

Celebrated by abounding love

We have often pictured God as a harsh God
whose anger needed to be appeased.
Yet He proved to have a heart of tender mercy.
He is the loving Father welcoming us back.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, came to earth to show us the character of our God. The character of Jesus is the character of God (Hebrews 1:3; John 14:9a). Jesus character is exactly like God's character (Hebrews 1:3).

God's good work in you is to restore a true knowledge of God, so that you know Him. He will reveal Himself to you until the day of Jesus Christ. And not only you, for

“... they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 31:34).

For humanity was created with a knowledge of God, but when Eve ate the fruit, and her “eyes were opened,” she fell into a spiritual blackness that blotted out her knowledge of God. She got Alzheimer's, and passed it down to you and me. But when Jesus came, the disciple's “eyes were opened” (Luke 24:31, 32) and they finally knew Him. Whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father (John 14:9). And Jesus promised that we would see Him (John 14:19). He promised that we would know Him (John 14:7). For Jesus came to restore a knowledge of God, and will do so until the Day of Jesus Christ.

God in Jesus

Can you imagine the pain that strikes at God's loving heart when He sees His children unable to sense His love, and goodness, and kindness and mercy? When my wife saw her Father with Alzheimer's, unable to recognise her, she cried. How much grief fills the heart of God when He sees His children in this world unable to recognise Him, unable to know Him?

Here's a picture of God that is true.

“God so loved the world, that He gave His One and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:16, 17).

God's desire is to reach out and rescue His afflicted children.

“I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

“It is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little [children] should perish” (Matthew 18:14).

“The Lord ... is not willing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

And remember, if Jesus loves you, then God loves you too, because Jesus’ character is exactly like God’s character (Hebrews 1:3).

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever” (Psalm 136:1, KJV).

“Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his steadfast love endures forever” (Psalm 136:2, ESV).

Jesus demonstrated our Father’s character in healing the blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, and even resurrecting the dead. Jesus demonstrated our Father’s character in saying, “Let the little children come to me” (Matthew 19:14). Jesus demonstrated the Father’s character in searching and saving the lost sheep (Luke 15:1–6).

The loving Father

Jesus demonstrated the love of the Father, by telling this story.

11-12 Then he said, “There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, I want right now what would come to me when you die.’

12-16 “So the father divided the property between the two sons. It wasn’t long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He began to work with a farmer who assigned him to his fields to feed the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig food, but no one would give him any.

17-20 “That brought him to his senses. He said, ‘All the farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I’m going back to my father. I’ll say to him, Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you; I don’t deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.’ He got right up and went home to his father.

20-21 “When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. The father’s heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: ‘Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you; I don’t deserve to be called your son ever again.’

22-24 “But the father wasn’t listening. He was calling to the servants, ‘Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We’re going to feast! We’re going to have a wonderful time! My son is here. He was given up for dead, but is now alive! Given up for lost and now found!’ And they began to have a wonderful time (Luke 15:11–24).

That's our loving heavenly Father. He sent His Son into this world to find His lost sheep. And whenever His Son brings a sheep home, the Father celebrates. He's always ready to welcome us home. That's His heart's greatest desire.

The good work that Jesus has started in you, is to restore a knowledge of God's abounding love. For if you know, deep in your heart, the abounding love of God, then you will be empowered to be loving, and to communicate that love through word and deed, to everyone. May your heart be rooted in the tender mercy of God our Father.

"It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9–11).

"He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

References:

This message based on Luke 15:11–24, Philippians 1:6, 9–11.