



June 2017

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the wake of Mother's Day in May came Father's Day this month. On Mother's Day, our Sunday worship was centered on Children's Ministry for two reasons: first, to allow children to participate in whole-family worship and to serve in it, thus making it known to them and to adults that they can serve God even at young age, and second, to make that ministry better known to the congregation and report its current status and needs, thus motivating more people through God's Spirit to participate in teamwork ministry to our children. We should all know that the Mother's Day worship is a regular Sunday service but with its theme and focus on mothers. Although the service on that day was very long and markedly exceeded the schedule, we could not simply end it after the presentation of the children's ministry. The sermon should always be the core of our worship as we not only worship God but also listen to His words. The service could not have ended without delivering the message on Mother's Day from the pulpit. Had we cut out the sermon due to time restraint, we would not have had a full worship and thus risked turning it into a children's show. Nevertheless, the worship on that day greatly exceeded the planned duration of an hour and a half and we apologize for that. Coworkers of the children ministry have learned their lesson and will do their best to control the timing to allow on-time start and finish in the future. We also regret that during the service, we did not introduce core coworkers of the children ministry team and express our gratitude to those faithfully involved in children's Sunday school and worship and Friday Awana ministry due to our negligence. With this letter, we beg those coworkers for your forgiveness. Despite the missed opportunity to thank you in public, the church appreciates dearly the effort of children's coworkers and trust that God also knows it. May God bless each one of you and let us hold onto to the opportunity, leaning on the power of the Holy Spirit, to brand Jesus Christ and the Biblical truth in the lives of our children. The book of Proverbs reminds us, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." (22:6) "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

On this Father's Day, I, on behalf of the church, wish all fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers health and happiness and God's peace. We become more appreciative of the love of our parents when we ourselves become parents. Being a father, we have certainly experienced its sweetness and bitterness. Only a father can feel the dismay of children's disobedience. On Mother's Day in May, I felt envious upon seeing the presentation of flowers by children to sisters in the church who are mothers, for I knew that the worship on Father's Day would be of a much simpler format. Nevertheless, may God's peace and joy be with all you fathers. As sons and daughters, I hope that you will grasp the moment to appreciate and pay respect to your parents. Ephesians 6:1-4 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. This is the first commandment with a promise. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." There are clear teachings in the Bible on being a child or being a father. We also ought to thank our heavenly Father on this day as the Bible tells us, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not

always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.” (Psalms 103:8-13)

A sensational book “Battle hymn of the tiger mom” was published in the US a few years ago. If you have children, you most likely have heard about this book. It was written by a professor of Chinese descent, Amy Cha, on her experience of raising children. She raised her two daughters Sophia and Lulu with extreme disciplinary voracity akin to a tiger. Interestingly, her zodiac sign is also the tiger. One daughter was obedient with no complaint on her discipline and even appreciating her mom’s effort. The other daughter, however, was disrespectful and dared to challenge her mom even when forced to stand outside in the snow. Both daughters became high achievers as soloists playing with world-class orchestras. Do you think that Tiger mom was successful? Do you want to become a tiger mom? On other hand, parents who toil hard for their children are often seen today among Chinese and American families. These families are generally well-off with a small number of children and they are adored by their parents. A Sunday school teacher once lamented, “It is really hard to teach children these days. Six adults in the family can pamper a single child. No wonder they are spoiled!” Tiger parents, or toiling parents, will eventually realize that the future life of a child is really not up to them. Regardless of their exceptional or just ordinary achievement, children’s happiness does not rest on parents’ efforts or on their ability or academic qualifications. Rather, it depends on God who has ultimate control of our lives as said in Psalms, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” (Psalms 127:1-2)

Father’s Day is also a time for remembering our deceased fathers. For me, the memory of being with my father in Hong Kong before going abroad remains vivid. On that dark, cloudy day with non-stop rain from early morning to dusk, the usually bustling Hong Kong streets were nearly abandoned with a few homebound pedestrians. My wife and I were burdened in our hearts for we would depart from Hong Kong the next morning to travel to the strange land of America. That was the same year when we, holding daughter in our arms, escaped on the roaring sea as refugees. For one and half month, our boat was lost in the sea that devoured some of our fellow voyagers who died of starvation and thirst on the journey. To our utter amazement, we eventually reached Hong Kong, thus allowing reunification with parents. However, being in refugee status, we could not stay there but had to leave for a third country that would accept us. Our hearts were torn between the longing for settling down somewhere and for remaining in Hong Kong to be with parents. We were like rootless lotus leaves floating and drifting aimlessly in the wind. After being with parents for just a few months, we had to leave Hong Kong immediately upon the news of being granted asylum in the US. Our future was veiled in uncertainty and we did not know if we could ever reunite with our parents again. As the night fell, with rain still pouring, when my brother had not returned home from work and mom was busy in the kitchen, dad unexpectedly asked me to go out with him to a little shop across a ball field to have some wanton noodle. I was surprised by his request since dad was a type of traditional, stern Chinese father who seldom smiled or even talked to or played with children. We never saw him laugh, let alone going out with him alone. My siblings and I really feared our dad and dared not get close to him. But, he now would take me alone to have wanton noodle on the eve of my departure from Hong Kong! As we were walking

on the rain-soaked street, dad opened the umbrella and asked me to walk under it. As we walked toward the noodle shop in silence, I felt so close to my dad and in fact, that was my most intimate moment with him throughout my life. Walking on that quiet street under the umbrella, it appeared as if we were the only people on earth. Neither of us said anything to each other. We did not really know what to say and sensed in our minds that it would be the last time of being together as father and son. Not surprisingly, I received the news of my father's passing shortly after leaving Hong Kong but sadly, I did not have a chance to go back to Hong Kong to his funeral. From that day on, I learned to treasure each day of my time on earth and each occasion of getting together with others. Every gathering with families, relatives, friends or church brothers and sisters is precious. There is no everlasting feast on earth; joyful gatherings do not last long. Why do we still insist on things according to our own will? Why do we hurt others' feelings because of trivial matters? I often recall words from Ecclesiastes, "For everything there is a season...a time to be born, and a time to die...a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh..." One cannot avoid storms in our lives but with minds united, we can support each other under one umbrella and walk together instead of being alone. I can no longer remember the taste of that bowl of wonton noodle, but the scene of that umbrella and the warmth of walking with my dad under it remained vivid in my mind.

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Serving with you in the Lord,  
Pastor Calvin Chan