



March 15, 2017
The Apostles' Creed 1.3

Read Ephesians 1:3-7

“And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.” (Luther’s meaning to the Apostles’ Creed, *Small Catechism*)

In 1527, Katie and Martin Luther became the parents of a daughter, Elizabeth. Less than a year later, on August 3, 1528, Elizabeth died. This loss moved him deeply. In March of 1529 their daughter, Magdalena was born. The new baby provided some consolation to her parents. Sadly, Magdalena died after a long illness in her father’s arms at age thirteen.

Three years after Magdalena’s death, Luther wrote a letter to comfort his friend and colleague, Andrew Osian-der, upon the death of Osian-der’s second wife and a daughter who died at almost the same time. In this letter we read of Luther’s parental grief three years after Magdalena’s death.

“I know from the death of my own dearest child how great must be your grief. It may appear strange, but I am still mourning the death of my dear Magdalene, and I am not able to forget her. Yet I know surely that she is in heaven, that she has eternal life there, and that God has thereby given me a true token of his love in having, while I live, taken my flesh and blood to his Fatherly heart.”

As Timothy Lull notes, Luther was the first theologian in a thousand years to have been a (legitimate) father. He brings this experience to the catechisms. God’s “pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy” was not a metaphor for Luther but rather an experience. Luther knew the joy of parental love for his children. He knew the pain of watching his children suffer and die. And he knew that this was a dim reflection of the passionate love of God for all of us, God’s children.

Luther came to understand that parenting is a self-sacrificing vocation of service. In our parenting, we are called to mirror God’s parental love for all God’s creatures. And that is true whether we are parents, grandpar-ents, aunts, uncles, friends, neighbors, teachers or any other caregivers.

More than that, Luther knew that it was the death of God’s son that saves us all. It is the broken fatherly heart of God that pours out life for all of us now and forever. In gratitude we do well to thank God for that love and to offer our service to our neighbors who are God’s children as well.

Let’s pray. Dear God, send your Holy Spirit into my heart today to know, accept and trust in your parental love for me and all your children. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Do something: Make a donation of gifts and/or cash to the Spiritual Life Program at Children’s Square (<http://childrensquare.org/spiritual-life/>).

Pastor Lowell Hennigs
Emanuel Lutheran Church
2444 N Broadway
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503-0499
www.emanuelcb.org