

“You look just like your dad, Jim.”

“You look just like Lewis.”

“You’ve got that Rogers smile... with a little of your mother in you too.”

The more I get older, the more I agree, I do look like my father. Since I’ve turned 30, which was only a month ago, I’ve spent a lot of time looking at myself during this quarantine. I don’t have anywhere to go. Everywhere I look, there I am. I’ve seen myself more during this pandemic than anyone else. When I do Zoom meetings and Facebook recordings, there I am. Looking in the many different mirrors I’ve noticed that I’m beginning to get my father’s face, and unfortunately even his belly and hair (or lack thereof). I still have his smile and his nose, and blue eyes, but the thinning hairline I could do without.

The more my sister gets older, people tell her that she resembles my mom. So much so, that on the phone when you talk to her even their voices are identical, its uncanny. And when my mom, my sister, my aunt, Jamie-Sue and her daughter, Dorothy all get together, it’s like listening to one person talk to themselves. It’s extremely entertaining.

But even though, my father is gone, and the memory of him gets harder and harder to hold onto as time passes. It comforts me that I can still see him, when I look in the mirror. That I can still hear him, when I speak or laugh. But at the same time, I understand too that it must be hard for those who loved him as much as I did, for them to see or hear me. I cannot explain how oddly bitter-sweet those moments are for some.

Yet, it’s nice to know too that I know where I come from, and that I’m loved. There are so many folks out there trying to figure out just who they are, and where they come from. You’ve got ancestry.com, and 23andme, and I’m sure a lot of other DNA testing websites that give you the chance to know your story without having to get on the Maury television show. You can even

get your dog’s DNA tested now to find out what breeds they are! And of course! Why would we not want to find out where we come from? It’s nice to know our story.

While I may continue to look like my father with every passing day, it’s nice to know that there are traces and subtleties of my mother too. I wish I’d inherited my mom’s metabolism but at least I inherited her nose instead of my dad’s. But more than just appearances, there are things about myself that I’ve learned, because I know who my parents are. And that’s not a luxury for some. Knowing my parents has helped me know myself.

I’m extremely analytical. I tend to overthink things. But I’m also laid-back. I remember my parents telling me one day to sum me up, “Son, you are a dessert eater first.” Meaning I like to procrastinate on what needs to get done and do the fun stuff first. Instead of drawing on my father’s hard-working attributes and my mother’s caring attributes, I tend to do my own thing. So, when my mom tells me “that’s something your dad would’ve done”. Or that I’ve said something or resembled him, or her for that matter, in some way, I feel extremely moved and proud, because that meant that some of their likeness could be seen coming out of me. And I want so much to be like the funny, charismatic, kind-loving, life of the party person that my father was. And I want so much to be like the caring, nurturing, will always be there for you when you need me type of person my mother is. I long to be like them, to be as good as they were to me, for my own children someday.

I’m talking about my likeness I have with my parents, not just because we’re celebrating mother’s today, but because I think Jesus is talking about the same thing in our Gospel reading for today.

In chapter 14 of John’s Gospel, Jesus gathers with his disciples at the Last Supper, on the night before he is sentenced to die on the cross, to prepare them for the grim days that are ahead

of them saying, “Don’t be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. My father’s house has room to spare. If that were not the case, would I have told you that I’m going to prepare a place for you? When I go to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me so that where I am you will be too. You know the way to the place I’m going” (John 14:1-4 CEB).

For Jesus, death was near, and he knew it. That is why he assured the disciples to not be worried. He was returning to the Father to prepare a place for us in heaven, in the eternal household of God. And then he reminds them that they know the way to God’s home. We talked about the way in last week’s gospel lesson. Jesus says, “I am the door, the gateway.” And we know greener pastures are their waiting for us, so long as we go through the gate and not over it.

But then doubting Thomas, in uniform fashion asks Jesus, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. If we don’t know where you are going, how can we know the way?”

I sometimes find the disciples to be beyond hopeless at times. This being one of them. Yet again, Jesus clarifies much about himself and God as he patiently re-reveals one of the most important confessions in all of the New Testament saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From now on you know him and have seen him”.

Still, Philip says, “Lord, just show us God; that will be good enough for us.” (John 14:6-7) Did I mention that the disciples were hopeless? Philip just seems to pour on the doubt, embodying the human spirit, kicking Jesus when he’s already down, “sure thing Jesus, ‘Son of God,’ just show us your Father in heaven right now and that’ll be sufficient proof enough for us.”

The disciples long to see the Father too that it almost sounds like they are doubtful; yet they have had Jesus right in front of them the whole time. I can hear the pain and disappointment in Jesus’s voice when he gives his reply, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been

with you all this time?” Were the words of glory and hope I speak to you not enough? Were the actions of love and friendship not understood in my works of miracles for others. The biggest and best of them all that is yet to come to you? “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I have spoken to you I don’t speak on my own. They come from the Father. The Father who dwells in me does his works. The works I do, they come from the Father. Trust me when I say (Philip and friends) that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least believe on account of the works themselves.” (9-10 CEB).

In other words, if you remember the scene from *the Lion King* where Simba is having an identity crisis, Jesus is all the beloved Disney characters Simba, Mufasa, and Rafiki rolled into one explaining to us who he is and calling us to “Remember who we are”. Essentially, what I mean is, if we look close enough and hard enough at Jesus’s reflection in the Scriptures, then we should see what God looks like. If we listen close enough and hard enough to Jesus speaking to us in the Scriptures, we should hear God’s voice too. Forgetting what Jesus looks and sounds like makes us forget who God is and who we are. This I believe is what Jesus means by, “if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father,” and, “no one comes to the Father except through me.”

So if you want to know what God looks like and sounds like...just look at his Son.

If you want to remember what God looks like and sounds like...just look at his Son again.

If you want to know or remember how to act or what to do if there’s a pandemic and you have to be in quarantine with your family...just go back and look at his Son again and again and again until his likeness becomes a part of you.

Like me wanting to hold onto the memory of my dad by looking into the mirror or talking about him with those who knew him, we too can hold onto the likeness of God by reading and talking about God’s Son in the Bible. The Gospels specifically are meant to be a mirror reflection of Jesus for us to follow. If the Gospels are a reflection of Jesus, and Jesus is a reflection of God, and we are to mirror Jesus by reading the scriptures, then when people who’ve never seen God meet us, we should come alive and show them our reflection of Jesus from the Scripture.

In other words, as my parents son...

When people see me, they see my mother and my father. They see a reflection of them.

When people hear me, they hear my father. They hear an echo of him.

When people know me, they know my mother and my father, though they may never have even met them.

Therefore, as Christians...

When people see you, they should see a reflection of Christ in you.

When people hear you, they should hear an echo of Christ’s words in you.

When people know you, they should know Christ who is God’s Son in you.

So on this Mother’s Day take the time to remember what it is that makes you, you. Take the time to reflect on who it is that made you, you. Take the time to thank them. Thank them with a phone call or a card. Thank them by being to others, better than they were to you. Finally, and most important of all, thank them with a prayer. Jesus ends his reply to Philips request to see the Father with saying, “I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father can be glorified in the Son. When you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.” So, today I want all of us, in complete belief that Jesus will do it for us, I want us to pray and ask Jesus to let those

who mothered us (whether that's our God in heaven who nurtured us or our parents) to know our love and thanks for all they have done for us. Amen.

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