



Father of the Prodigal

Father's Day is one of those annual days that prompt preachers to direct the thoughts of congregations to the topic of fathers. In preparing for this week's lesson I was reminded of a TV show airing the past few years called Family Guy. Even though I've never seen an episode, I suspect it doesn't do justice to the title, better than our Sovereign God. You see, I believe God is the original "Family Guy", since He is the originator of every aspect of family.

Scripture is full of references to almost every familial element. Paul continuously uses the terms brother, brethren and even calls Timothy his son or beloved son. His directions to the church in regard to leadership in local congregations include the relationship deacons and elders are to have with their families (1 Tim 3/Titus 1). Paul also uses husband/wife dynamics to illustrate Christ and His relationship to the church. Even Peter leaves us with examples as he writes about family relationships in his first epistle. The Hebrews (2:11) writer tells us Jesus is not ashamed 'to call us brethren' and Jesus uses the term 'Father' more than 180 times in the Gospel accounts with nearly all of them referring to God, our Heavenly Father. Perhaps the best known allusion to Father comes in the parable of the prodigal son found in chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke. Let's review this beloved parallel to our own Heavenly Father.

Three aspects are obvious as we read this parable. First we find the giving nature of the father when asked for distribution of the estate in verse 11 & 12. We know that every good and perfect gift comes from God (James 1:17) and the greatest of His gifts is His Son Jesus (John 3:16). Next, we see an ever watchful, waiting father. This prodigal's father seeks reconciliation just as does our Heavenly Father (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) and we see it demonstrated by his watching and waiting. Ephesians 2:13 aptly compares the prodigal to today's saved sinner as being formerly 'far off' but in Christ is brought near to the Father. Lastly, we can see the father's desire to forgive. When greeted by a humbled and contrite son, the father refused to allow less than restoration to family status. God, our Heavenly Father, desires no less. Jesus is His gift to us to save us from our sins (Matt 1:21), He, Who came to seek and save the lost! (Luke 19:10) Is that you? Let us always be thankful to our Heavenly Father!!