

The Good Father

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John 4:46-54

Happy Father's Day. For all of you who are Fathers, I pray that this will be a blessed day. For all of you who have fathers still living, I know your call to them today will be a blessing. For those of us who have lost our fathers, this is a day to remember the good times we had together with them.

Today we're going to look at the story of a very good father from the Gospel of John, the fourth chapter, beginning with the 46th verse.

Hear now the word of the Lord.

There was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." "Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed.

Holy Wisdom, Holy Word. Thanks be to God!

This father was a Roman official. He represented Caesar in a city along the Sea of Galilee called Capernaum. That's a long way from Rome. According to Google Maps it is 2388 miles away. In those days that trip back to Rome might have taken him months. He was a wealthy father. We know that he had servants. His was a position of trust and authority. And as the representative of an oppressive conquering power he would have been hated. His life would likely have been in danger. It's easy to imagine a high official like this father moving about with Roman soldiers for security.

So imagine the scene then with this wealthy powerful father, surrounded by Roman Soldiers, who were clearing the way for him to meet with the Lord Jesus. Then he begged Jesus to come and heal his son. It's hard to imagine a wealthy powerful man like this ever begging for anything. He could simply order what he wanted and his servants and soldiers would make it happen. His position would have insulated him from everyday problems. But when you're a father it's different. Deadly disease strikes the children of the rich and the children of the poor alike. We all do whatever we possibly can to help our children.

Jesus' initial reaction was reluctant; "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." You see, Jesus was surrounded by people who wanted Him to do miracles for their entertainment. But this father pressed Jesus; "Sir, come down before my child dies." It's not hard to imagine the agony on his face or in his voice. But he did not give up. And that's a good lesson for us when we pray. It's okay to press in on God and ask more urgently. We serve a God who is able to empathize with our trouble. Remember that the Lord Jesus had plenty of trouble of His own.

“Go,” Jesus told the father, “your son will live.” The father was a day’s journey from home when he left Jesus. But he trusted Jesus’ promise. And that’s a lesson for each one of us. We should trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding. Jesus said the boy was healed. That was enough for this father.

And before he even got home, the news came to him that his son had recovered the very moment he spoke with Jesus. That became the catalyst for faith. Not only did this father come to faith but his whole household believed as well. They did not come to faith because of their wealth or high position. They came to faith by recognising the impossibility of their situation and begging the Lord Jesus for help. As it is with each of us. We do not come to Christ offering our splendid qualifications or our good deeds but rather we bring our helplessness in the face of God’s righteousness.

So in this story we see a pattern for the kind of admirable fatherhood that we celebrate on Father’s Day. And it’s good that we recognise and remember our fathers in this way. But what about those of us who had fathers that fell short of this ideal. Not all of us can remember our fathers so fondly. Some of us are left to grieve the absence of a loving father in our lives. And that grief is normal and right. But how do we even know to grieve? How do we even know that father relationship is missing in our lives? One way is to compare our lives to those of others. But a better way is to compare ourselves to God. He is the Good Father. He chose us to be His children before the world was formed. He chose us because He loved us. He made the ultimate sacrifice to redeem us out of darkness and transfer us to the kingdom of His dear Son. He provides for all of our needs. And He has a heavenly kingdom prepared for us. Whether we realize it or not, each

one of us has a good, good Father in heaven who loves us deeply and cares for us constantly.

On this Father's Day it is good and proper for us to honor the father's we still have with us, to remember fondly the fathers that have gone on ahead of us, and to reflect deeply on the Good father we all share in common.