



Message: ***The Heart of the Father*** | June 21, 2026 | Speaker: **Pastor Eddie Eddy**

Luke 15:11-32 (NIV)      **The Parable of the Lost Son**      <sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. <sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him! <sup>31</sup> "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> 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.'"

### **The Heart of a Father**

Happy Father's Day everyone. Today is one of those days where we pause to honor the men who helped shape our lives. Some of you had fathers who taught you how to work hard, how to shake a hand, how to fix things with duct tape and determination. Some of you had dads who were quiet but dependable. Some of you had fathers who prayed with you, coached you, disciplined you, encouraged you, and showed you what sacrifice looked like. And for some of us, Father's Day can bring mixed emotions too. Some carry grief because Dad is no longer here. Some carry hurt because the relationship was strained or broken. Some are trying their best to become the kind of father they maybe never had themselves.

Let's start with a little trivia this morning. Who knows what day of the year the most phone calls are made? Mother's Day. What do you think happens on Father's Day? Anybody want to guess? The big claim to fame for Father's Day used to be collect calls. I don't even know if collect calls still exist anymore. One little boy once said, "Father's Day is just like Mother's Day...only you don't spend as much on the gift."

And honestly...there's probably some truth to that.

Moms often get recognized for their nurturing spirit, their compassion, and their ability to comfort us when life hurts. There's something special about the way so many moms naturally care for people physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Meanwhile Father's Day sometimes feels like society saying, "Well...we probably ought to celebrate dads too." You don't usually see athletes scoring the game-winning touchdown and yelling, "Hi Dad!" into the camera. When I worked at the pie factory, we lost money fifty weeks out of the year. The only two profitable weeks were Thanksgiving and Mother's Day. We made enough money during those fourteen days to keep the company alive the rest of the year. Father's Day? We didn't even make enough pies to cover payroll.

I heard a story once about two children who begged their mother to let them bring home the classroom pet hamster named Davie. Mom said no repeatedly because she knew exactly what would happen. A pet meant responsibility. Feeding. Cleaning. Caring for it

every day. But after hours of pleading and promises, she finally gave in. She warned them clearly though: if they didn't take care of Davie, he would be gone.

Well...you can probably guess what happened. Within a couple weeks Mom was doing all the work herself. Feeding Davie. Cleaning the cage. Taking care of everything while the kids lost interest. Finally she found another family willing to take the hamster and she sat the children down to explain.

She said, "Davie has become too much work for one person, and since I'm doing it all myself, I found him a new home."

To her surprise, the children didn't seem upset at all. One of them even asked, "Is it because he eats too much? Maybe we could help him eat less."

Mom explained that it wasn't just the eating. It was the mess, the smell, and all the extra work.

The kids nodded thoughtfully and went back to watching TV. A few minutes later Mom came through the living room carrying the cage and supplies. Suddenly the children jumped up and shouted, "Wait! What are you doing with Davie?"

Mom said, "We just talked about this. I found him a new home."

The children cried out, "No, not Davie! We thought you said Daddy!"

Our culture has shifted a little, hasn't it? We used to grow up with television fathers like Ward Cleaver and Howard Cunningham. Fathers who, while imperfect, were generally portrayed with wisdom and integrity. Now many portrayals of dads make them look clueless, lazy, foolish, or disconnected.

And whether we realize it or not, our understanding of fatherhood shapes the way many people see God.

If your earthly father was distant, you may struggle to believe God is truly present. If your father was harsh, maybe you expect God to constantly punish you. If you never felt good enough growing up, maybe you assume God must always be disappointed in you too.

Sometimes we project earthly fathers onto our Heavenly Father.

But friends, God is bigger than our earthly experiences.

Even the best fathers among us cannot fully compare to the love and grace of God. And that's not meant as an insult to good dads. It's meant to remind us how incredible the heart of God really is.

The Bible gives us our clearest picture of what our Heavenly Father is like. And one of the greatest pictures Jesus ever paints is found in the parable we read today.

Jesus tells the story of a father and two sons. And honestly...on Father's Day...it's hard not to focus on the father in this story.

Because what kind of father keeps watching the road after being humiliated by his own son? What kind of father keeps loving after rejection? What kind of father runs toward someone who wasted everything?

Most fathers in that culture would not have done that. The younger son demanding his inheritance early was basically saying, "I wish you were dead." That kind of disrespect would normally end a relationship. In our culture...it should have ended with shame and separation.

But not here. This father keeps watching the road.

And when the son finally comes home dirty, broken, and rehearsing his apology, the father doesn't stand there waiting for an explanation. Instead...He runs.

Here's the thing about that...The father running...would have shocked Jesus' audience. Wealthy older men did not run in public. It was humiliating. Undignified. Yet this father **lifts his robe** and **runs** toward his son anyway.

Why?

Because love moved him. Grace moved him. Compassion moved him. I think that's one of the most powerful images in all of scripture about the heart of God.

And maybe fathers need to hear that today too.

Fatherhood is not about being flawless. It's not about always having the answers. It's not about never making mistakes.

It's about faithful presence. Being there. Showing up. Continuing to love even when life gets messy. Keeping the porch light on when someone loses their way.

This father stayed available. He kept hoping. He kept loving. He kept watching the road.

And while I don't want to turn this into another Trinity sermon this morning since we already talked about that a couple of weeks ago...I do think it's beautiful that even here, inside a story focused on a father's love, we still catch a glimpse of the fullness of God.

We see the heart of the Father in the one who never gives up on his child. We see the grace of the Son in the restoration that welcomes the lost back home instead of condemning them. And we see the work of the Holy Spirit in what happens after the son returns...because in reality...coming home is only the beginning. Now comes healing. Growth. Transformation. Learning how to live differently than before.

That's how God still works in our lives. The Father loves us before we deserve it. The Son makes restoration possible. And the Spirit keeps shaping us after we come home.

But the center of this story today is still the father standing at the edge of the road waiting for his child. Maybe some dads here today needed that reminder.

The greatest impact many fathers make is not through perfection but through faithful presence. Through forgiveness. Through patience. Through grace.

Through continuing to love even when disappointment creeps in.

And for those carrying pain connected to fatherhood today, whether because of loss, broken relationships, absence, or disappointment, I hope you hear this clearly:

There is still a Heavenly Father with a heart who sees you, loves you, and waits for you with open arms. A Father who still watches the road...waiting to welcome all of His children home.

To God be the Glory. Amen.