

The Quest of a Father

One of the most compelling stories of the depth of a father's love came out of the Civil War. In a Quaker family living in Pennsylvania, the son, Jonathan, went against his father's wishes, ran away and enlisted in the cause of the North. Time passed, and there was no word from Jonathan. One night, the father had a dream that his son had been wounded in action, was in distress, and needed the care of a father.

So the father left the farm and discovered where the troops that included his son might be. He made his way by horse-drawn buggy until he came to the battlefield. He inquired until he found the commander of the forces and asked about his son. The commander explained that there had been heavy action earlier in the day, and many had fallen wounded. Some had been cared for, but others were still left out in the trenches. But he gave permission to the father to go and try to find his son. He told him where the fighting had taken place.

It was now about dark, so the father lit a lantern. Walking along, searching, the light fell across wounded young men, some calling for help, many too seriously wounded to cry out for assistance. The task seemed impossible. How could he find his son among all those wounded and dying? As he stumbled over body after body, he almost despaired. Then he began calling loudly, "Jonathan Smythe, thy father seeketh after thee!" Then he would walk a little way and call again, "Jonathan Smythe, thy father seeketh after thee!"

A groan could be heard here and there, and more than a few times the words were uttered, "I wish that were my father."

The man kept diligently at his search. Finally, he heard a very faint, barely audible reply, "Father, over here. I'm over here." And then the fallen soldier said, "I knew you would come."

The father knelt down and took him in his arms, comforting him with his presence. He dressed the wound, carried him to the buggy, took him to a place of seclusion and nursed him back to health.

Sunday is Father's Day, a day celebrating fatherhood and the influence of fathers in our society and in leadership of the family.

It should not be lost on us that our Heavenly Father still loved His sons and daughters, even when they went against His wishes, turned their backs on Him, and plunged into a world of sin and disobedience. The Father's quest to draw us back into His fellowship was so great that He sent His only Son into the battlefield to live and die on our behalf. His grace and His forgiveness restore our spiritual health.

This Sunday, let us honor both our earthly fathers and our Heavenly Father.

– Beecher Hunter