

J.J.

OUR FATHER'S HEART

Luke 15:11-24

ANNOUNCEMENT:

- Continue to pray for Ken in Ethiopia

INTRODUCTION :

Story : Someone asked a young boy : What is Father's Day? It's just like Mother's Day but only less important.

Note : One of the things that seared in my mind when I was reading on Christian parenthood when Zak was born is that the child's first idea of who God the Father is, is his own relationship with his own dad. If the father is loving, then he will have not have a difficult time believing that God the Father in heaven is loving. If the father is always angry, the kid will grow up believing that God is just waiting for him to mess up and just be angry with the kid. If the father is absent, then the kids will have a hard time believing if there really is a God.

That's why as a father it's good to know our God the Father's heart and so we can emulate it by God's grace.

Luke 15: 11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' ²⁰So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. '

²²"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a

feast and celebrate.²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

Pray

Background :

- This parable has been considered the greatest short story ever told.
- We have to remember in order to really understand and get the greatest impact of this parable, we have to understand it according to the customs and culture of that time.
- We always hear the title of this parable as “The Prodigal Son” but the more appropriate title must be “The Lovesick Father”
- Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us a glimpse inside our Father’s heart.

Let’s take a look at the story.

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

***I. OUR FATHER’S LOVE EVEN IN OUR REJECTION OF HIM**

Question : How would you know if a person really loves you? That person loves you even if you don’t love him back or even if you reject him.

**11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them*

Etymology : share of the estate “meros ousia” portion of the material property

Note : The son did not use the word “inheritance” “kleronomia” – it’s not just the material goods but even the management of the estate for the future so you can provide for the entire family. The younger son only wanted the material “meros ousia” but not the management of the estate.

In short, the younger son DOESN’T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIS FATHER OR HIS FAMILY ANYMORE.

IN THOSE TIMES, it’s just like saying “I want you dead already because I want to run my own life.”

NOW : The cultural, normal and understandable reaction to this always in that time is a slap in the face – a Jewish gesture showing disdain for what he is asking. In our term, wala kang utang na loob, pagkatapos kitang makinabang sa lahat ng pag-aari ko, now you are wishing me dead. AND THEN, some fathers would dismiss the child and consider him dead already. They even sometimes hold a funeral.

BUT WHAT DID THE FATHER DO HERE? ...*he divided his property between them...*

Explain : One of the proofs that God loves us is that He has given us freewill – freewill to either love Him or reject Him.

***Quote :** I've heard one preacher say, that “God can do anything but there's one thing He won't do and that is to force you to love Him.”

Note : Love that is forced is not love at all. Love to be true must be an act of the will.

That's why : True love is called “agape” love. Phileo love says, I love you because I have to. But agape love says, I love you because I want to.

Illustration : I remember my own father, he went to Saudi when I was in Grade 4 until I was 18 years old. Based on his contract, he can only visit every 2 years (if company paid and no loss of salary). When he finally came home for good, all of us had a hard time relating with him. He was trying to strike a conversation but it even irritated me. But things changed when I saw how much he loves my Nanay. He was always gentle with her and never hurt her. But one time, they had a huge fight and I was in the middle of it. They were face to face but they were relaying their message by talking to me. My Nanay, who is a very passionate yet emotional woman said something like, “You know what Jerry, I don't love your Tatay anymore.” How can you react to that? And then she stepped out. It was deafening silence now between my Tatay and me. Until my Tatay said, “You know what Jerry, even if your Nanay said she doesn't love me anymore, here's what I can tell you. I love your Nanay and I will always love her no matter what.” From then on, I had respect for my Tatay but I respected and loved him even more.

Note : God chose to show His love for us even if we rejected Him or rebelled against Him.

Romans 5: 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

***Another proof that the son** doesn't want anything to do with the father.

¹³“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.”

Isn't this how we are described in the Bible before we received Jesus Christ in our lives?

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Again : It is God who has opened the way for us to be near Him again through His Son Jesus Christ.

¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

Interpretation first : To the Jews listening at that time, this would be ...sobra ang nangyari...because they are not allowed to eat pork or even touch it and now he is in Gentile land and now feeding pigs. He really went low.

¹⁷"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!'"

Etymology : KJV he came to himself “erchomai eis heautou” it’s like saying, he realized what he’s doing.

