homesick 2. Living in God's Family





homesick

hiraeth:

a homesickness for a home to which you cannot return, a home which maybe never was; the nostalgia, the yearning, the grief for the lost places of your past.







Tim Keller

To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial.

To be known and not loved is our greatest fear.

But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It ... fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.

God's love for me was limited by my fear of God's power, and it seemed wise to keep a careful distance even though the desire for closeness was immense. I know that I share this experience with countless others. I have seen how the fear of becoming subject to God's revenge and punishment has paralyzed the mental and emotional lives of many people ... This paralyzing fear of God is one of the great human tragedies.

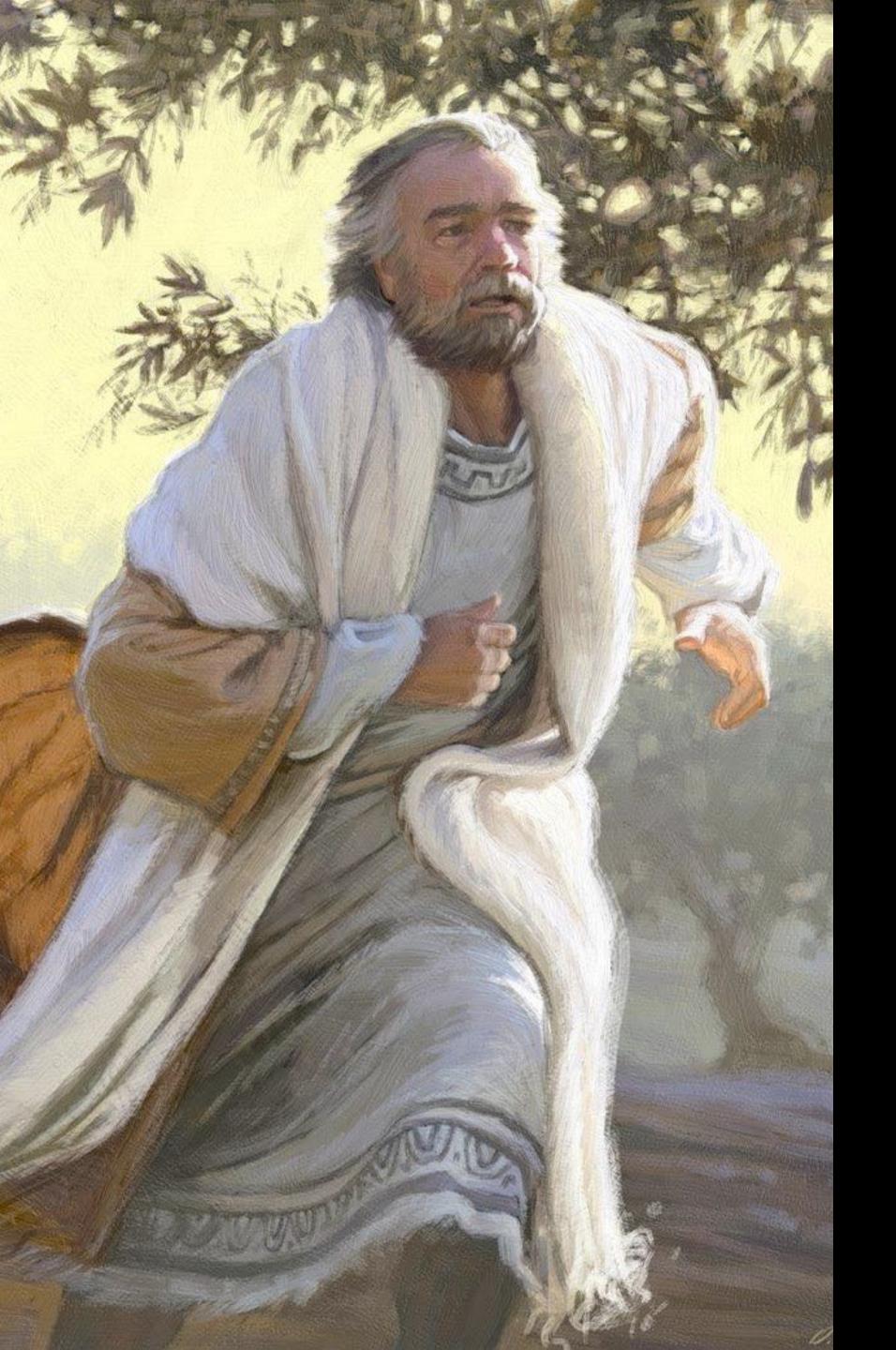
Luke 15:17-24 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to

