

AO-20090101: Love Providing^[#2]

Author: Festo Kivengere
Place:
Date:
Event:
Theme: Love Providing; The Prodigal Son Comes Home
Text: Luke 15: 21-32

Comment: Taken from Tape 50
Series of two messages:
1. Love Embracing
2. Love Providing

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The Prodigal Home

Love Providing

by Festo Kivengere

Luke 15: 21
Place ?

Rock of Ages

Those lovely words: Rock of Ages, cleft for me

Let me hide myself in thee

I believe most of us know what that (says?) you are begging permission to hide looks like. Perhaps some of us there are a few areas of blind spots and you don't realize what the singer meant when he said, Rock of Ages, particularly cleft for me, let me hide this self of mine in thee. Why should you hide? Because that kind of self - that we saw yesterday- surrounded by with arms of love - remember the picture of the father embracing, as we read in the new Bible translation those lovely words- that the father ran to meet him and flung his arms around him and covered him with kisses. There you find this wretched, returning wanderer, this waster of his father's goods, this tired body, dilapidated life, covered with the much of dissipation, and in fact a very sad picture- almost a caricature, in rags and tatters, nothing to commend this ^{returning} wanderer to the father, nothing at all. He looked around and there was nothing - and then we found that all the words that warmed him up were in the arms of the father. All the work was in these arms which surrounded him, in those kisses which covered him. That was the only hope for him.

He looked in the past, all there was there was to be ashamed of. He looked in the present, all he could find was just the remains of a dilapidated life. That was no encouragement either. He looked in the future, there wasn't much to look forward to. Now he looks into the eyes of the father and he could have sung quite easily what we have sung this morning:

Nothing in my hand I bring

Simply to the Cross I cling;

Naked Naked, I need dress

Helpless, absolutely helpless . . . when I went away from you, father, I thought I was able, now I admit I am utterly helpless. I need your grace. Not only that, I am filthy . . . Don't you think you would have called that the song of the prodigal? This was the only hope, all that there is - Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

This is where the word, "Let me hide myself - this self of mine"

mine. This self with marks of dissipation, marks and wounds of wandering and backslidings in the heart. Here, Lord, I want to hide this self in those arms of love.

Let us go back to that amazing picture ^{which} the Lord Jesus Himself painted for us. And I believe because it is ~~is~~ our Saviour who gave this parable that you are in it and I am in it. And I think we are very blind if we don't see ourselves in it, remembering that he who told it is our Lord, the one who came particularly for you and me, therefore who knows us from A to Z.

Yesterday we saw "Love Embracing," now let us think a little bit about "Love Providing."

I'm sure that if you saw that perfected picture of this starved person whom we called the prodigal son, or the waster of God's gifts. You were perhaps left wondering. . . We saw love embracing him - kissing him. We saw him getting warmed up, cold as he was. This was the first time this wanderer with the dissipated life felt the warmth, and some of us were feeling warmed up. You know this is what Calvary does. When you are very cold and your heart is wandering away in those dry parts of this poor world, then Calvary love comes near. ^{wounded} The arms of Jesus embrace you, unembracable as you are, and they are only arms, you know that can embrace one such as you and I am. And then you begin to feel a kind of strange warmth - like John Wesley in London when he heard the exposition of Galatians and said, "I felt my heart strangely warmed." He had never felt any warmth although he ^{belonged} was a very keen, conservative Anglican family. His mother was a very dedicated woman. This was the first time - "I felt my heart strangely warmed." Do you know what warming it was? It was based on the fact that when you come to Christ, you don't bring any achievement, which was Wesley's problem as a man who was always trying to bring achievement. But in order to be a deserving Christian, a commendable Christian, but now he ~~found~~ found as this bro was expounding Galatians ~~xx~~ somehow what grace can do in spite of what you are. And he caught this vision and the Sp of God began to warm up his cold heart - he felt the arms of Jesus, as it were, bringing this strange warmth into my soul, and of course it melted him. The love of the father melted this prodigal man coming back home.

