

The Father's Love

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Introduction

This parable is a veritable gold mine of lessons for us. But there is a line in practically the middle of the story that caught my attention this week: *But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him (v. 20b)*. If I were forced to pick one of the many lessons as the theme for this story, it would be **THE FATHER'S LOVE**. Today, we look at this parable with an eye to the question, "What does this teach us about our heavenly Father's love?" Of course, nowhere does Jesus identify the father as God. But it goes without saying that He is as He is the Father of all.

V. 12 He Divided His Property

The first thing that amazes us about the father's love is that he grants the boy's request to give him his inheritance early. The boy has, by this request, declared his father dead to him. And by all standards of society, the father, by submitting to the request, has behaved foolishly and jeopardized his family's honor. Not to mention, he has taken a portion of his property and given it away, cutting his own income. Only to see his son liquidate it for his own selfish purposes.

This goes a long way to answer the question of why God would bother to make us when He knew that we would sin. Out of love, He made us to love Him, and true love requires a choice. So, He gave us the option of not choosing Him. God loves us enough to let us go, even though He knows that going is not the best thing for us.

v. 20 The Father's Compassion

In **verse 20** we are told that the father *felt compassion* for his son. That compassion is shown in his actions in this verse.

He Saw His Son

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him (v. 20). How many think the father was just working around the house and casually looked up and happened to see his son? Of course not! He was patiently waiting for his son, looking for him to come to his senses and come home.

Like the father in the story, our heavenly Father is looking for us by sending His only begotten Son (**John 3:16**) to call us from the awful mess of sin that we have gotten ourselves into.

He Ran to His Son

Picture in your mind an old man running down the street and to do this, he must lift his robe up to free his legs. To us, it would be humorous, in his context, as the patriarch, it would be scandalous. The land would be out in the country, but the main house is in the city. He's making a fool of himself for everyone to see, and he doesn't care.

That's a picture of the scandal of the cross. Remember how Jesus was taunted and scorned? God was willing to humiliate Himself to bring us home.

He Embraced and Kissed His Son

He embraced and kissed his son. The boy is sweaty from his long journey and filthy from living with the pigs. Yet his father throws his arms around him and holds him tightly. The verb “kissed” means he kissed him passionately. This was no handshake and a peck on the cheek.

Our heavenly Father loves us in our filth. Paul says in **Romans 5:8** that *God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. He meets us where we are in the middle of our sin and loves us to Himself.

v. 22 He Restored His Son

Instead of taking him on as a servant, as the boy requests, the father restores his son to a place he had given up, a position that really wasn't open to him. He had declared his father dead and taken his part of the inheritance. The father restored his status by dressing him in a fine robe. He restored his power by giving him a signet ring. He restored the relationship by throwing a feast for the entire village.

When our heavenly Father redeems us through the blood of the Lamb, he clothes us in Christ's righteousness (**Romans 3:22**). He declares we will *reign with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12)*. The angels of God *rejoice over every sinner who repents (Luke 15:10)*. And we will feast at the *wedding banquet of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9)*.

v. 32 He Resurrected His Son

“This brother was dead and is alive” (v. 32). In restoring his son, the father in our story as good as raised him from the dead.

Colossians 2 says (Read **Colossians 2:11-12**). The Father gives us new life in Christ through the Means of Grace. The Father raises us in faith through Baptism and continues to give us forgiveness of sins and strengthen our faith through the Word and Sacrament of the Altar. This is a picture of *The Father's Love* for us. He sent His Son into the world to seek and save us. Through the death of Jesus Christ, He humiliates Himself to forgive our sins and welcome us back. He restores us to life and sustains that life through Word and Sacrament. All this He does out of His great love for us.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