Luke 15:17-24 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.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

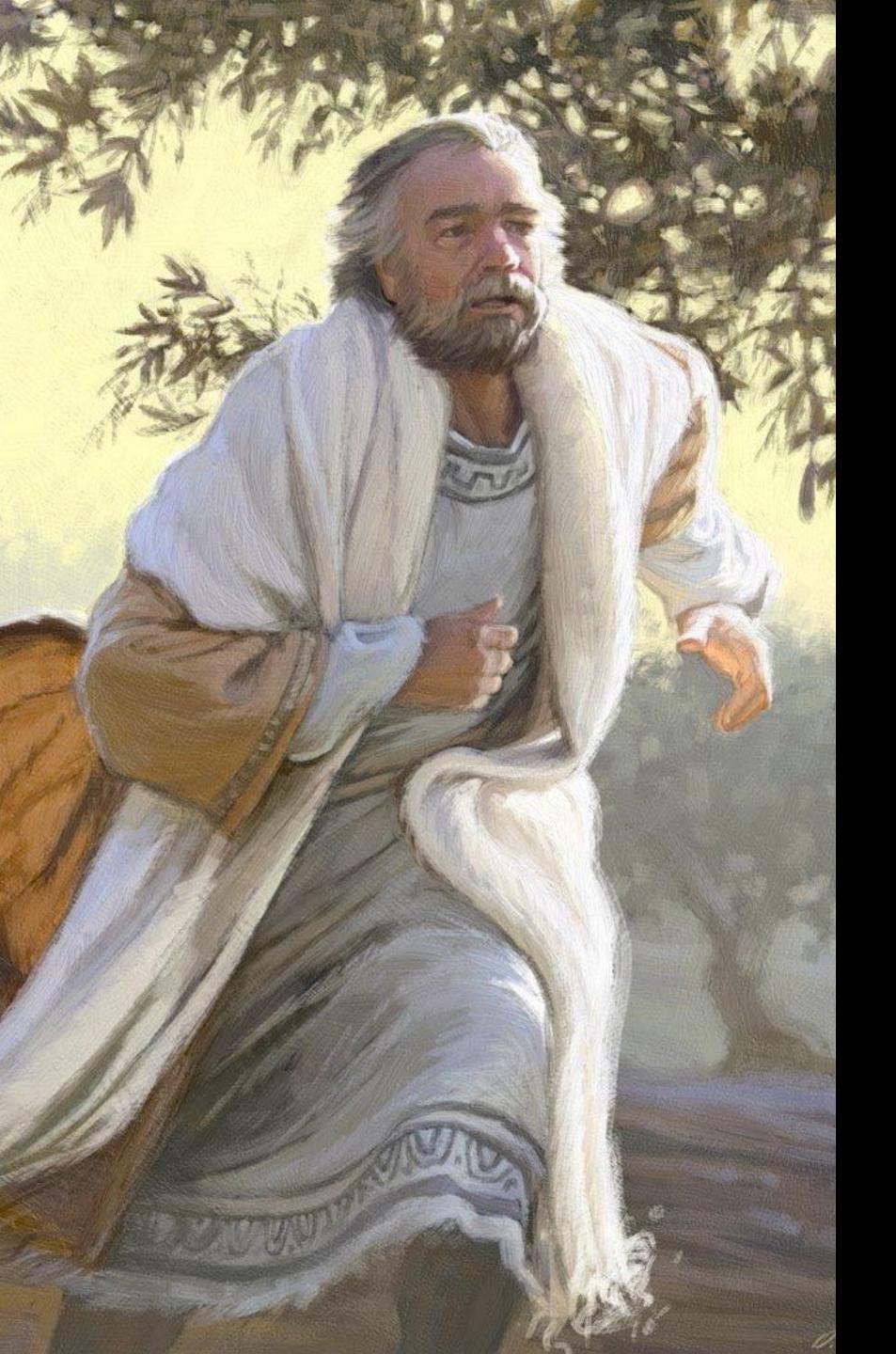
Luke 15:17-24

"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. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.



