

The Father's Love

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[0:00] Thinking about the love of God, behold what manner of love the Father has given to us.! And thinking of the story of the prodigal, there was a young man, he lived with the pigs! And his days were spent in this filthy pigsty. He was hungry, far from home. And then memories flooded his mind. And he remembered home. He remembered home.

It reads in Luke 15 verse 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare? And I perish with hunger. So he thought about home, where he'd come from. He thought about his father. And it says, verse 18, I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. And I'm no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants.

Here he was in this filthy pigsty. The pigs grunting and squealing and the filthy mess that he was there amongst them, feeding them. How was it that he had sunk so low? How did he go to that place? This lad had brashly demanded his share of the family's estate. He wanted his wealth and he wanted it now, before his father had passed on. How cheeky. And he cashed it all in. But before long, it was all gone. What had he done with it? Perhaps in the pigpen, he remembered his shame and his guilt. What had happened, it says, when the wealth was parted and distributed between the two sons, it says, verse 13, and not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all there arose a famine, a mighty famine in that land. And he began to be in once. Now just yesterday, Saturday afternoon, just gone, I sat on the porch with a likable man called Richard in Elizabeth Vale. And Richard had had a colourful life. He told me about some of his history, he chatted with me for a while, and Richard called himself an Irish Catholic. He was 77 years old. And Richard told me that he was dying with bone cancer. And Richard told me stories of his life as a stockman in the Gulf of Carpentaria, of his days that he had been a security guard, rounding up the crims. And one day he told me how he reached into a car with the crims in it and he grabbed the car keys and he threw them out while he radioed for the police to come. And Richard joked with me that sometimes people called him Roger, as he had a habit from his radio talk of saying, Roger that, Roger that.

Yet for all of his life, Roger, no Richard, did not know the Saviour. He did not know the Saviour. And I urged Richard to trust in Christ. But as far as religion goes, he had nothing but disdain for the church.

[3:26] The Catholic Church, but regardless for the church. And what he had experienced as a schoolboy. Here was Richard now, 77, dying. What had happened to him so long ago, so many years before, in his schoolboy days, still haunted him and sailed him for all his life. And sadly, Richard stands at the end of a wasted life.

Truly a Christless life is a wasted life. The man in our story was such a man. He was a waster. He wasted his substance. His life was wasted. And now he was in want. Empty. He'd sunk so low that he was in the very pig pen, literally.

And it tells in verse 15 that he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country. He sent him into his fields to feed the swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat. And no man gave unto him. Here he was feeding the pigs and he even wanted to eat the pig swill. The very rubbish that the pigs were eating.

This man was a waster. He'd hit rock bottom. He knew his shame. What he had done. But he turned the corner. He turned the corner. He headed back to the Father. He headed back home. Perhaps he feared rejection.

[4:59] Certainly he deserved nothing. Nothing but condemnation. Yet he turned his face homewards. And it tells us verse 20. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.

Maybe he was looking. He was looking. His father saw him. While he was a great way off. And his father saw him. And had compassion. And his father ran.

And fell on his neck. And kissed him. This man had been a rebel. Now he was clothed in these smelly rags. Yet look at the father's heart here.

The repentant waster saw his father running towards him. He saw the outstretched arms. His fears were stilled. Verse 21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against thee.

I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. And I am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Father, he says. Father, I have sinned.

[6:05] Now there's no record here of tears. But chances are there were some. But we know down through the centuries. As people have heard this story. Tears have flowed. From many faces.

Many prodigal's faces bowed before the throne of God's pardoning grace. And they, like the son in this story, have proved the sweetness of the father's love.

Father God's enduring love. And yet there's a sad shadow on this moving scene. As we hear about the other son. The other son. He had taken his share when the wealth was divided.

And he had not wasted it on righteous living. But what had he done with it? We are not told. But what we do know is that there was this lack of gratitude in his near yet distant heart.

And the servants in his father's house had so much, so much bread. Bread enough to spare. And all that he had was ever there to satisfy him.

[7:08] But his heart was as ungrateful as the slaves. But the father's heart was filled with love and joy. For this my son was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. And they began to be merry. So the father was filled with this love, with this joy, overflowing. The great love that could forgive the sinner in disgrace.

Yet not everyone shared this joy. When the elder son was in the field, he came and he drew knights of the house. And he heard the music and the dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked him what these things meant.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come. And thy father hath killed the fatted calf because he hath received him safe and sound. But the older brother was stirred up with bitterness and resentment.

And it says, And he was angry and would not go in. Therefore came his father out and entreated him. He was stewing. He was steaming there. Smoke coming out of his ears. How dare this brother of mine, this son of his, as he called him.

