

Leviticus 19:1-2 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."

There are certain things every young person growing up believes with all their heart that ever person who has grown up heartily chuckles at. Today I would like to focus us on one such belief. The belief is this: I will never be like my dad or my mom. Yes, every young person, usually in a moment of uncontrolled frustration, solemnly vows to the skies, "When I grow up, I will never be like my parents."

But years later, it happens to all, no matter how solemn that vow made in youth was. A phrase comes out one's mouth that they were sure would never cross their lips. A particular attitude flows through one's veins that they were certain they had vaccinated themselves against ever catching. A facial feature or rounded belly stares back at them in the mirror that bears a resemblance so close to their parents that it could easily be used as a birth certificate. Usually when these things happen, a scream fit for Halloween is issued as the person realizes that they have become their parents, at least in one way or another.

It is just part of life. At least in some ways, each one of us ends up looking, sounding, or being just like our parents. One could say that it is just in the genes.

But before we get the young people in the congregation today too discouraged, we should say that resembling our parents is not always a bad thing. Some people's likeness to their parents is a blessing. Some are blessed with a metabolism that eats up mounds of food and leaves a trim waistline just like their mom. Others seem to have just been born with an ability to cope well with any amount of stress just like their dad. And still others find flowing from their mouths pearls of wisdom that were planted by good old mom or good old dad. Yes, these good things too are just in the genes.

Today, we are encouraged by our Old Testament lesson to be just like our Dad. But the call is not to be like our earthly dads, but our Heavenly Dad. Yes, we are encouraged to prove true the old adage: like Father, like son. Or for those women out there, like Father, like daughter. And what particularly are we called to emulate about our Dad? How are we to look like our Heavenly Father? Well our text is fairly simple. It says, “Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”

Well to be completely honest, our text is not quite that simple. In the Hebrew, this seemingly simple phrase could really be translated three different ways. One option I have already said. It could be translated, “*Be holy*, for I the Lord your God, am holy. But, it could also be translated, “*You are holy*, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.” Or finally, it could be translated, “*You will be holy*, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.”

Do I bring this up today in order to try to confuse you or because I wish to teach you Hebrew? Certainly not! I bring it up because the question of how to translate this phrase actually leads us into the truth of our text. You see to respond to the command to be holy, one must rest on the truths that they are holy and that they will be holy. Let me say that again. You see to respond to the command to be holy one must rest on the truths that they are holy and that they will be holy. We could well say that all three translations are proper for we as God’s children are holy, we will be holy, and we are to be holy.

The whole of scripture is clear, as children of God, if we wish to be holy we shouldn’t worry first and foremost about how we are acting but first understand that we are holy by virtue of God’s grace. Yes, each of us by virtue of God’s gifts first given to us in baptism and continuing to be given to us in Word and Supper, we are holy. 1 Corinthians 1:7 puts it this

way: "God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." Yes, we are God's holy temples by virtue of the Spirit's indwelling in us. It is not that we are holy by virtue of what we do, but rather by virtue of who lives in us, namely the Holy One, the Holy of Holies, the Holy Spirit. On the day of our baptism, God said that we were holy. But he did more than just say it, he forgave us all of our sins and gave to us the Holy Spirit in order that not only would he say that we were holy but that he might make us holy as well.

And when we understand this truth, that God makes us into holy people, we are finally able to respond to the command to be holy. Our acts of holiness are only possible because we are people of holiness by God's grace. 1 Peter says something very similar to our text in this way, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." Yes our acting in holiness rests upon the fact that God had called each of us in holiness.

Yes, it is as if God placed into us his genes in the new birth of Holy Baptism. Being holy is now just in our genes. The holiness given to us freely by our God becomes the very source for the holiness that is to be expressed by us in our daily lives. Just as surely as a blond hair gene produces blond hair, so also having God's holy genes inside of us produces holiness of life.

Like Father like son. Like Father, like daughter. Yes we are to resemble our Father and his holiness. And this resemblance is to be seen and known. We will find ourselves defeating temptation just like our God did when he was here in the flesh. We will find ourselves being

gentle, kind, patient, and loving just like our God is as his Spirit makes clear. We will love righteousness and hate wickedness just like dear old Dad.

Yes when we look in the mirror and examine our lives, we should begin to see a likeness to our Father. And perhaps even more importantly, when others look at us, they too should see that likeness. They see our good or holy works and give glory to our Father who is in heaven.

We don't become holy by wanting to look like our Father. And we do not become holy by fighting against that resemblance either. We become holy simply because we are God's kids and kids resemble their parents. Our Father is holy, so also we are holy.

And one day this process which was begun in us on the day of our baptism will be complete when all of those parts of us that bear likeness to our old father, the devil, are removed completely from us in heaven. Then we will be indistinguishable from our Father in terms of our holiness. There his holiness and our holiness will be the same. Oh he will still be the Dad and we will still be the kids, but by his grace we will look, talk, and act holy just like him for all eternity.

I suppose it is only natural to want to fight being like our earthly Fathers and Mothers, but we need not fight against being like our Heavenly Father. In fact, that is what sin in the Christian life truly is. It is fighting against the likeness God has given us to himself. Our text gives us some example of what fighting against our likeness to God this looks like. It looks like slandering our neighbor, causing him or her harm with our words. It looks like looking out for the poor or the rich without regard for justice. It looks like holding grudges or seeking revenge. And no doubt any sin can be added to this list for each and every sin is evidence of fighting against the spiritual genes that God has blessed us with.

And for such fighting against our spiritual nature in Christ, we indeed need to be here today to confess such striving against God. As we will confess such actions to God, he has promised that we will receive his forgiveness and the strengthening that comes from his Holy Spirit again. Yes, as we confess our sins God will give to us a share in the holiness of his Son, that One who resembled his Father and his will in every last detail of his life. If we confess our fighting against our likeness to our Father, surprisingly God will only make us more like himself.

If we leave this place knowing that the forgiveness won at the cross has come to us again this day to make us holy, we will no longer find a need to fight our likeness to the Father. But instead, we can rejoice at God's work of conforming us into his image day by day. Yes, by his grace, we can look into the mirror and be glad to look like our dad.

Hopefully sometime this week, Melissa this week gave birth to a new child. And without a doubt, one of the first comments made will be this, "Well who does it look like, her mom Melissa or her dad Josh." But hopefully as this little one grows, the true likeness that will be seen will be to its Heavenly Father.

The same is my prayer for each of us. It is in our genes. As long we don't fight it, we will look more and more like our Father. Like Father, like sons and daughters. What blessed truth this is to know and to receive. May we never fight the resemblance we have to our Father again. Amen.