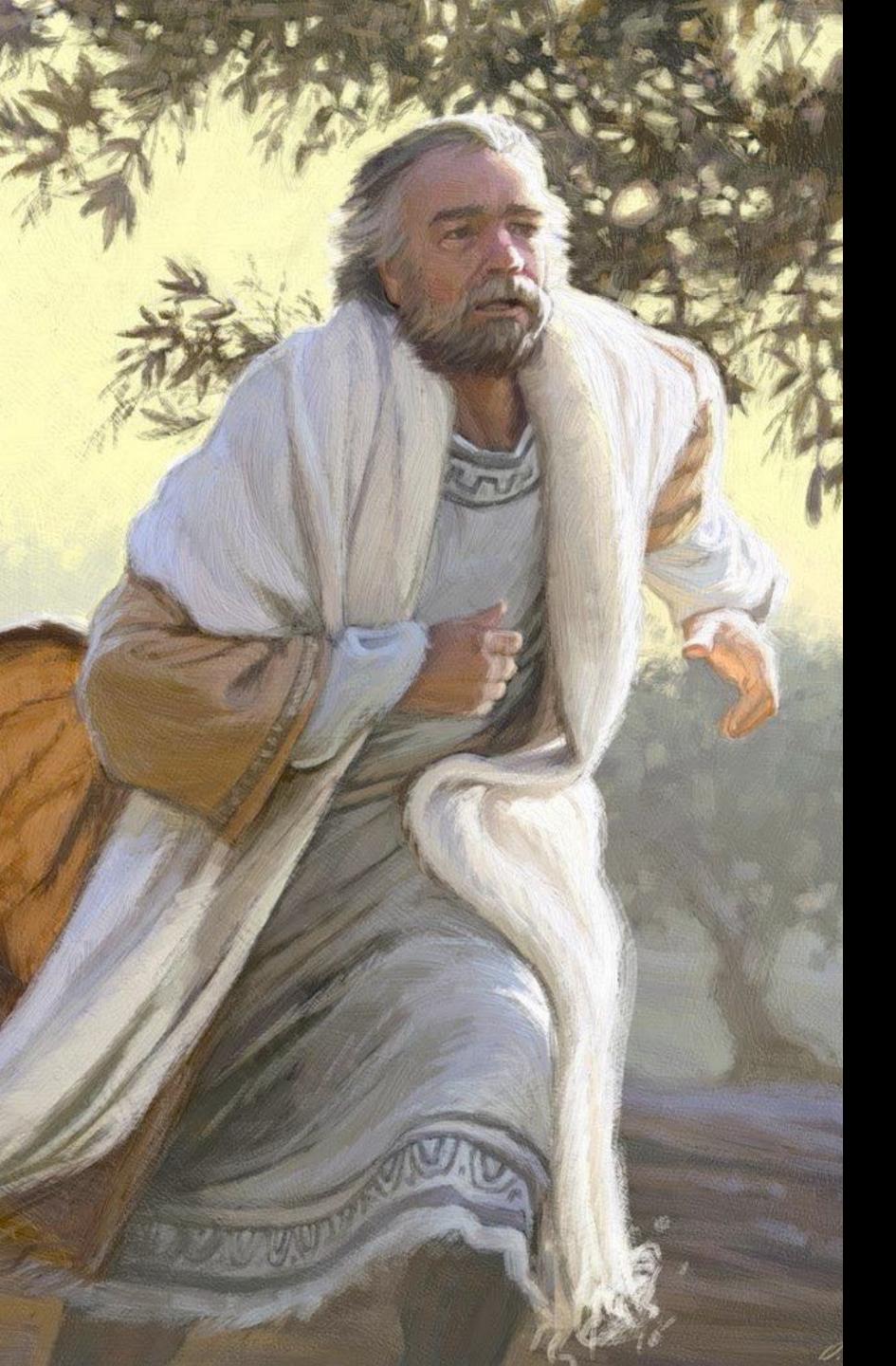
Kenneth Bailey

... the father breaks the mold of Middle Eastern patriarchy. He takes the bottom edge of his long robes in his hand and runs to welcome his pig-herding son. He falls on his neck and kisses him before hearing his prepared speech! The father does not demonstrate love in response to his son's confession.



Kenneth Bailey

Rather, out of his own compassion he empties himself, assumes the form of a servant, and runs to reconcile his estranged son. Traditional Middle Easterners, wearing long robes, do not run in public. To do so is deeply humiliating. This father runs.



Kenneth Bailey

... Rather than experiencing the ruthless hostility he deserves and anticipates, the son witnesses an unexpected, visible demonstration of love in humiliation.







Through the church God provides every believer with a new family, a new nome.

Jen Pollack Michel The church ... must bear witness to bonds of human love and loyalty that exist outside of the marriage covenant —to a home that exists outside of the nuclear family. ... The nuclear family cannot bear the full weight of human hope and expectation, struggle and need. It's too fragile and human an entity. As a married woman with children,

Jen Pollack Michel

I need relational connection and commitment beyond the circle of my immediate family, both for myself as well as for the sake of my family. ... It is not easy to stretch across the demographic differences of our lives and make a go at community. But this is part of the church's housekeeping.

Jen Pollack Michel

If home is God's welcome, then each of us must work to make sure everyone belongs. God has a home, and he is looking to share it. As the psalmist describes him, he is "Father of the fatherless and protector of widows.



Luke 15:25-30

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'



Luke 15:25-30

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 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.



Luke 15:25-30

But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

"'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 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.'"

