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Happy Father's Day! Each one of us here today has a Father. Even if you don't, or did not have a good relationship with your father, you wouldn't be here without him! He may not have been perfect, but he will always be your Father, so here's to doing what the Bible instructs us, here's to honouring, our father!

In some churches, ladies sitting next to their husbands think today is, "*National Elbow Your Husband in the Ribs During the Sermon, Day*".

Children are both, the bane and the blessing of our lives. They declare boldly what their fathers dread to hear like, *My daddy can beat up your daddy!* I know fathers who are terrified at the thought of beating up li'll Charles' father!

Their whisper is as loud as their normal voice, like the little fella who, when the offering plate was approaching, declared in a loud whisper, ***Daddy! Don't pay for me, I'm under five.***

Little girls don't get off scot-free! Many little girls have a habit of listening to what they shouldn't, early practice to refine the talent of *gossip* some think they have been gifted. After Sunday Church, one little daddy's darling said to the Minister, ***When I grow up, I'm going to give you some money.*** Taken aback, the Minister said, ***Thank you my dear, but why?*** She replied, ***Because, my daddy says you are the poorest preacher we've ever had.*** To those of you who have, even faint recollections of having subjected your father to such dread, Happy Father's Day!

In the immortal words of the "Lady of the House", Hyacinth Bouquet, *It's a terrible thing to lose one's Daddy just before cheese and wine.*

Irma Bombeck, the American humorist who write in a special language called "English Humour", having written books titled, "If life is a bowl of

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cherries, what am I doing in the pits?" and "The Grass is Always Greener over the Septic Tank", described her father, "*Daddy was a clumsy creature, but he was safe at any speed*". That's how most of us remember our fathers, *safe at any speed*.

On two occasions, I have reflected this question, ***What kind of daughter/son did your father hope you would be?*** Its not make us feel undervalued, or to put our father's in the wrong light, but reflecting on the question helps us appreciate ***What kind of daughter/son does your Father in Heaven hope you would be?***

There is no perfect father, except one. In Luke 14 to 17:10, Jesus portrays, The Perfect Father.

We examined part of this passage two Sundays ago, set in the home of a prominent Pharisee over a Sabbath meal.¹ There is so much activity and conversation going on, it is easy to get caught up in the minute of the dialogue and completely miss, Jesus' train of thought²: *from the start, Jesus was challenging the Pharisees, who assumed they were "Keepers of God's Perfect Law", acting as "Father of the Nation"*.

A person with dropsy³ entered the room and Jesus asked the host, *Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?*⁴ - No answer. As they scrambled for the best seats in the house, Jesus cautions, *Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself, will be exalted,*⁵ referring to a guiding principle in God's Kingdom.

¹ Luke 14:1

² Luke 14:1 - 17:10

³ Swollen hands and feet

⁴ Luke 14:3

⁵ Luke 14:11

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The conversation continued as "large crowds" gathered in the home of the prominent Pharisee, among whom were tax collectors and "sinners", pressing closer to Jesus, to hear Him.

The Pharisees complained that Jesus was attracting the wrong crowd, that He was giving them more importance, that they were soiling their home with their presence.

*So ... Jesus told **them** (the Pharisees), **this** parable...*

*A trilogy, the first two parts building up to the third, a narrative of *getting / being lost*, and *being found*, ending in a great big celebration, **for that which was deemed dead is alive, and that which was thought to be lost, has been found!***

The Pharisees were not stupid. They understood, the one sheep who trotted out of the field into the unknown and was lost, was the younger son who went walkabout and was lost in the world. They understood that the coin which was lost in the woman's home, could well be themselves, lost in their Father's home, complaining they were so busy as custodians of God's law, the Father never allowed them the joy of celebration their hard work with their friends!

Jesus left them pondering on the Father's closing words to the elder son, *Everything I have is yours, but we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours, was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found*, and addressed His disciples with **two** parables of caution, the first is a caution of getting trapped by the wealth of the world, using and abusing it, giving in to the ways money is made and lost, and the second is a caution that *self-sufficiency*, which wealth brings, is the trap which leads to an attitude of self-righteousness. In both parables, Jesus may well have been

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referring to a real person when He says, *There was a rich man...* and the Pharisees and perhaps others might well have recognised who it could be, but Jesus purpose, once again, is not to *name and shame*, but to provide a mirror for people to see themselves and understand the world they live in.

The first was rich enough to employ a Manager to manage his estate. He heard, the Manager had his hand in the till, taking what was not due to him, so sacked him.

On his way out, this Manager cuts deals with the estate's buyers, reducing the amount they owed the estate (*perhaps taking a cut of the saving for himself*). The owner of the estate commended the manager for acting shrewdly, for being astute and savvy and clever, managing the resources at work entrusted to us, but this is not the message of the parable.

This parable is about the Father's response to the resources placed in trust with us. The Father's principle is, *If you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will trust you with property of your own?*

The rich man in the second parable, is dressed in purple (he thinks he is royalty) and fine linen, living in the lap of luxury. Obsessed with himself, his wealth has consumed him. He has fallen in the trap of self-sufficiency, which breeds a spirit of self-righteousness. So arrogant is this rich man, when Lazarus the poor man who lived outside his gate, died and went to heaven, the rich man thought he could order Abraham **to send Lazarus** to cool his burning tongue!

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So arrogant is this rich man, when Abraham replied, no one could cross the great chasm fixed between them, he begs Abraham **to send Lazarus** to warn his five brothers not to come to this place of torment!

That evening, in the home of the prominent Pharisee, Jesus takes great pains to paint a picture of our Father in Heaven, who is the very opposite of the character portrayed by the religious leaders, and He closes with a caution, *Things that cause people to sin, are bound to come, but woe to that **person** through whom they come! It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone around his neck, than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. **So watch yourselves!***

You know, it doesn't matter if you had a near-perfect whom you adore and who adored you, or if you had a father who wasn't there for you when you needed him, our first call is to honour him, who is our father here, and so we do.

Everyone needs, however, to know this: I can assure you, it is not at all difficult, to belong to the family of God, and to live a wonderful, fulfilling life in the family of God, in which God is the perfect Father.

I can give you this assurance because John says it very clearly. *Jesus came into the very world He created, but the world didn't recognise Him. He came to His own people, and they rejected Him. **But** to all who believed Him, His promises and His purpose for coming here, and accepted Him, **to them He gave the right to become children of God.** They are reborn, not through a physical birth, the result of human passion or plan, but a birth that comes uniquely from God.⁶*

⁶ John 1:10-13

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Jesus paints a portrait of our perfect Father, one who is readily approachable, as narrated by the younger son who approached his father to ask for his inheritance, one who waits patiently for us to return home, one who doesn't wait until Monday morning to answer our prayer, one who knows our trials and difficulties, one who has given us the **right** to become His child, if only we would believe, He sent His Son to die on the cross to break the barrier of death which holds us back from Him.

No one has ever seen God, but the One and only Son, who is Himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, the Son has made the Father known to us.⁷

The journey from having a Father and knowing our Father, is the journey from the head to the heart. Honouring our father is making this journey memorable, for us and for our Father.

AMEN.

⁷ John 1:18