

first! How the father receives the son will determine how the villagers must receive him.

Coming to his senses, the lost son devises a plan to return to his father's home. He says, "I will say to my father: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired servants.'" However the Father interrupts him and calls for the signet ring on his finger and puts the finest robe on him. The father does not impose the law on him, but offers him love, grace, and mercy by restoring him to the family.

The father calls for a feast, for the son that was lost is found, he who was dead is alive again! There must be a celebration! The father was filled with great joy on his son's arrival home. There is great joy over the son who has returned home. The father wants the other members of the village to celebrate with him as he restores his son to his family.

We are the ones who have wandered away from God. We are the ones who claimed ownership of creation and life and want to use them to enjoy ourselves rather than use them to glorify God and serve others in our earthly village. And when we come to our senses and return to our Heavenly Father, what do we bring? The younger son had only pig-stink to bring with him. We have only sin-stink to bring with us. But when we come, the Heavenly Father rushes out to meet us, welcomes us passionately, and reinstates us in this family circle. God finds us because "**A Father's Love**" will never let us go!

THE LAMPLIGHTER



**THEME: Jesus Spoke to Them in Parables –
"A Father's Love"**

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. {12} The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. . . {19} 'I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' {20} So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. . . {32} '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.'" (Luke 15:11-32 NIV)

JULY 2010

*A Publication of The Lutheran Service Auxiliary
4505 Applewood Ave
Sioux City, Iowa 51106*

Dear Children of the Heavenly Father,

Silas Shotwell, in *Homemade*, September 1987 writes: Charles Francis Adams, the 19th century political figure and diplomat, kept a diary. One day he entered: “Went fishing with my son today--a day wasted.” His son, Brook Adams, also kept a diary, which is still in existence. On that same day, Brook Adams made this entry: “Went fishing with my father--the most wonderful day of my life!” The father thought he was wasting his time while fishing with his son, but his son saw it as an investment of time. The only way to tell the difference between wasting and investing is to know one’s ultimate purpose in life and to judge accordingly.

While wrapped in a different package and shown in a different way than a mother’s love, a father’s love is important to the growth and development of his children. In our text (Luke 15) a father was asked an extremely unusual question. His youngest son asked for his portion of the inheritance even before his father’s departure from this life.

This father lets his children do their worst to him, so that he might do his best for them. The younger son is impatient for his father’s death. Traditionally, a father’s wealth would be divided only after his death. On very rare occasions, a father could, on his own initiative, divide the property while he is still living. Though he assigned his property over to a son, the father still retained control over it. In short, a son was given the right of possession but not the right of disposition. However, what the younger son demands is not merely the right of possession but also the right of disposition. Even though this request is most rare, the father grants the younger son’s desire.

A request, like this, hurts not only the father, but it also hurts the entire family since the wealth of the family is not held in a savings account at the local bank. It is held in the family’s house and buildings and in animals and land. A third of all these possessions would have to be quickly sold off at any price. Surely, for a family to lose one-third of its assets would be a staggering loss.

Is it any wonder that the older brother would be angry? His anger becomes evident when the younger brother returns. His rebelliousness is evident in his own reluctance to forgive his brother. He slanders the name of his brother by accusing him of squandering his money on prostitutes. While such an accusation might make sense, he had no proof of his comment. It leads one to wonder, “Who really was the lost son?”

The father does not impose laws and constraints on his son. On account of the younger son’s rebellion, going back home was a risk. Taking his inheritance was equal to his disowning of the family and the village from which he was a member. But the father never disowned his son. Daily he looked from the window in hopes that his son would return. Each day ended in a disappointment until the son comes to his senses and begins his journey home.

Seeing the familiar figure coming down the road, the father runs out to meet his son. In this culture little boys run, teenagers run, but old men never run. They walk slowly and with great dignity. But this father runs! He must get to his son first. Since his request for the inheritance was not only a sin against his father or family, it was a sin against the village. For this reason he has no right to return to it. If the villagers see him first, they have every right to beat him and stone him to drive him away, or even kill him. So the father has to get there