

Introduction

- Drama script from SU group at school:
 - modern re-telling of the parable
 - girl runs away from home....
 - final scene, slow-motion girl and father running towards each other...
 - father slaps girl across the face!!
- (*Riding Lights!*)

The Father and the Son

- Jesus transformed way we understood God:
 - broke decisively with remote & highly formal modes of address used by the Jews of his own day
 - called God Father, not merely in sense of "Father of all creation", but as "relating to us as a Father does"
 - with love, concern, mercy, and inviting a son-like response!

The Father and the Two Sons

- Parable is example of this
 - remember it says many things - about repentance, about accepting what God is doing in his grace
 - as well as about the Father
- How does the Father act?
 - with surprising grace!
- This is how Jesus experienced God as his Father!

The Father of many Children

- We, by adoption and incorporation into Christ, are able to experience God in the same way!!

So?

- not merely fearful nor merely formal
- rather familial intimacy (still respectful; Papa, not Daddy!)
- so God has a concern for the individual believer that we can trust; we matter individually to God on the basis of his Fatherhood!
- this is not a mere description - "like a Father" - he **is** our Father!
- Implications for:
 - worship
 - personal identity
 - our obedience

The Father and the Objectors!

- What if our picture or experience of a Father is less than perfect?
 - practically, who would you like as your Father?
- Does this imply a universalist position?
 - this kind of Father language is only ever used of believers

Conclusion

- Enter into a Father/child relationship with God:
 - through the work of Christ on the Cross
 - which is what we will celebrate at the Table shortly!
- *How deep the Father's love for us....*