John Wesley
Heart strangely
warmed

Providing Love. Some of us may be wondering now, Yes, I know Jesus indeed has really welcomed me to come to Him. I

can sense that ~~when~~ He was really embracing me. I know that. I know He loves. I know my sins are forgiven. But I wonder how I am going to provide for this naked feeling I have right now. You know, I have come to Christ, but I still feel naked inside. Do I need the spectacular gifts from above to make me what I shd be? Where are the provisions to make me the man I think God wants me to be? I am in the arms of the Father, but I sense a kind of hunger - there is a sort of thirst I feel, and I look round for something to provide for it. And particularly when we are Xn~~x~~, do you know where we look? I am born again, I believe, there must be some sort of store withing me as a child of God to provide for this thirst. Effort, struggling.

You meet Christians who tell you, like Jacob, oh to struggle with God, oh to meet God and wrestle with Him until he blesses you. Really the fault of my not being blessed is with God! You wrestle with Him until you force him to bless you! They forget that Scripture doesn't put it that way. It says that the hardness was Jacob's way, not God's way. It doesn't say that Jacob wrestled with the man. It says that the man wrestled with Jacob. The ~~x~~ Many times we make the mistake as believers, we think that somehow in another way by which we are going to provide for . Where are we going to get the couraged - the ~~xxx~~ love of Chris t, - the patience - the fruit of the Sp. Where are these garments which are going to cover our spiritual nakedness? Are we going to manufacture them in the factory of prayer or the factory of Crhistian consistency? Where are we going to get these^{3/4} ? Come back to the story and you will see providing love.

I'm going to read these lovely verses and you will see how simple the secret is as our Lord Jesus puts it. Can we connect the two? Yesterday we saw this man absolutely in the arms of love. covered with kisses, feeling the warmth of the father's love. The love has metted him and encouraged him. This wonderful love of the father has ~~been~~ revealed to this poor man that he doesn't deserve, that he has no ~~pxxxx~~ claim at all on his father - nothing of deserving is there.

Lu.15:21: The son said. . . (this is the first time we have heard the son. I want to call your attention - at first the son was dumfounded. Do you realize that this is what the love of Christ will do to you. There are no excuses at Calvary- no arguments. When you stand face to face with the love which

Struggling

nailed our Saviour on the Cross of Calvary. No excuse whatever. You will be - have nothing to say. To stand there amazed --- that you of all people could be loved - and love to that extent. This is what overcomes men and women. This is God's way of melting people. And then, having been melted, having been warmed up, having been convicted, embarrassed in order to be blessed, here we hear the first utterance from the son - uttered by the son in the arms of love. I want to tell you this is where repentance makes sense. Most of us repent outside the arms of love. You may as well confess as a Catholic does to the priest. Christian repentance is when you are in the arms of love.

Peter may weep when he is within those piercing by loving eyes of the suffering Saviour. It makes all the difference in the world. Christian repentance is not a miserable ~~experience~~ experience such as a person goes through when you stand in front of a psychiatrist who analyses you through and through and tells you all your faults and where you get all this depression and sends you to wonder why or what ~~w~~ are you going to try what. You are left wandering in the world of yourself.

Christian repentance comes when you are absolutely surrounded by the arms of love. And do you know what it brings? Not despair. There is no despair when a Christian repents. There is not room for it when in the arms of love. You look around and all you can see is forgiveness. ~~Yessssssssssssssssssssss~~ Forgive him! Yes, he's bad, but forgive him. These are not arms of judgment, but of love. Reconciling love.

Having seen that the son said, " Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son. . ." He had hardly finished those words when we hear this - love, intervening love. "But" not "And" But, - in other words, here is love doing what he did n't expect. Some of us think that when you repent, therefore it should be "and" because I repented, therefore I deserve --. No, no, it's a "But" Here is love providing what he didn't expect. You were deserving to be a hired servant - away in the dark -completely cut off, "But--" and this is the lovely way in which God provided. He expected perhaps to go and work and get tired and sweat and maybe ~~w~~ someone will give you a few more rags to put on. "But -- I believe this is a word to encourage some of us here

*Christian
Repentance*

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Some of us have been struggling and wondering. We've been struggling with some sin and we push it back and it comes forward and we push it back. This is your message.

