

I have three children. They are individuals, each one of them with their own talents, their own weaknesses, their own special needs. I love them, not with a love that is like a blanket drapped over the three of them, But a love that is shaped and comformed to each of them as they are. I have hopes for each of them, not one hope to which they all should conform, but rather hopes that are tied to who they are as individuals. Day by day I try to speak to them, one by one to share with them who I am, one by one to learn who each of them is that came from Sue and I. Katie, Beth and Matt are each like us in some ways, but in so many more ways they are creations of God that we know not at all but will delight in spending a lifetime getting to know.

Jesus taught us to call God Father. Jesus wanted everyone of his followers to enter into the relationship that ~~our~~ children have with ^{their loving} Sue ^{parents} and I. A listening, a speaking, a sharing, a knowing more and more day by day, a marveling at the mystery of one who is like me, yet different from me, yet ^{as we speak of her/gather} who gives everything for my good. Our Father, Jesus taught us to pray.

Because I and Sue and our children are all sinful, often the relationship between us is distorted. One of the most common ways that happens is when our children start to think of our love as a blanket drapped over all of them. They get a little cold, and one starts to hog the covers. Matt tugs for more attention and Beth feels exposed. Katie gets a special privilege based on her need in that moment, and Matt feels like he lost some of the warmth.

Sometimes we think of God's love in that way also, as if it has been drapped over all of us. His word that he speaks, we may hear as a general word, applying to everyone in the same ways. We may get the idea that we

are part of a large mass of believers, being herded enmass toward the place God has prepared.

If that is the way you have thought of yourself and your heavenly Father, I want you to think a new thought this morning. I want you each to hear the word that Jeremiah spoke and apply it to yourself.

Jeremiah the prophet spoke an unpopular word to the people of his time. He told them that if they did not change their ways the Lord would destroy their temple and city. They wanted to kill him for saying that. Jeremiah said, Sure, go ahead and kill me, Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the Lord sent me to speak all these words to your ears.

In truth the Lord sent me. Jeremiah was certain that God had spoken to him, sent him, that his life was under the direction of the Lord. In truth the Lord sent me.

Every time I stand in this pulpit, I stand in the assurance that the Lord has sent me to you. But I also speak in the conviction that the Lord through me, is sending each and every one of you through his word.

His word is not a blanket drapped over you all, ^{spoken to you as a person!} but a word that is fit and tailored to you. Here in this place, God is recognizing you as an individual, and through his word he is calling you and preparing you and sending you to be ^{God's} ~~his~~ ambassador, ^{God's} ~~his~~ spokesperson, ^{God's} ~~his~~ child in this world. God has a plan and purpose and work for you. One by one he has given you birth in the waters of baptism. One by one he speaks to you week after week here. One by one he feeds you with ^{Christ's} ~~his~~ own Body and Blood.

God wants you to search his word as if it is spoken to you alone, letting his word shape and direct your life. As Jeremiah declared of himself, so God would have you declare, In truth the Lord has sent me. This afternoon, and tommorrow, he has work for you to do that no other

person on earth will be in a position to do. He knows you, he knows how many blessings he can make happen through you. God is speaking to you here, in a way that he is speaking to no other. For he speaks through his spirit given to me, and he hears through his spirit given to you that he might be powerful in this world through you.

As a father I dream big things for my children, I expect so much from them. That they could learn to love so much more than I am able, and to give themselves to others, and to trust in God with all their hearts and soul and mind and strength, what joy that would bring in heaven and on earth. How much more so does our Father in heaven dream big things for us. He knows all the possibilities he has created in you. He knows how many impossibilities he can accomplish through you as you believe. He has miracles beyond imagining stacked up, waiting for you as you hear his word, and day by day that in truth it is he who sends you.

Just as he sent Jeremiah, and Jesus.