children believe we're two rather than one, it affects them in very powerful ways.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services lists the following as characteristics of adult children of alcoholics:

1. Fear of losing control
 2. Fear of feelings
 3. Overdeveloped sense of responsibility
 4. Guilty feelings
 5. Inability to release / let go / have fun
 6. Harsh, even fierce self-criticism
 7. Denial
 8. Difficult with relationships
 9. Living as a victim
 10. Compulsive behavior
 11. Confusing love and pity,
- ... etc. etc. etc.

See? It's all a prison of fear – hearts constrained by fear rather than constrained by Love ... that is, free.

That prison can manifest as rebellion or responsibility, as tax collector and sinner or a scribe and Pharisee... but it's all the result of believing your father is a monster. See, it's not even whether he is a monster or not. It's just suspecting that he is: not one, but two natures.

I counseled with a man who deeply loved his father, yet his father became addicted to alcohol, and would become a monster. One night, as a boy, he watched as his father, in a drunken stupor, threatened his entire family with a rifle: His mother screaming in terror as his father cried, "Where are those sons of bitches? I'm gonna kill 'em all!" The police came and threw him in prison, but the father wasn't the only one in prison; so were the hearts of his twelve children.

Well, my father has profoundly blessed me. He passed away six years ago last Monday. He wasn't flawless, and yet more than anyone I've ever known, his heart looked like Jesus. I grew up believing that I could always count on dad's heart for me. I believed he'd die for me at the drop of a hat. So most of the time, I trusted his judgment more than my own. That means I obeyed – because I wanted to. And yet, at times I didn't, and he disciplined me ... really disciplined me ... because he loved me.

Discipline is love ... it's a severe mercy.

So, discipline is hard for dads, cause it doesn't look like mercy. And for a child, it's tempting to think the father is divided.

Years ago, my son had an accident at Wal-Mart. We'd been working on the toilet thing for a long time, so I really scolded him. (That's what you do at Wal-Mart ... people go to Wal-Mart to yell at their kids.) I really scolded him there in the aisle... And then he asked a question that broke my heart. He looked at me with those big beautiful eyes and said: "But Daddy, you're still proud of me ... right?"

That is, "Daddy, you're still one and not two, right?"

I remember thinking: "How can I show him? How can I let him know?"

I will always love you. But Buddy, I don't want you to live your life with poop in your pants. Not because I don't love you, but because I DO love you.

My judgment is love, and that will not change ... but your underwear will be changed. So please, please, please **believe** I'm not two ... I'm one. I'd **die** to show you I'm one.

Now, I'm no great father; and sometimes I am divided. Yet God is the perfect father ... is He divided?

Technically, the oldest heresy in the Christian Church is the Marcionite Heresy. In the 2nd century, Marcion taught that the God of the Old Testament is a different God than the God of the New Testament... that Yahweh was vindictive and mean (like a beast), and that the God Jesus revealed was Love and Mercy.

The Marcionite faith passed away in a few hundred years, however the belief that God isn't one, but two, came roaring back. It may be more prevalent today than at any time in history.

Last week, we began preaching on John chapter 5: Jesus goes to the Pool of Bethesda, surrounded by five roofed colonnades, under which lay a multitude of invalids ... one of which had been there for thirty-eight years. And out of all those invalids, Jesus walks up to one and asks, "Do you want to be well?" The man doesn't

really answer the question, so Jesus answers for him, saying, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk."

John notes that it is the Sabbath, and clearly implies that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, who delivers us to God's Sabbath... His Seventh Day ... our eternal Home.

See, the man didn't choose Jesus, Jesus chose the man. And Jesus chose "wellness" for the man and within the man ... that's Grace!

God chose that man, and yet it appears the other invalids still lay there, like dead men in a tomb.

Why did God choose that man and not the others?

Why does God bless others with good things and not You?

Is he Love for them, but not for you?

Why does God choose that man and not those Jews?

Is God a monster?

Is your father two or one?

I can't think of a more pertinent question.

John 5:15-21

The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

*So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead (not some of the dead ... **the dead**) ... For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.*

"Whom he will." You see, just like the man at the pool, salvation does not depend on our will, but God's will. In other words, Faith is a gift, so salvation is 100% Grace. That was the glorious rediscovery of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, freeing us from a world of driven-ness and fear. We choose because we've been chosen – we are predestined ... for "The Son gives life to whom He will."

Well ... to whom does He will to give it???

Most of the early Church fathers seem to argue: Jesus wills life for All, and so will ultimately give life to all. In the 4th Century, one theologian (Basil the great) stated that this was what most Christians believed in the days of the early church. Well, that church was horrifically persecuted by the institutions of its day.

But in 391, the Church itself became institutionalized... for Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. You could say, "The Church conquered the Empire." OR ... "The Empire conquered the Church."