[8:19] How dare he. The older son told of his works. How he thought not of love and grace. What does he talk about in verse 29? He answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee.

Neither transgressed I at any time like a moment. And yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. These many years do I serve thee.

This one just talked about his works. His own works. Not of relationship. The older son accused his brother. His heart despised both his father and his brother.

Then verse 30 it reads, But as soon as this thy son, thy son, not my brother, thy son, was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Can we see in this story the wonderful grace of God the father? And the father says, So just touching on this thought, the older brother, the younger brother, the older brother was right.

[9:37] Technically, yes. Technically, yes. In the sense that his brother had done wrong. Why should he get anything? But the older brother had also wasted what he was given.

He did not truly value the relationship. The fact that all the father had was his already. The father's love had raced towards the disgraced son to bring compassion to the repentant.

Think of it as we come to the table of the father's love. The hands stretched out of the father. The hands stretched out in welcome to receive us.

And the hands stretched out today for you and me. They're nail scarred hands. The hands of his only begotten son. God manifest in the flesh, reaching out to us.

Welcoming us. What should have happened in Israel, apparently, was the elder brother ought to have gladly welcomed the younger brother home. That was the rightful thing.

[10:37] The customary thing. But he failed to. He failed to do so. How is it that God deals with us? We think in the sense that Christ, as the elder brother, the heir of all things, the one who through his earthly life, he never transgressed at any time his commandment.

He could truly say that. Couldn't he? Our Lord. The son of God. The only begotten son of God. He could truly say that he had not at any time transgressed the commandment.

And he is the one. He comes. He comes forth on behalf of the father in his name to welcome us. To seek the lost. To seek the lost. And it tells of our Lord, he himself, who not ashamed to call them brethren.

He's not ashamed to call us brethren. And he brings the restored into the banqueting house. As we come to have a feast this morning. As much as it's only a tiny feast. It is a feast, isn't it?

It's the love feast. And it is he himself was not ashamed to call them brethren who invites us to the table. And we see the welcome of the father.

[11:51] He says, as this repentant son comes home, behold, the best robe which he brings out.

It is the robe of righteousness. We see in Isaiah 61. It tells of the one greatly rejoicing. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.

My soul shall be joyful in God. For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments.

And as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. The father says, bring forth the best robe. That's what he does for you, isn't it?

He does for me. The best robe. Who could calculate its worth? It was the most precious robe. And he himself purchased that robe for us.

[12:52] As he welcomes us on our return. We think of this one who gives us the best robe. He was stripped of his robe, wasn't he? His seamless robe.

They tore it off him. And they gambled for it at the foot of the cross. They stripped his robe before he bore our sins on the cross. The one who gives you the best robe.

The best robe. And then we read verse 22. But the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe. And put it on him.

And put a ring on his finger. Put a ring on his hand. And shoes on his feet. We see the ring which is put on the prodigal's hand. It's just that honour that was bestowed upon him.

Of the family welcome. The ring of the family's welcome. And the hand that holds that ring is wounded. And it extends that ring to you.

[13:51] And the heir of all things. He receives us as joint heirs with himself. God freely gives us all things. And the older son was told, all things.

All my things are yours. Everything that I have is yours. But the older son was just concentrating on his works.

These many years I've served thee. And the father says, put shoes on his feet. He who unstooped to wash his disciples' feet.

His own unshod feet were nailed in agony to the cross. He stoops to clothe our feet. With the preparation of the gospel of peace. And he says, verse 23, bring the fatted calf.

The very best calf. The choicest calf. Bring that one that we've been saving up for something special. Bring out the fatted calf. The best. Let us eat and be merry.

[14:58] Think of the prodigal. And put yourself in his place. He probably didn't have shoes. You couldn't put yourself in his shoes. Because he would have been shoeless.

Like a slave. But now he was wearing shoes. As the son. And that foolish young man. He'd known the pains of hunger and remorse.

He'd sat in the company of the grunting pigs. Now where was he? In the bright banqueting hall. Of home. As the place is filled with joy.

And music. And he's fully satisfied. Think of it. That we can feast with him. In that glad feast. That is his fellowship.

Relationship with the Father. God the Father. And that we are seated with him. In heavenly places. Can we be filled with the wonder of it all? As we come to the table.

[15:55] Think of that banqueting house. We think of the glad reception. We think of this one. He didn't deserve to be feasting. And yet here he was. He was welcomed. Clothed.

Honoured. Embraced. Kissed by the Father. Can we be filled with the wonder of Calvary today? Of what it means that we can have such a reception.

Such a glad, gracious reception. That God's love could be imparted to such as we. The love of the Father. And the love of the Son. The love of God rejoicing over one.