Pain and suffering has a way of getting our attention that we have strayed far from God. I’ve seen it several times that when God blesses a person, they have a tendency to forget to put God first. But when things are taken away, that’s the time they realize that everything comes from God.

Quote : God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” C.S. Lewis “The Problem of Pain

Pain has a way of bringing us back to and looking to our Father for help.

And when we experience pain because of our own wrongdoing, that’s the time we repent. **What is repentance?**

¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' ²⁰So he got up and went to his father.

It is stopping on your tracks and saying, “I sinned and I’m going back to God.”

***Quote :** If there are a thousand steps between us and God, he will take all but one. He will leave the final one for us. The choice is ours. - Max Lucado

And this is what our Lord Jesus showed regarding our Father’s heart.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

***II. OUR FATHER’S LONGING TO RECONCILE WITH US**

Interpretation : Let’s take this line by line.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion;

Note : Obviously, the father was looking time and time again if the son would come back because he immediately recognized his son. – he really loves his son, never loses hope na babalik din sa kanya. That's what love is.

Illustration : My father-in-law would always say, "Kung pusa nga hinahanap, kayo pa."

he ran to his son,

Note : Jewish men don't run. Why? Because it's a disgrace to show their legs, that's why mahaba ang kanilang damit

Etymology : ran "trecho" sprint

IMPORTANT Question : Why did he run?

while he was still a long way off,

In short, in order to reach his father, he will be passing by the neighbours and what he did would earn him scorn...and people during that time would be vocal about it (unlike the western situation)... "ito na walanghiyang anak...bumalik balik pa... or baka masampal or baka maduraan." , THE FATHER WANTED TO PROTECT HIM FROM IT.

***THAT'S WHY :** *threw his arms around him and kissed him.*

Interpretation : The usual Jewish custom, let him experience the scorn of others. In order for the rebellious son to learn, he must stand outside the house. The father is inside the house and wouldn't let him in first and you know what...the son was expecting that treatment but instead...

Quote : When you repent, our Father will always receive you and never reject you.

Illustration : This was very different from the father of Elizabeth Barrett. A childhood accident caused poet Elizabeth Barrett to lead a life of semi-invalidism before she married Robert Browning in 1846. There's more to the story. In her youth, Elizabeth had been watched over by her tyrannical father. When she and Robert were married, their wedding was held in secret because of her father's disapproval. After the wedding the Brownings sailed for Italy, where they lived for the rest of their lives. But even though her parents had disowned her, Elizabeth never gave up on the relationship. Almost weekly she wrote them letters. Not once did they reply. After 10 years, she received a large box in the mail. Inside, Elizabeth found all of her letters; not one had been opened! Today those letters are among the most beautiful in classical English literature. Had her parents only read a few of them, their relationship with Elizabeth might have been restored.

Now why are we sure that God will accept us back even if we strayed our too far.

Quote : God's love is based on his character, not our performance. - Christine Caine

***Notice :** ²¹*"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

What do you notice? The son never said *make me like one of your hired men*

In short : He realized that he doesn't even deserve to become a hired man or his servant...there's nothing he can do

THAT'S TRUE REPENTANCE : Realizing that you are a sinner and there's no way we can earn God's acceptance—

***This is the reason :** JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS ON OUR BEHALF. It is because of Him that we are accepted by our Father in heaven.

Galatians 2: 16 We know very well that we are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. (The Message Paraphrase)

Let's look at the further reaction of the father in this story.

²²*"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.*

***III. OUR FATHER'S LAVISHNESS IN HIS REJOICING BECAUSE OF US**

***Notice :** Did you hear the father blaming the son? If you repent and receive the forgiveness that our Lord Jesus Christ offers, He totally doesn't count our sins against us. *Hebrews 8 : 12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*

Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

What's the proof?

'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Note: I love that word "Quick!" here. It means instantly.

Illustration : I remember when I was younger when I sinned against God. I will kneel down and ask for forgiveness and yet I never felt it was enough so I would get a hanger, take off my shirt and use it as a whip to my back until it hurts. I was so wrong.

When I ask for forgiveness, he immediately forgives me because of what His Son Jesus Christ did. That's why 1 John 1:9 said

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

The meaning of "faithful and just" there means God saying, "I will always be faithful in remembering that my Son Jesus Christ already paid for ALL of your sins." God never forgets that you are His child because of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Note : In the Jewish household, you will distinguish immediately who is the servant and who are the sons. The male servants are half-naked, has no authority and are barefooted. The sons are wearing robes, has the authority (ring) and sandals.

