

Good morning, I'd like to add my welcome to Jonny's – if you don't know who I am, I'm Dianne, the youth and families associate here at the united parish.

Today's service is a little bit different to other ones over recent weeks

As Today we're thinking about fathers –

In fact, I want to think a little bit wider than that ...

I want to actually think about male role models in our lives

and for many of us it might be our dads,

but that's not the case for all of us -

maybe our dad isn't around so it might be grandad,

that inspirational teacher or youth worker,

a family friend, or an uncle...who's been a great encouragement to you.

but whoever it is – today is a great opportunity to recognise their part in your life and to thank them...

TALK 1 – Role models

So I've been wondering – who do you look up to? Who inspires you, encourages you?

I asked some of our children and young people that question – let's find out what they said...

VIDEO

As a child, when I first moved to northern Ireland with my mum and my 2 sisters

- there was one man in particular whom I met at church

and he became someone very important to me and my family.

He was my minister – Jan Taylor. Sadly he's no longer with us.

But this man was kind, and caring and full of fun –

and the reason I went to church,

the reason I discovered Jesus and why I am doing what I do today.

I'm sad I never really got to tell him that, but one day I will!

But, The bible is full of male role models, men who were like fathers to others—
for example Barnabas who encouraged John Mark,
or Joseph – Jesus step dad who brought him up as his own son –
helping him grow and become the person God was shaping him to be.

There are lots of people we can learn from, but one of my Favourites is a man called Paul –

So instead of a bible reading today let's watch a short video from saddleback kids about Paul's life. (you can read all about Paul in Acts chapter 9, and much of the New Testament)

VIDEO

I love this story of Paul and although ***Paul wasn't a dad*** –

he became a great role model to lots of people,

especially two young men called timothy and titus whom he called sons of the faith.

These men's lives were shaped by God who used Paul and his teaching to transform so many!

I love that Paul wasn't perfect! None of us are...

not the role models we look up to, not even our dads are perfect.

We're all very human who make mistakes –

so we need to be careful that we don't look for perfection in our fathers, or male role models – or we may be disappointed.

But I love the fact that although Paul started out as someone who detested Jesus and all his followers – but then encountered God and was transformed –

in fact – you can't help but be transformed when you encounter Jesus – we read about it all the time in the new testament.

Paul actually became the person he was trying to destroy...

I love that no matter what mistakes we've made,

or how much we've messed up – we learn and see in Paul's life that God's forgiveness is there for us all nothing can separate us from God's love!

Because like Paul – God sees something in you – he sees the purpose of your life, he sees the person you can become with his help.

Today as we think about role models –

I want to ask you a question –

not who do you look up to, but who looks up to you – are you someone's role model?

Are you setting the example you should be setting (this question is for all of us, not just dads!)

I dare you to be courageous like Paul and to step out in faith and see what purpose/what adventure god has planned for your life.

TALK 2 – God is our role model – the perfect father!

So I asked some of our children and youth to describe the characteristics of someone they look up to, a role model in their life! this is what they had to say:

“My dad” VIDEO

Some of us have a great relationship with our fathers and some of us really struggle

But over the years I've come to know and trust my heavenly father to be the perfect father.

And here's a few of the reasons why:

God is trust worthy – Proverbs 3v5 says to trust in the lord with all of your heart, we shouldn't depend on our own understanding. Jesus always trusted his father God even when he wasn't sure about what was going to happen to him – he followed Gods plan anyway. (Personal story – moving here etc) **have you stepped out in faith and trusted God with your life?**

A source of encouragement – throughout the bible God want to encourage us... in fact he wants to help us to live the best life possible! Jesus tells us (in john chapter 10 verse 10) that he has come so that we might have life – life to the full... a life to the full is one that is in relationship with God the father and allows God to lead us. (God's word always encourages and helps us but I find that sometimes I need to hear it from people too.... And ive found that god often brings people across my path when ive needed to hear an encouraging word! – **who can you encourage?**)

He's always there for us – even in the difficult times God is always there for us – I love that even when Jesus was finding things difficult he knew he could always retreat and find some where to spend time alone with his heavenly father - Gods word promises us that God will never leave nor forsake us! **If you're struggling can I encourage you to run into your heavenly father's arms – he loves you very much and is always there waiting for you!**

Finally, God the perfect father – **always has our best interest at heart!** Sometimes we may not like what God wants to do in our lives, but it's all back to knowing gods heart is always for us... if he won't give us something we've asked for, or asks us to go or do something we're not comfortable with – we need to remember he sees the bigger picture – he only wants to give us good things... he wants us to live a great life – full of joy, and peace and kindness and all the fruit of the spirit – he wants to shape us... but he asks for us to be patient and to trust...

So today, on father's day – as we celebrate those amazing male role models that we have in our lives... let's not forget our heavenly father who loves you very much and wants the best for you... you can trust him! I hope that you do!

God bless, Dianne x