

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

“Coming Back Home”

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This story in some way reminds me of the role of parenting our children. That age when they tell you they are going out on a Saturday night with their friends and will be back no later than 11 pm or 12 am. But what happens, 11 pm comes and there is no sign of your son or daughter, 12 am comes and no sign of him or her. You call their phones but no answer. It is 1 or 2 in the morning and still no news from them, you start to worry, all kind of scenarios run through your head, you try to sleep but it is not possible, you start to pray, you even want to call the police, until you hear the sound of the front door open and close then your heart goes back to rest. Oh My! All the things we have to bear and go through as parents.

It looks like the Father of the Prodigal Son in Jesus' parable knew something about this.

The parable says that while the prodigal son was still far off from home, his father saw him coming back and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

I wonder how many mornings, afternoons and evenings the father, had fixed his eyes on that road, hoping to see his son coming back, returning home. I wonder how many scenarios ran through his mind concerning the well being of his beloved son. Is he well? Is he running into some kind of trouble? Is he taking care of himself? Is he alive?

Was this father feeling the same things we parents feel for our children? Sure, he was. Keeping his eyes on that road tells me he was worried, sad, praying, and longing for the day when he would see his son walking back home.

So big was this father's love for his son that the moment he saw his son coming home, he ran, he was so overwhelmed with happiness that he ran like a 20 year old, he didn't feel the chronic pain in his knees and hips, he threw the cane away, he ran to meet the son he thought was lost forever, he thought was dead, gave him a big hug and kissed him.

What a moment to contemplate, what a moment of powerful love, what a moment of joy, what a moment of perfect love from a father to his son.

Not a single word of reproach, scolding, or shame, all he valued and surely was thankful for at that moment was that his son who he thought was dead was alive, his son who was lost had now been found.

Not so the older brother who had stayed by his father's side all the time, he was angry that the reckless, foolish, unwise, irresponsible and careless younger brother had been welcomed back like the hero of the family, with a ring, a robe, a big dinner and celebration.

Two different responses from the father and the older brother, and sometimes I wonder if we all are like the older brother. Sometimes I wonder if we don't want a merciful, loving and forgiving God. Don't get me wrong, we all want a forgiving, loving and merciful God but the problem is that we want a God like that only for those we judge worthy of Him, not for someone like the prodigal son in this parable, for someone like him, we want a God with a very hard heart, a God who gives others what they deserve.

It was shocking for the older brother that his father showed so much love for the younger brother who had offended and hurt his father and who had not been a good son.

This is the perfect illustration of who God is. Through this parable the Lord Jesus is saying that God loves us unconditionally. As parents we know what it is like to have countless hours of waiting for our children to come home safe and sound, we do this while rehearsing in our heads all the things we want to tell them for coming late and not answering our calls to hear from them, but once they make it back home we cannot love them less.

All we care about is that they are back, we want them by our side, so it is with our Heavenly Father, He wants us home, by his side. No matter how long the road back home is, no matter what it is that we need to change, turn away from or repent from, God our heavenly Father wants us back by his side.

For the prodigal son it was a long way back home, even before he started his journey back, he was planning to start from scratch to prove to his Dad that he had changed, that he had repented and learned from his mistakes. Imagine all the things that could have gone through his head as he walked on the long road back to his father. Surely, he thought about his father's reaction, thinking about a cold welcome, the

reprimanding and perhaps humiliation he would receive from his father. I am sure, he was shocked about the warm welcome his father gave him, about the gift of the ring and the robe that reaffirmed his position in the family as the father's son. To say he was shocked is an understatement. He was overwhelmed by his father's love and forgiveness.

None of us should be afraid to come to our Heavenly Father, none of us should expect anything less than pure love and forgiveness from Him. We hear that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to save us, but I wonder if we really grasp the real depth of those words.

You have heard of people who give no chance to their salvation because of what they have done in this world, people who think God won't forgive them. Those people think the same way that the prodigal son did. I have these words for anyone who might think like that, don't be afraid to come to God, we can start walking home to our Father in heaven with the confidence that he loves us, with the confidence of his forgiveness. What matters is to keep walking toward Him, change our ways because at the end we will be welcomed, embraced, loved and forgiven by God. Amen.