**PAPA’S COMING**

***Joy or Fear?***

He swung on the gate and looked down the street,

Awaiting the sound of familiar feet,

Then suddenly came to the sweet child’s eyes,

The marvelous glory of morning skies.

For a manly form with a steady stride,

Drew near to the gate that opened wide,

As the boy sprang forward and joyfully cried,

“Papa’s coming!”

The wasted face of a little child,

Looked out of the window with eyes made wild,

By the ghostly shades in failing light,

And the glimpse of a drunk man in the night,

Cursing and reeling from side to side,

The poor boy, trembling and trying to hide,

Clung to his mother’s skirts and cried,

“Papa’s coming!”

Fathers, which of the above stanzas more closely represents your relationship to your children? If the former, no matter what others in the world may say or think, you are indeed a happy and blessed man. But if the latter, no matter what other successes you might have accomplished in life, you are surely a sad man.

Lonely days, full of memories which bring deep regrets, awaits the man who has failed his children. Testimonials from grieving fathers who have lost their children to the world, are among the most heart-wrenching experiences of my life. Young fathers, it is my sincere and fervent prayer that you never have to live with such regrets. Let me encourage you to study three Papa’s from the Bible who showed us how to have special homecomings.

What did Shem, Ham and Japheth think when Papa Noah was coming home? They no doubt thought what God thought: “*By faith Noah … moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house*” (Heb. 11:7). In a world gone mad where “*the thoughts of man’s heart were only evil continually*” and that “*all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth*” Noah “*found grace in the eyes of the Lord*” (Gen. 6:5, 12, 8). He was “*a just man and perfect in his generation*” (Gen. 6:9). The saving of his family, both physically and spiritually, was his top priority. Yes, he was also “*a preacher of righteousness*” to an ungodly world (2 Pet. 2:5), but first and foremost he was an example of righteousness to his wife and children. With only a slight imagination you can easily envision the table talk and nightly devotions in this man’s home. Before, during, and after the flood Noah’s house was an altar of sacrifice unto God. Mrs. Noah undoubtedly heard the joyful squeals of little Shem, Ham and Japheth that “Papa’s Coming!” and simply smiled.

What did Sarah and Isaac think when Papa Abraham was coming home? They surely thought what God thought: “*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him*” (Gen. 18:19). Isaac so trusted his aging father that there is no record of any struggle or word spoken when he bound him on that altar and raised the knife to kill him. The unconditional love and close chemistry between the two must have been very special. When Sarah heard Isaac yell out, “Papa’s coming!” she knew how proud that made her husband feel.

In a somewhat different way, but with the same pride and passion, the apostle John had children who thought of him as their spiritual Papa. He said himself, “*I have no greater joy than to hear that* ***my children*** *walk in truth*.” (3 Jn. 4). The epistle of Third John could actually be titled “*Gaius*” – just like Paul wrote to his children in the faith and they are titled First and Second Timothy, Titus and Philemon. John’s letter to Gaius begins this way:

​1 The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:
2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

I’m sure the “elder” John lost some of his “children” to the world (I Jn. 2:15-17), perhaps including Diotrophes (3 Jn. 9). But some, like Gaius, gave him “*no greater joy*” by hearing of their faithfulness to Christ.

Noah “***walked with God***” (Gen. 6:9).

Abraham “***commanded his children after him***” (Gen. 18:19).

John, according to reliable sources in church history, lived around Ephesus for over two decades, becoming a father in the faith to many children like Gaius. Here is a summary of John’s life to his children*: “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in* ***deed*** *and in* ***truth****”* (I Jn. 3:18).

My heart goes out to all fathers who have lost their sons or daughters to the world, even when they did everything as God showed us in the lives of Noah, Abraham and John. David, a man after God’s own heart, lost his children to the world, as did Lot. But if our children are going to ever be saved it must be by the ingredients seen in the lives of these three great Papa’s.

“Papa’s coming!” What do those words mean to your wife and children? - Rick