



Good morning. It's a great day in the Kingdom!

...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 ... 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. -Luke 15:20, 22 (the parable of the Prodigal Son)

I just returned, Tuesday, from my umpteenth journey between California and home. I was delivering the littles to their parents after their annual summer visit, and maintained a tortured week of straddling 4 time zones to get my work done. Flying during the COVID-19 times is a different. Trans-continental flight is never easy, and now, with extra constraints, it is particularly challenging. God blessed my homecoming with words of sweetness and welcome, and now I have had 3 nights back in my own bed, in the home that God has provided, in the community that God has assigned to my care. This morning, as the sun rises in the east, I reflect on journeys and homecomings past.

In the days after the attacks of 9/11, I stood with my little family in the middle of South Station in Boston. Having cashed my 18-year-old daughter's plane tickets in for train tickets, my wife and I stood with her and most of her worldly possessions as she embarked on her life's journey - to establish herself in the world, nearly a continent away. A difficult time for any father, this leave-taking was made more difficult by compounded fears prevalent in that horrible time. We had bought three new Sacagawea 1\$ gold coins when we purchased her traveler's checks, and we stood in prayer, blessing these coins that they would remind us of our family unity and love across the miles and years. We each put our coin in a safe place as a sort of Mizpah, and waved

goodbye.

It would not be fair to my daughter to compare her to the prodigal son, but her sojourn in New Mexico was not without misadventures and mistakes and, she would admit, some errors in judgement. Such has been the case for all of us, I think, in our first shot at adult life. A year later, she decided to return home and see what she could make of her future. Like the father in Jesus' story, I ran to her. Lori and I drove 2,500 miles across our beautiful country and accompanied her another 3,000 miles through the South and back home. What a journey! Our daughter would need to come home for various reasons a few more times before she would become ensconced in the SF Bay area with her own little family. To have a baby, to raise her baby safely, to save rent, to weather her husband's deployment, and so forth.

My experiences as a parent have informed me greatly about our Father's love for us. This is what Jesus meant to teach us with this parable about a child returning home to reload. When we are in trouble, when we need to come home, when we need to ground ourselves, when we need loving reassurance, God *runs* to us. He doesn't just mail us the airfare! He runs to be by our side, and he gives us signs of his love. No matter how bad we've been, or how neglectful we've been, or inconsiderate of others or of ourselves. No matter how angry or disappointed with God we have been, He *runs* to us to bring us home. All we have to do is turn to Him. God blesses us when we love one another in the same fashion. He gives us signs of his favor and grace toward us.

On that first prodigal homecoming, I remember we had reached Connecticut, and spent the last of our cash on tolls, we still needed gas to make the last 200 miles. We scrounged through the car for nickels and dimes, and we prayed for God's travelling mercies to see us safely home. Finally, with my baseball cap filled with small change, I went to a snack machine to change it into quarters for the gas station. When I hit the coin return, out dropped 10 Sacagawea \$1 gold coins! I smiled then. I knew God was smiling too.

If you feel you have been away during this quarantine; if you feel you aren't where you should be and would like to get back to your home, your church, your family; if you feel separated from that 'right' feeling in your life, turn back to God. He will bring out His best for you too! He will welcome you home.

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