Here is the word of the father. Remember it is Jesus speaking - the lips of the One who hung on the cross for you, for me, the LJC. "But the father said to his servant, Quick" that is how he put it - no waiting at all. The confession had hardly come out. It seems as though the father is not really listening to the confession. Some of us think that God is there enjoying your confession. He doesn't. What God is interested in is that you return. The point of turning is what God is interested in - it is you, not your confession. You may confess one thousand sins, God's love is really interested in you. You are the interest of God, you are the center of his love. Don't make a mistake about it. It isn't the sins you confess - those things have to go - they all say one story, that you have lived a life, that's all. What does your confession say? That you have lived a life of dilapidation, that you have wasted God's gifts. God's love concentrates not on the word you use, not on how many sins you confess, but on you - you are the object of Calvary love. That's why the father doesn't seem to listen - this is the form he loves, he has come back. And praise God, love has brought him to a place where he can come back. And so the father says,

"Quick, fetch a robe." O, praise the Lord for that. Take care of his nakedness. Look at these rags and tatters. Do you think this poor man knows where the robes were? Don't you think this was an absolute surprise? Did he expect a robe, of all people? If anything he would have expected some used clothes thrown away and if they had brought them he would have been extra thankful, that would have been very much of grace. But now,

"Quick, take that particular robe which has been waiting for him." Do you realize there is a robe waiting for you all the time? Yes, in the beautiful wardrobe of the father. You don't need to whitewash yourself all the time. The father is not interested in your whitewashing - all he is interested in is you as you are. You may be in rags and tatters spiritually, and most of us are. Your relationships may be all over the place. Your imagination may be wandering in the world of dryness

Fetch the robe

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and in thoughts of impurity that defile us. The father is not shocked by that. He has provided something to cover that mess, and that's what he did.

"Hurry up, quick! I don't like to see this my son in this condition any longer. I have provided for him. He needn't wait in his nakedness any more. I have provided." And they ran and brought the robe and he says, Quick, fetch a robe, my best one. It was the only one in the home. My best one. Bring it and put it on him. Poor him! He really needs to be covered. He has been exposed for such a long time. No wonder all this terrible dissipation and wounds and scars - he was too much exposed.

Have you been exposed too long? without anything to cover you? The father has provided for that.

"Put it on him!" Not only that. I want you to take your place as the prodigal and listen to these words:

"Quick, take the best robe I have and put it on him." And the prodigal is there. Have you anything to say, prodigal? NO tears are flowing from his eyes. He is surprised and completely captivated by this love. Then something more before he got over that -

"Put a ring on his finger!" Poor finger - just a skeleton, you know. They were no longer the same beautiful fingers that left home years ago. These are fingers of the returning prodigal unclean nails. "Put a ring on that poor finger." He has been out of fellowship for long. Put that ring of fellowship back - absolutely reconciled - and confirming that I am loved. You see, I have received him as my son. We are re-wedded, if I may use that word. I want to say to you that there is a ring waiting for each one of us.

Have you lost fellowship with your brother for a long time - a man and wife - there is a ring provided which brings peace. You have heard of people being brought back into full reconciliation. Put a ring on his finger

And shoes on his feet. He has been standing on his own feet for such a long time. They can't support him, they are too dirty to carry him along. Put them on his sad feet that he may be able to walk. How have you been walking as a Xn? On your own feet? You need provision for your feet. They need to be covered with grace, to be cleansed and then covered

Amos

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so that where you have had bruises, they will be healed and you can walk. So grace starts by covering the body, by bringing reconciliation and by covering the feet. That's not all.

