

Diocesan Sermon
The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Year A
6th September 2026

The Reverend Dr Jane Lee-Barker, Parish of Barham NSW

Fathers! It's Father's Day today!

What images come to mind to you with this word?

Many people will be making this a special day for a man in their lives. Some men will be enjoying breakfast in bed and some other gifts. Others will be remembering their own fathers and what he meant to them. The word *father* means many things to many people. Some people have good memories and experiences and others may have very bad memories.

When I was studying pastoral care, we had to recognise that when we or Jesus referred to God as father, there might be someone listening who might immediately become disturbed. Richard Rohr the great pastoral and spiritual teacher talks about the "father wound" and how he had had many people who came to him because of that.

My own father was the unconditional love man, and I knew that no matter what I did all that would upset him was what it might be doing to me. There was a liberal aspect to this too. Once when I was twelve my mother didn't want me to go to a Christian girls' camp, but when I asked my father, he said to my mother, "You can't keep her in cottonwool forever, Beryl. Of course she should go!"

Usually, the person is a man although in today's world someone might dispute that. What qualities might we expect to see in a person who is a father, and can another person such as a woman have those qualities? Perhaps with a little leeway we may say that some women might have some of these qualities too.

We might see protection, a person who protects others. We might see a teacher or one who cares for others and brings them under his "wing". We might see a father as one who provides financially or in other ways. A father might be seen as dependable and one in whom we can trust. We might see a father as someone strong who stands up for what is right.

In our Gospel reading today we have the way to treat others - it is love. We read of Jesus' words telling us that we should never despise the little ones or those who

appear to be least significant. Rather we should seek them out. Value them! We are assured of the care of our Father, God. In the parable of the 99 and the 1, we are reminded of our way of thinking that the 99 is enough, but not for God the Father. God has all the qualities of a father and many more as well. He or she may be little to you but very important to me. This is to say we need to see ourselves as, how God sees us. God is totally loving. We need to ask how God sees a person. Jesus asks for active ministry that doesn't judge but openly encourages.

Jesus has shown us that our God is a loving ever-present God who loves us beyond measure, protects us and always wants the best for us!

May the name of the Lord be praised!