We cannot love others and make a welcoming home for them in the church until we truly understand God's love

In a world that constantly compares people, ranking them as more or less intelligent, more or less attractive, more or less successful, it is not easy to really believe in a love that does not do the same. When I hear someone praised, it is hard not to think of myself as less praiseworthy; when I read about the goodness and kindness of other people, it is hard not to wonder whether I myself am as good and kind as they; and when I see trophies, rewards, and prizes being

handed out to special people, I cannot avoid asking myself why that didn't happen to me.

The world in which I have grown up is a world so full of grades, scores, and statistics that, consciously or unconsciously, I always try to take my measure against all the others. Much sadness and gladness in my life flows directly from my comparing, and most, if not all, of this comparing is useless and a terrible waste of time and energy.

God's love should not only save us, but ought to transform us.

Here lies hidden the great call to conversion: to look not with the eyes of my own low self-esteem, but with the eyes of God's love. As long as I keep looking at God ... as a father who wants to get the most out of me for the least cost, I cannot but become jealous, bitter, and resentful toward ... my brothers and sisters.

But if I am able to look at the world with the eyes of God's love and discover that God's vision is not that of a stereotypical ... patriarch but rather that of an all-giving and forgiving father who does not measure out his love to his children according to how well they behave, then I quickly see that my only true response

can be deep gratitude. ... As children of the darkness that rules through fear, self-interest, greed, and power, our great motivators are survival and self-preservation. But as children of the light who know that perfect love casts out all fear, it becomes possible to give away all that we have for others.

Luke 6:32-36 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting

Luke 6:32-36

to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.