"Beware when fighting the dragon, lest you become the dragon."

In Scripture (both in Daniel and in John's Revelation), the Roman Empire is portrayed as a beast. The institutions of this world operate very differently than the Kingdom of God. They don't win authority through Love; they seize power through fear. And therefore, they long to wield the greatest threat possible ... like a beast.

The first great Roman theologian was a fellow named Augustine.¹ He was brilliant and profoundly wise in so many things, and yet he was first to argue that violence could be employed for evangelism. And I've read he was first to teach "eternal damnation." That is, "endless torment," rather than the "aionios punishment."

Ironically, it was Augustine (like Luther and Calvin 1000 years later) who so beautifully described the wonder of Grace... just not Grace for all, just Grace for those who submitted to the dictates of the institutional church before they died.

So, "The Son gives life to whom He will," and "He wills to give it to only a few," reasoned Augustine. Yet if God is Love, why would He will to give it to only a few? Well, Augustine's answer was that God was Love and Something Else. The Something Else was "Righteousness.." Even though Scripture never defines Righteousness in just this way, Augustine defined it as "revenging justice."

So you see, God has two attributes (according to Augustine):

One is Justice ... that is, punishing people for sin.
And the other one is Mercy, which is not punishing people for sin.

So, God has vengeance on **most** (claimed Augustine), so that a few can appreciate that He doesn't have vengeance on **them**.

And so, for most Christians in the West, God has two attributes ... really, two natures ... two opposite natures:

¹ I don't know if this matters, but he had a lousy relationship with his Father. But he was ordained in 391, the same year Christianity was institutionalized.

Justice, which is defined as “not Grace,” and
Grace, which is defined as “not Justice.”

If you get Justice, you will be endlessly tortured without mercy “to the praise of
God’s glorious Justice.”

If you get Mercy, you will have endless ecstasy without justice “to the praise of God’s
glorious Grace.”

To me, that sounds like Marcion’s two gods trapped in one God.
Like a mentally ill God.

It sounds like one gigantic alcoholic father, and we’re his children.

It sounds like the Hulk, the Terminator, and the Wolfman all in one.

It sounds like my deepest fear ... that my Father is Love, and yet something totally
opposite: Love and Not Love, Wolf and Savior, Vengeful Judge and Merciful Jesus.

Two years ago, the institution required that I publically confess the following, and I
quote:

“That it is ... God’s will ... that He **not call** some of mankind, and that he ordain them
to ... to wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.”

I couldn’t do it. For nothing matters more than faith in my Father’s heart.

The 6th point of the National Association of Evangelicals Statement of Faith reads:
“We believe in the resurrection of ... the saved and the lost: (I do too.)
They that are saved unto the resurrection of Life, and they that are lost unto the
resurrection of Damnation.”

If they’re already lost, why do they need to be damned?

Damnation – most people believe that’s a place, where God’s wrath never ends ... yet
Scripture says that God’s wrath ends... a place where God takes life, and yet He must
give life and sustain life, for they say the torture never ends.

So, it’s a place where the works of the devil are not “destroyed,” but “maintained” by
God – for God alone has immortality. And dang ... that at least seems to make God
worse (way worse) than the Hulk, the Terminator, and the Wolfman combined.

So, I’m supposed to preach that God is Love, and God is **that**? That’s tough.

Video Clip – Joel Osteen on Larry King Live

Larry King: A call from Phoenix, Arizona

Caller: I'm wondering why you sidestepped Larry's earlier question about how we get to heaven. The Bible clearly tells us that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and the only way to the Father is through him. It's not really a message of condemnation; it's a message of truth.

Joel Osteen: Yeah. I would agree with her. I believe that

Larry King: So then a Jew is not going to Hell?

Joel Osteen: No....Here's my thing: I can't judge somebody's heart. Only God can look

at somebody's heart. To me, it's not my business to say, 'This one is or this one isn't. I just look at what the Bible teaches. I want to put my faith in Christ. I think it's wrong to go around and say, 'You're not going. You're not going.' It's just not my way. I want to put my faith in Christ.

Larry King: You believe your way.

Joel Osteen: I believe my way with all my heart

Larry King: If someone doesn't share it...well they're wrong right?

Joel Osteen: I don't know if I look at it that way. I would present my way, but I'm just gonna let God be the judge of that. I mean, I don't know. I don't know.

See the problem? I think Larry King is trying to say, "Joel, your God seems like a monster." I think Joel is trying to say, "I know, but I've seen His heart."

Conservative pastors just shredded Joel Osteen for his "wishy-washy" answer. Yet I think he answered far better than most. Yet Scripture does better than that, and "Scripture cannot be broken," says Jesus.

