



Father's Day Sermon 2020

Luke 15:11-31

Dads, I'd like to share with you 12 principles for being a better dad. They come from the book "Straight from a Dads heart" by Robert Harmin.

These may also apply to you if you are a mother, grandmother or grandfather.

Spend quantity time with your kids. Time is the very crucible of fathering. It provides the frame work for all other family success.

Seize every moment to do something loving, special, different or exciting with your children. As an old ad says, "Make every moment a Kodak moment".

Create memories for your children that they will look fondly back on. Holidays, birthdays, times with grandparents, special traditions. Reading and play with your children.

Don't let your wife be the only one to savour the years when they are babies.

Give them a balance of love and affection in a happy home as well as rules and boundaries. Trust them and help them become independent. Be patient, understanding and affirming.

Get a balance between work and family.

Offer unconditional love.

Build your child's self-esteem.

Communicate, communicate. Communicate.

Discipline constructively and with love. When you discipline your child help them feel bad about their behaviour but good about themselves.

Affirm basic morals.

Instil spiritual values. Show them that God is love and that he loves them and and that his love will never stop.

Well, at this point perhaps you are feeling a little overwhelmed.

Perhaps you're sensing how far short you fall from the image of the ideal father.

For some there may be regrets about how fatherhood was handled through the years.

I would like to tell you about a father Jesus spoke about.

As a father he is a wonder to behold.

Perhaps all we can do is pray that we receive some measure of his father heart and become a reflection of him.

Read Luke 15:11-31

We all know the story don't we. But have you noticed what happened between verses 21 and 22. Let me read those two verses again.

21 His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

22 "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.

Do you see it? It is a wonder to contemplate.

No recriminations! That's right. "No I told you so". "No thought of punishment."

The father doesn't need to say "I forgive" he did that long ago. Now his actions reveal that reality. He is simply overjoyed to see his son return home, that's all he ever wanted.

Philip Yancey tells a story of a friend in his book, "What's so amazing about grace".

His friend was battling with a 15 year old daughter whom the father knew was using birth-control and staying out all hours.

Yancey's friend told him how he felt standing before the plate-glass window waiting for her to come home.

"I wanted to be like the father of the prodigal son but I was so furious with her for the way she was acting. 'And yet', he said, 'when my daughter came home that night or rather the next morning I wanted nothing in the world so much as to take her in my arms, to love her, and to tell her I wanted nothing but the best for her. I was a love-sick father.'"

Yancey's continued, "Now, when I think about God, I hold up the image of the love-sick father...I think of Jesus' depiction of the waiting father, heartsick, abused, yet wanting above all else to forgive and begin anew, and to announce, 'This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'"

He is the picture of Father God who waits for us to return from the far country and enter again into his loving embrace.

In the parable we see something truly amazing. It applies to each one of us also.

Here we see the king of the universe running with his shirt tails flying as he runs to welcome us home.

As the song says, "O how he loves you and me, He gave his life what more could he give."

When he sees you he comes running to meet you.

Imagine that, the king of the universe running through the royal entourage just to throw his arms around you.

Can you imagine everyone's surprise if Queen Elizabeth did that if Harry and Megan came back to Buckingham palace?

I pray that right now God's Spirit will touch you supernaturally with his presence so that you can catch a glimpse of His love for you.

Listen to what the great Danish Lutheran theologian Soren Kierkegaard said,

"When it is a question of a sinner He does not merely stand still, open His arms and say, 'Come hither'. No he does not stand there and wait, as the father of the lost son waited. He goes forth to seek, as the shepherd sought the lost sheep, as the woman sought the lost coin. He goes – yet no, he has gone infinitely further than the shepherd or the woman. He being God went so far as to become a man in search of lost sinners."

Like the prodigal son we are recipients of God's mercy and love. He has saved the best robe for us, the robe kept for the most special guests.

He has put a ring on our finger; symbolic of the authority that comes from being a son or daughter of the father.

We have been given sandals for our feet; indicating that we are no longer slaves but free people.

In this parable we see the loving father heart of God for us. Here we see the Gospel in all its magnificent beauty.

No other religion can match this parable because no other religion has such a God who loves without reservation.

This parable is an assurance that no matter how far we may wander or how low we may stoop, God lovingly seeks us out and welcomes us home with open arms.

Dads, you and I could never match that kind of fatherliness. We fail often in our role as fathers.

But you are in the father's heart also. He loves you too. His arms are extended in forgiveness and welcome. Come to him and feel his embrace.

God's greatest joy is not that the world's problems are solved. His greatest joy is not to receive the praise of countless angels.

His greatest joy overflows when one of his children who had been lost gets found.

This is not the story of a wayward son; it is the story of a father who loves beyond comprehension.

It is the story of a God who did not wait for us to come home but came in search of us in his son Jesus, to redeem us from the far country and bring us home.

If you are weary, father God says to you my friend, "Welcome Home!"