***Isn't this what happened to us when we received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour?
We become His children and He becomes our Father.**

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

***How do we become children of God?**

John 1: 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

Note : God rejoices/celebrates when a person repents and comes back to Him

Context : This parable is connected with two other parables before it . The Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin...and together with the Parable of the Lost Son...you will see at the end that God rejoices at the end if a sinner repents.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Luke 15: ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁹ And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' ¹⁰ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The Parable of the Lost Son

²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

***Look at how true love should look like in the Bible :**

*1 Corinthians 13 : ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, **it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.** ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, **always hopes, always perseveres.***

Isn't this the kind of love our Lord Jesus demonstrated in the story?

Now : Look at the lavishness of the Father's joy.

²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

He asks that the fattened calf be killed. It's obvious that the fattened calf is only reserved for special celebrations or occasion. This is what happens when we repent and come back to God. ALWAYS Expect a reception instead of a rejection.

What's the reason for the celebration?

²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again;

That's who we are before without Christ.

Ephesians 2: 1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...

⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions —it is by grace you have been saved.

he was lost and is found.'

***Story :** A recent novel by Madeleine L'Engle is entitled A Severed Wasp. If you're addressing young people or some other audience with strong stomachs, the title, which comes from one of George Orwell's essays, offers a graphic image of human lostness. Orwell describes a wasp that "was sucking jam on my plate and I cut him in half. He paid no attention, merely went on with his meal, while a tiny stream of jam trickled out of his severed esophagus. Only when he tried to fly away did he grasp the dreadful thing that had happened to him." The wasp and people without Christ have much in common. Severed from their souls, but greedy and unaware, people continue to consume life's sweetness. Only when it's time to fly away will they gasp their dreadful condition.

God knows our dreadful situation without Him. That's how we need to look at the world. **LOOK AT THE WORLD WITH COMPASSION INSTEAD OF CONDEMNATION.**

Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

***Lyrics :** *Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,*

That saved a wretch like me....

I once was lost but now am found,

Was blind, but now, I see.

So they began to celebrate.

That's why Christians are supposed to be the most joyful people here on earth because we know where we stand and who we are. Maybe that's the reason why Christianity has lost its appeal because instead of love and joy, people see anger and condemnation. Remember God is rejoicing because we are saved.

GOD'S REJOICING IS ALWAYS CONNECTED WITH HIS SALVATION FOR US.

Zephaniah 3:17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

Wow! We thought earlier, we are the ones singing to God. We know God is singing in rejoicing when the church gathers because we are the ones who were lost but now has been found.

CONCLUSION :

Lesson : Christianity is about having that love relationship with God and others.

Example : we might be attending church but we might be attending to fulfill a duty or just for ourselves. We attend church because we have a relationship with God.

Story : The last time I saw My tatay was in 2009. I went home in August 2009 to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary and after a month he passed away because of cancer.

We already knew he had cancer and I wasn't so sure if I can celebrate with them because of financial constraints. My Tatay knows about this.

Whenever my Tatay and I would talk on the phone or in Skype, I would always ask him, "May gusto ba kayo? He will always answer " "wala anak". But I remember Saturday before Father's Day in 2009, we were on Skype and he said to me, , "Di ba anak, palagi mong tinatanong kung ano ang gusto ko?" I answered, "O sige ano po yun tay?" He replied, "I hope you will be here with us to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary"

It's just the same with our Father in heaven, more than our service, more than our gifts, what He wants is us and He gave even His own Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in order for that to happen. That's how much our Father in heaven loves us.

But that's not the end of the story. I wanted to surprise them so I didn't tell them I was going home. On the day of the 50th anniversary church wedding, I was getting out of the car and we made sure we parked far from the front steps of the church. I saw him get out of the van and then while I was alighting the car, he looked our way and said, "Si Jerry!" The people around him said, "No that's not Jerry". But my dad said, "Si Jerry, anak ko yan, si Jerry anak ko yan."

That's the heart also of our Father in heaven, even from afar when we go back to Him, He will be saying to everyone in heaven, "That's _____, he's my son."

S.G.D.