Homecoming of a sinner. Coming home. And truly he rejoices. Our God rejoices over thee.

As it reads. Zephaniah 3. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love.

[16:51] He will joy over thee with singing. Friends. Know the love of God today. Know that you. Even if you might feel. Like you're still back in the pig pen. Feeling like you've come to a very low place.

That the Father is just looking out for you. He's watching out for you. And he wants you to just turn your face towards him. And then he'll run to you. And he'll embrace you.

He'll receive you. That's the Father. The Father heart of God today, isn't it? Notice the feet that run. He didn't just stand there and wait for the Son to come. The Father ran to him.

He did the work. He did the yards to go to the Son. He ran to the Son. Whereas I imagine the Son was probably looking at his feet and kicking the can down the road.

Not that they ever had cans back then. But he would have been kicking the dust and feeling pretty miserable and pretty low. Pretty guilty. And condemned. And unworthy. But the feet that ran were the feet of the Father.

[17:51] The feet of the Father ran. And the arms of the Father reached out to receive. And the heart of the Father. It gives and gives. And keeps on giving. Then he dances with joy at the festival.

At the feasting. At the return of one sinner. This is our God. Our Father. Isn't it? May his love kindle in us a love like his. A love that waits.

That welcomes the returning sinner. That we can be unlike the older son in the story. That we might offer the fullest fellowship with others.

Just as unworthy as we. As we see a sinner come home. As we see a brother, a sister. Made a new creation. And we can welcome them to the family.

Knowing that none of us are worthy. Even the ones like the eldest brother. Who could talk about his works. Yet we know it's not of works. Lest any man should boast.

[18:48] May we offer the fullest fellowship. To everyone. That would simply come to the Father. May we have his love. That's willing to reach out. And embrace them.

As brothers and sisters in Christ. And that's what we hear about today. As we come to the table. As the table of fellowship. As the table. It's the banqueting time. Isn't it?

With our great God and Saviour. Our Lord Jesus. Today. Let's be encouraged. As we think. Of the great grace of God. He so extends it.

He still extends it. That we can be clothed. With the garment of salvation. He puts it on us. He clothes us with it. He bestows it. The garments of salvation.

He has covered me. With the robe of righteousness. It's his righteousness. He decks us out. It says. Like a bridegroom with ornaments. Like a bride with her jewels.

[19:44] What a picture of. A glorious day. Isn't it? A wedding day. And they heard the music and dancing.

Thy brother is come. And thy father had killed the fatted calf. Because he has received him. Safe and sound. What a reception. You can know that reception today.

As many as received him. We receive him. He receives us. It's twofold isn't it? We can't fathom the mystery of it. Yet. It's such a transaction made.

That he takes us out of the pig pen. And takes us to the banqueting house. That he takes us from our poverty. From our hunger. And gives us so much. Providence.

And supply. He takes us out of our condemnation. And he gives us such freedom. And forgiveness. That we can know that today.

[20:42] We're no longer in the pig pen. We're seated. In heavenly places. We're seated. Around the father's banqueting table. We're no longer weighed down. By guilt. And condemnation.

We're the objects of our father's love. And joy. And we're no longer rebels. And wasters. We're glad sons and daughters. By our father's grace.

That's the joy of it isn't it? The joy of our salvation. That we can know him. It's that relationship. That truly our heavenly father. Is the perfect.

Perfect one. The perfect father. As much as our human fathers might. Have limitations. And failings. Yet. Our father God.

Is truly gracious. That he would. Extend. Such love. As pictured in the prodigal story. I will arise.

[21:39] And go to my father. Can you go to the father today? Come. Run to the father. He'll run to you. I will arise. And go to my father. Father.

I have sinned. I'm no more worthy. To be called thy son. Yet there's no. There's no feeding of that narrative.

Is it? You know. It's just. The father doesn't. Doesn't hear that really. He just sees the. He sees the. The humble heart.

He sees that heart. Broken up. He sees the. The guilt acknowledged. And he gives grace. To such a one.

And if you can know that today. No matter your guilt. And shame. No matter the wasting. The. The wasted years. He looks beyond that.

[22:35] He sees. That you've come to your senses. You've come to yourself. And you've turned your face. Homewards. And you know. His welcome today. By his grace.

You'll know the garment of salvation. He'll get the best robe. The very best. It's the robe of his righteousness. Isn't it? As we come unto him. And what a joy in rejoicing.

In the father's house. It's filled with joy. And gladness. We pray for this man Richard. That he might know that.

That he might. Not waste another day. Not waste another moment. Until he comes to the cross. To Christ. God bless him.