The Parable of a Father's Great Love  


Very often people who were known to be living sinful lives came to hear Jesus preach. Jesus always welcomed them. He was glad to have the opportunity to lead them to know him as their Savior. But the Jewish leaders grumbled because he did this.

To correct their wrong idea of what a Savior should do, Jesus told this parable: “A certain man had two sons. One day the younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me now the share of the money that you plan to leave me when you die.’ So the father gave each son his share right away.

“A few days later the younger son packed up all his belongings and traveled to a faraway country. There he wasted his money on wild parties with bad men and women. Soon he had spent everything he had. About that same time, a very bad famine came to that land, and the young man was left with nothing. So he found a job feeding pigs. He became so hungry that he wished he could eat some of the food that the pigs were given to eat, but no one would give him even that.

“Finally he came to his senses and saw how foolish he had been. He said to himself, ‘Back home even my father’s servants have more than enough food to eat, and here I am starving to death! I will go back to my father and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I do not deserve to be your son. Just let me stay here and be one of your servants.”’

“So the young man started on his way home to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father looked down the road and saw him coming. The father’s heart was filled with love and pity for his son. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him.

“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I do not deserve to be your son.’

“But that was as far as he got, because the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring out the finest robe and put it on my son. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we’ve been saving for a special occasion and get it ready to eat. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For my son was dead and has come to life again! He was lost and now has been found!’ And they began to celebrate.

“While this was happening, the older son was out in the field working. When he came home and found out about the celebration for his younger brother, he became angry and refused to join in. His father went out and
begged him to come in.

“But the older son said to his father, ‘It’s not fair! I’ve worked hard for you all these years and always did what you said. Yet you never made it possible for me and my friends to celebrate. But for this son who wasted your money on wild and sinful living, you have a big celebration!’

“My son,’ the father said, ‘you have always been with me, and everything I have is yours. But how could we keep from being happy and celebrating? Your brother was dead and has come to life again. He was lost and now has been found!’”

Parents and Kids

Through this parable Jesus teaches that God the Father forgives repentant sinners because of his great love and mercy.

1. To illustrate this truth, try this object lesson with your child:

• Talk about the many blessings you as a parent have given to her or him.
• Together use paper or a calculator to total up how much some of those things cost.
• Explain that the total is just part of the bill, or debt, for the blessings from you.
• Have your child subtract any savings or cash she or he might have and visualize how impossible it would be to repay this debt.

Now rip up the paper or cancel out the calculator. Explain that you love your child and are “forgiving the debt.” Your child owes nothing even without making a payment.

This illustrates in a very small way how God lovingly sent the Savior to pay our debt for us. We have forgiveness! What an incredible gift!

2. Work together with your family to list characteristics of a good father and why God our heavenly Father is the best Father. Use your ideas in the prayer that follows.

Pray Together

Dear heavenly Father, you are the best Father we could ever have because you ____________. Thank you for being such a loving, forgiving Father! Amen.

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* Isaiah 64:6a

* Ephesians 2:8, 9

* The Conclusion to the Commandments

What does God say about all these commandments?

He says, “I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands.

But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.

* Hymn 304:1