So let's read it:

Verse 21

For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.

Wow... so when we come to Jesus, we come to Judgment. And if everybody comes to Judgment, everybody comes to "The Way, the Truth, and the Life." For Jesus is "The Way, the Truth, and the Life = The Only Way."

He is the Only Way, but we don't own the Only Way.

And the Only Way seems to show up in the damndest places.

And check this out:

Jesus says, "The Father judges no one."

In 8:15, Jesus says, "I judge no one."

In 8:26, He says, "I have much to judge."

He's like the Judge who judges by not judging ... like He is the Judgment, and like His judgment is Mercy ... NOT the opposite of Mercy.

Verse 22

All judgment to the Son, that all (not "some" ... all) may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.

Honor Him for what? His judgment. Wow!

That sounds like "Every knee shall bow and every tongue give praise."

That sounds like "Every creature in Heaven and on earth and under the earth giving praise to Him who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb." The slaughtered Lamb.

Like every creature – ALL – clapping and yelling, "What an awesome Judgment!"

Well, what is His Judgment?

John 3:19 – "And this is the Judgment: The Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light."

That is, we crucified the Light, and Jesus is the Light. (John 1:4, 8:12, and 9:5)

In John 12:31 (Palm Sunday – Easter Week), Jesus cried out to the crowd, "Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

God's Judgment IS Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

To honor God for His Judgment is to honor Jesus for His cross.

And to honor Jesus for His cross is to Live.

Wow.

[verse 23]

*Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. (John 10:30 – Jesus says, "I and the Father are One." Not two, one.) Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my Word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. (Hearing and believing **is** eternal life... not the **cost** of eternal life.) He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*

He doesn't come into judgment... for perhaps, he's already been judged.

In John 12, Jesus says, *“The one who rejects me has a Judge. The Word I’ve spoken will judge him on the last day.”* (The day when “it is finished.”)

In John 15, Jesus says to His disciples, *“You are already made clean by the Word I have spoken.”*

Jesus is the Word, and the Word is Judgment. The Word is a knife, and judgment means “to cut,” – Krisis – Crisis.

When we come to the cross and witness God’s love for us, it cuts us. It reveals that we are that bad... so bad that we would nail Love Himself to our tree. Every sin is a bad judgment that does just that. We are that bad – and God is that good. So good, He let us. He bears all our bad judgments in order that we would see His good judgment ... His heart ... Mercy. When we see it, it burns the hell out of us. It kills the old man, and gives life to the new.

That’s Judgment.

verse 25

“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”

Live, and Jesus is the Life.

Live ... not reanimated like zombies.

Those who hear will what??

Class?

LIVE!

verse 26

For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.

The “son of man” means He is a man like us, and so understands us. But the “Son of Man” also refers to the Firey Man in Daniel 7 and in John’s Revelation who destroys the beasts and the institution of this world, replacing them with an eternal Kingdom.

verse 28

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice.”

All in the tombs will hear his voice ... ALL.

And what happens to those who hear his voice?

Class?

They LIVE!

Please remember, I didn't write the Bible, and I'm not making this up. I'm preaching it because it's the next text in the Gospel of John.

"All who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out"

Not "live" ... not yet. Just "come out." Just like in Rev 20, when John says, "I saw the dead ... standing."

"... and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life..."

"Done good." Who's done good?

John 6:29 – Good work is to believe, and we just read: "To believe is to pass from death to Life."

See, they come to the resurrection of life, because they already have eternal life. Perhaps they've already been judged.

Have you done evil? Well, John writes, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just (Righteous) to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

His Justice, His Judgment is Grace. They have already come to Judgment, because they've already come to Jesus, the Judge.

verse 29

"Those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

Evil is "not believing in Jesus."

And to come to Judgment is to come to Whom? Jesus. 'Cause Jesus appeared to "destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)."

And Judgment is what? His Cross.

Judgment cuts the evil from the good.

So if a person is only evil (if that's even possible), only darkness, lies, and works of the devil ... perhaps nothing remains after judgment.

And yet Jesus did say, "All who are in the tombs will hear, and ALL who hear will live." Live. That must be after the resurrection of Judgment.

Now, I don't doubt that judgment may be very severe, and I don't doubt that a person may gnash their teeth in the tomb for a long time before it happens. And I don't doubt that when it happens, the eternal fire may just burn like hell – the judgment of Gehena.

But you see, God's Judgment – Jesus Christ and Him crucified – is Mercy... not the opposite of Mercy. And though judgment looks different in each person (because He makes each person unique – and that's a blessing, not a curse), our Father is always LOVE.

So maybe God isn't two; maybe He's one.

Every day, a good Jew prayed and still prays the "Shema." It means "head." "Hear, oh Israel, the Lord your God is One Lord, and Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and strength." (Deut 6:4)

In other words, your Father is One so you must be one – one substance, and that is Love.

