

“My Son, My Son”
by Grace Johnson, Lay Speaker
June 20, 2010

Good Morning, It's Fathers Day, Happy Fathers Day Dad!

Bill Cosby wrote a book called 'Fatherhood' it's a good read and quite funny. He observed that boys grow up spending hours and hours throwing footballs, baseballs, and going to games with their Dads. And when they make it big on the college scene, before the big bowl game they get interviewed on TV and the first thing they say is "Hi Mom!" He said Fathers Day is almost as exciting as Groundhog Day. Bill was sharing an important insight concerning parenting. You have to have a sense of humor to be a parent. So we are here to honor Fathers and that is good because Dad's don't get much respect these days.

I heard about a doting dad who used to sing his children to sleep. He sang for them until one night he heard his 4 year old whisper to her younger sister "If you pretend you're asleep he stops."

One boy was heard telling a friend that Father's Day is like Mother's Day but you don't have to spend as much on a present.

But on the other side of that coin. Each year the Center for Fathering conducts an essay contest. The topic is "What My Father Means to Me"

A first grader wrote "My Dad is the best dad ever. I'd kiss a pig for him."

A fifth grade girl wrote, "...You know what else my dad does? He braids my hair. I'm the only girl I know whose dad braids her hair. I think that's a perfect dad. He is already the world's greatest dad to me. I just want everyone to know that."

My favorite is by a third grader who writes, "The dad in my life isn't really my dad. He's my Grandpa. But he's been like a dad to me since before I was born....I hope that as I get older Grandpa will teach me all the stuff he knows about wood, and first-aid, and everything else he knows about. My Grandpa isn't my father, but I wouldn't trade him for all the dads in the world.

So here's to you Dad. This is your day!

In 1909 in Spokane Washington a young woman whose dad had raised his children after their Mother died in childbirth, was listening to a Mother's Day tribute in church. She thought about her father raising the kids doing double duty as both father and mother. She decided father's deserved a tribute too. So she ask the Pastor if he would honor fathers with a sermon in June on her own father's birthday. He did and so was born Father's Daysort of. Mother's Day became an official holiday in 1914. Father's Day did not become official until 1972. Mother's day is still

the busiest day of the year for florists, restaurants and long distance phone companies. Father's day is the day the most collect calls are made.

Our scripture today is "The Parable of the Prodigal Son," but this time instead of the sons let's look at it from the father's point of view. I think he must have been a remarkable father.

So was mine! When I was seventeen I got married. My parents were not happy about it—but being a stubborn and head strong girl I kept after them until they finally gave in to me. The man I married turned out to be a psychological sadist. He never, ever physically hurt me; his specialty was to hurt me with words. Remember that childhood saying... "sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never harm me?" Don't believe it because words can hurt you. He said, "God and church were out. That stuff was for not for us we were above that." After one year, we moved to Hawaii and there—with no family or friends to support me, and no church family to turn to—I was at his mercy. He broke me down to the depths of despair and after a time I tried and very nearly succeeded in committing suicide. Thankfully, I was found by a neighbor who called an ambulance. I was taken to Tripler Army Hospital where I was revived. After that I was kept in the Psyche ward for quite a time. The Doctor who treated me called my Mother and Father in Washington State explained the situation and they arranged for me to come home. All I had left was the clothes on my back and they were not very warm. It was mid-January when I left Hawaii a balmy 78 and when I stepped off the plane a chilly 39. There they were, my parents; My Dad, with tears in his eyes, holding a pretty, pink, warm coat and open arms to welcome back this prodigal daughter. My Dad put his arm around me and told me I was his shining star, and how much he had missed me. My Dad was a handicapped man and money was hard to come by but he found the funds to buy me a one way ticket on the newly instituted jet service from Honolulu to Seattle. I have no idea what he had to give up to get me home. It didn't matter he wanted me back. It took me 46 years before I could return to Hawaii.

So here we are with this father welcoming his lost son home. Like my Dad he didn't care what had happened or what had been wasted, he only knew that his child was home.

We know that his son had taken his portion of the family fortune and spent it all. He had sold his fine rings, his clothes were rags, his shoes nearly gone and he was reduced to feeding pigs. Quite a come down for a rich Jewish boy.

This amazing Father saw his son far off and filled with compassion; he ran to him crying "**my son, my son**" and put his arms around him and kissed him. I can see the tears in his eyes when he says "**Welcome home, welcome home my beloved son.**" He had the servants bring clothes and shoes and rings for his fingers. Then the feasting began.

