**Portrait of a Loving Father**

Luke 15:11-24

Every time Father’s Day comes around, I find myself wondering, as I have done for years, what it would have been like to have had a loving father in my life while growing up. I have seen the tremendous impact good fathers make in the lives of both their sons and daughters. Although I had seven older brothers who always looked out for me, they were not my father. Since my father died when I was an infant, I could only imagine what it would have been like. The parable of the prodigal son is an excellent illustration of a loving father.

In our text found in Luke chapter 15, beginning at verse 11, Jesus tells the story of a father who had two sons. The younger of his sons came to his father one day and requested a portion of his estate, something he would have inherited after his father’s death. It was as if the son were saying, “I can’t wait until you die, I want my inheritance now.” I’m sure this younger son’s request broke the father’s heart. However, he granted his son’s request and divided the estate between him and his older brother.

How many times have we asked God for something that He knows we are unable to handle at the time, but He grants it anyway? Our heavenly Father loves us so much that He gave us free will. He desires that we love Him and remain with Him, but gives us the freedom to choose. The younger son left home and began to spend his inheritance on things that seemed pleasurable at the time. However, when his money ran out, there was no pleasure to be found. A famine entered the land and the young man began to be in want. He took a job feeding pigs, something that no Jewish person would do. Even the food he fed to the pigs began to look good. When we rebel against God, we begin a downward spiral like this young man. Things we thought we would never do, we find ourselves doing.

Finally, the younger son came to his senses and realized how good he had it at home. He had a place to sleep, food to eat, and a father who loved him. He began the journey back home, not knowing how he would be received. Can you imagine his surprise when he saw his father waiting for him from afar off? The young man was contrite and felt unworthy of the father’s love and forgiveness. He was ready to beg for a place as a servant in his father’s home. Yet, he was met by a father filled with love and compassion for his wasteful son. He hugged him and greeted him with a kiss. He called for the servants to place the best robe on him, put a ring on his finger, sandals on his feet, and to kill a fatted calf to celebrate that son’s return home.

Our heavenly Father is waiting with open arms for His children who have strayed and wasted their time to return to Him. Since He is a loving Father, He is always ready to forgive. All we have to do is come back home!

Happy Father’s Day!

Elder Shirley Freeman

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