Jesus said this is the greatest commandment: "Hear (do you hear?) ... Hear – The Lord your God is One, and you shall love.

God is Love, God is Holy, God is a Consuming Fire, and God is One. His very substance, His very white-hot brilliance is our Judgment.

"They shall come out to the resurrection of life," said Jesus, "And the resurrection of '*krisis*'," which clearly means Judgment. And it is almost always translated Judgment; yet here in this spot in the King James Version and several others it's translated "Damnation." ²

To me, there's quite a difference between Judgment and damnation. To judge is to decide and to damn is to have decided. To damn is to take the place of the judge... to take the place of the judge is the essence of evil.

I think we've taken the place of the Judge, and judged the Judge as two rather than one.

Why would we do such a thing? Well, perhaps we are not one, but two. And perhaps God is no monster... WE are the monster.

In John's Revelation, there is a complete monster –a dragon– and he controls the two beasts. One is political institution, and the other is religious institutions serving political institutions.

² There's a word for "damnation" in Greek – *Katakrisis*. But this is *krisis*, not *katakrisis*.

Satan is a liar and the father of lies, and to believe his lies is to give birth to a beast in you. His chief lie is that your Father is a monster. And therefore, children of Adam... You'd better judge yourself and hide yourself from His Judgment, for your Father cannot be trusted.

(I don't want to attribute the attributes of Satan to my Father.)

Satan will try to convince you that your Father is a monster, as he is a monster; and when that fails, he'll try to convince you that you are nothing but monster. And why is that?

Well, your heart knows there are no monsters in Heaven, and God's Judgment destroys monsters. God's Judgment takes wolfmen and turns them into men.

So, Satan wants to convince you that you're nothing but wolf, because he wants you terrified of God's Judgment. For God's Judgment is Satan's condemnation – He's the wolf.

"Now will the ruler of this world be cast out," said Jesus.
Judgment is Satan's condemnation, but your salvation.

God's Judgment takes 2 and makes 1 – like this:

Movie clip – *Theodin*

[Gandolph approaches Theoden, who has been possessed by Saruman.]

Gandolph: Theoden, son of Thengel too long have you sat in the shadows.

Gandolph: I release you from the spell.

Saruman: Cackling laughter. You have no power here Gandolph the great.

[Gandolph dramatic reveals his white robe. Saruman is now away of his authority.]

Gandolph: I will draw you Saruman as poison is drawn from a wound.

Saruman: If I go Theoden dies.

Gandolph: You did not kill me; you will not kill him.

[Saruman lurches toward Gandolph; Gandolph holds him back. He collapses and Saruman leaves Theoden. Theoden begins breathing deeply. Color and life returns to Theoden's face and he becomes younger.]

Theoden: I know your face Eowyn? Eowyn!

Gandolph?

Gandolph: Breathe the free air again my friend!

This is weird, but I've actually heard demons say that, "If you cast me out, she'll die." But she didn't die, and you won't die. You'll live.

That old you – the false you, the best you thought was you – will die. And the real you – the new you, Christ in you – will live.

That's Judgment.

So run to your Father's Judgment.

Remember the man who watched his drunken father threaten to kill his whole family? I didn't counsel him. He counseled me.

That was my father – the most Christ-like man I've ever known.

He was so different than my uncles and aunts.

See? His heart didn't stay in prison, for he met his real Father, and came to trust His heart: Jesus. And so he ran to God's Judgment.

Now, if you're an alcoholic or child of an alcoholic – or a sinner – listens closely: Jesus even takes your sin (that empty wound left by the beast) and transforms it into Grace. "Where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more."

That is His Judgment – Jesus.

You may have lots of questions about Judgment; I do. Scripture says we can't comprehend all of God's Judgments. And yet I think the Father is saying this:

"Listen Buddy, I know this is confusing. I know my discipline hurts. I know you can't understand all my judgments. But you know my Judgment, and you can trust my Judgment, because I've shown you my Judgment – my heart.

I let you, I even arranged for you to nail it ... to nail **Him**, to your tree. My Judgment is Jesus, crucified for all to see ... for you to see.

I AM Love, and I love you. That's my Judgment. Believe it and live.

So Jesus took the bread and the cup.

This is the Judgment that stands at the end of time, and this is the Judgment that meets you here and now. Trust His Judgment; run into His Judgment; confess your sins and obey His Word, for He is Good. He is Love.

Pray this: "Father, I confess 'I'm that bad'. I'm the monster. I'm two, not one. And Father, I confess that 'You are that good'. You are Love, and You are One, not two. Make me one, as You are one. I want You to be my judge. Not me, not others, not institutions ... You."

[Communion]

[Benediction]