When the older son found out what was happening he was pretty upset. Here was this spoiled brat coming home and he was being welcomed with the fatted calf. What was wrong with his father had he lost his mind?

That was what I heard one of my older siblings say to my Dad. Well not exactly those words no one would have asked my Dad if he had lost his mind. But that was the gist of it. I was the spoiled brat and Dad was spending money he didn't have and had no hope of ever getting back. Dad wasn't quite as eloquent as the father in our parable, but he told my sibling to mind their own business and since he had never asked them for anything it really wasn't any of their business.

The Father in our parable is much wiser he tells his oldest son "you are always with me and all that I have is yours, but we had to celebrate and rejoice because this brother of yours was dead and has now come to life; he was lost and has been found."

I'm not sure that answer was what the elder brother wanted to hear. I know my elder sibling was never happy with my Fathers answer.

It was not until many years later after my father had died and we were talking about the things past that I found out my Dad had picked out that darling pink coat he had for me at the airport. I had just assumed it was my Moms doing. I wish I had known. **I wish I had asked.**

When you get home today pick up your bible and turn to Luke Chapter 15. Read the verses from 1 through 32 that's the whole chapter but it's not too long. Three parables in all and all three parables have the same ending. Jesus is telling us to celebrate with him for the lost sheep has been found, the lost coin has been found, the lost son has been found. It is the same story. The lost have been found and we should rejoice. Jesus tells us that there is more joy over one sinner who repents then 99 righteous people who need no repentance.

For many years I never gave a thought to God unless I was in trouble. Then I would pray and ask for help. If it didn't come in the form I had ask for I would think God had given up on me. It was not until I opened my heart and welcomed him back in and asked for his forgiveness that I found he had not forsaken me. The help was always there I just didn't recognize it. He was always there, how else could I have survived? My heavenly Father was there all the time taking care of this prodigal daughter. I found that there is no limit to his love for us. It truly is an extravagant love.

He is not sitting with a big book writing down all of our transgressions. If he were he would have a huge book just for me. No, he is there with arms wide saying "**Welcome back**, my child I'm so glad you found your way home." In 1st Corinthians 13 Paul give us the definition of love and the first quality he lists is patience. Paul says "Love is patient." Well, I know God's love for us is enduring; he waited 35 years for me to come home. He welcomed me home by filling my heart and life with love. By giving me the wonderful refuge I had long been missing. Each day When I

rise I say Thank You Father, and each night I say Thank you father for another day with you in my heart.

I want to leave you today with one of the late great Erma Bombecks columns.

When the good Lord was creating Fathers he started with a tall frame. And a female Angel nearby said “What kind of father is that? If you’re going to make children so close to the ground, why have you put Fathers up so high? He won’t be able to shoot marbles without kneeling, tuck a child in bed without bending, or even kiss a child without stooping.” And God smiled and said, “Yes, but if I make him the child’s size, who would the child look up to?”

And when God made a fathers hands, they were large and sinewy. And the angel shook her head sadly and said, “Do you know what you are doing? Large hands are clumsy. They can’t manage diaper pins, small buttons, rubber bands on pony tails, or even remove splinters caused by baseball bats.” And God said, “I know but they are big enough to hold everything a small boy empties from his pockets at the end of the day...yet small enough to cup a child’s face in his hands.”

And then God molded long, slim legs and broad shoulders. And the angel nearly had a heart attack. “Boy, this is the end of the week, all right,” she clucked. “Do you realized you just made a father without a lap? How is he going to pull a child close to him without the kid falling between his legs? And God smiled and said, “A mother needs a lap. A father needs strong shoulders to pull a sled, balance a boy on a bicycle, and hold a sleepy head on the way home from the circus.

God was in the middle of creating two of the largest feet anyone had ever seen when the angel could no longer contain herself. “That’s not fair. Do you honestly think those large boats are going to dig out of bed early in the morning when the baby cries? Or walk through a small birthday party without crushing at least three of the guests?” And God smiled and said, “They’ll work. You’ll see. They’ll support a small child who wants to ride a horse, or scare off mice at the summer cabin, or display shoes that will be a challenge to fill.”

God worked through the night, giving the Father few words, but a firm authoritative voice, eyes that saw everything, but remained calm and tolerant. Finally, almost as an afterthought, he added tears. Then he turned to the angel and said, “Now are you satisfied that he can love as much as a mother?”

Erma Bombeck concludes, “The angel shuteth up.”

Amen