"Bring that fattened calf, and kill it." Why? You see because you can never feed on the Lord Jesus until you are covered in his righteousness. There must be reconciliation before you can eat. The dirty feet must be cleansed and covered then you can walk, not on your feet, but on the feet of Jesus C. Our steps as Christians are steps in grace. We stand in grace, we walk in grace or by faith, as Paul puts it. We walk by faith, provided. Everything is provided. Are your feet tired and rather dragging along? He has shoes to make them walk faster. Are you feeling naked and wondering where you are going to have something to cover you. Do you know in Jesus - you see him hanging on the cross naked. What does that say to you? When He hangs on the cross naked, He did it to give you sufficient righteousness to cover your ^{spiritual} nakedness. This is the meaning for JC hanging on the cross. He removed that garment of righteousness that it may cover your nakedness. Therefore when there are signs of nakedness spiritually, you are committing a bad sin - it is another way of despising what Jesus has provided and thinking it is not sufficient to cover my nakedness - I need something additional, something more. What can God give more to cover a prodigal's nakedness than that righteousness which JC as it were put off when he hanged on the cross as a criminal. Can I ever buy something more than that? This is a garment which covers you from head to foot - nothing more. You stand amazed. You wonder why God can cover you. Yes, he can cover you - every area of your life which is naked. If you are naked in love, there is sufficient love in JC to cover it. You feel sometimes rather naked in patience - there is sufficient patience in JC to ~~ga~~ cover that naked area of yours. You sometimes feel naked in purity - there is sufficient purity. And when the father says, Bring the best, he means JC. He has no other best. God's best was the LJC. No angel can cover you - the best angel in heaven hasn't enough to cover you. God never sent us an angel, he sent us His son. And in Him there is all that God knows, any of us is in need of. God does not look anywhere else. He looks at his son and he sees in Him sufficient grace, enough righteousness, suff.

fattened calf
righteousness covering

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purity, enough patience, plenty of love for you and for me. So there is no reason why we should be naked. You feel sometimes tired? He said, Come unto me and I will give you rest. You feel lost at times? He said, I am the Way. You sometimes fumble about looking for the proof? He said, I am the proof. Sometimes you feel dry in your spiritual life. He said, I am the Life. And then He says, I was wounded in order to bring you back uncovered. And then the fact that ^{counts:} the sufficiency of Christ. Oh, it's lovely to see husband and wife, a young person absolutely bubbling over with love. Do you know, Christian, we are very poor of what we believe. And the reason is that we have come and come halfway joy our doubts. We think to doubt is to be humble, so we sit back on those doubts and say, Well of course we are all human and Jesus knows we are human. Jesus knows you are a weak, you don't have to tell him that, and he provided for humans and for weak ~~weak~~ people. But I think the problem with us is that we don't come empty-handed enough so that grace may do the impossible. We don't come naked enough to be covered completely. We still have spots where we can say, Yes, of course I am a Christian but we know I have my own grace. I was brought up wonderfully, I had wonderful parents. It is in me. Yes, of course I came to Jesus, but you know I have some very nice things about me. " And these funny spots stop grace covering you completely. "Of course my church is a wonderful church, you know. We teach nothing by sound doctrine." How long have you been sitting on that doctrine and being naked? Well, your doctrines must be wrong somewhere, or you must be wrong somewhere yourself. And I ~~like~~ want to encourage you, my brothers and sisters and myself. Many times I have had to admit that I am very empty - even this morning in my tent, I had to go to this tremendous sufficiency to meet my need.

As I look round, I can ~~xxx~~ almost see God the Father standing aside and looking at what His Son has provided and I'm sure God is amazed to see a hungry Christian by JC. A Christian still mourning about emptiness and nothingness and nakedness - and there God looks at His Son and looks at you and is amazed at your unbelief, amazed at your hardness of heart. For angels in Heaven are absolutely overcome. The provision is too good - it's tremendous. You can just get it, you can just get there and repent and rejoice and go and tell others about it.

Yes, if you had met this prodigal covered with this robe, a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet. Now they took this poor man and gave him one of the best chairs in the home, seated by the father and they ~~xxx~~ spread this beautiful table before him. You think what would be his thoughts. If you came there, would he look miserable? Would you find him complaining? Would you see him scratching his head wondering how he is going to be provided for, or would you find him overcome and singing Amazing Grace that saves such a wretch like me! I am sure he would be longing perhaps to go back to the far country and call them all. "It's too much, it's wonderful. I never expected this! I expected the father, because he is loving, to give me the leftovers when they have had enough. Now here I am, I am ~~xxxxxxx~~ eating on the freshness of my father's table!" Praside the Lord!

I want to encourage you this mornin'. There is provision and more than provision made for you in Jesus. Come just as you are - a tired Christian, a defeated Christian, a troubled couple in confusion - provision has been made for you by your God. And when God provides, I tell you, He provides sufficiently. There is no lack when God provides, because He has enough. And I want to tell you this is why I dare speak like this. The last 25 years of my life as a wretched prodigal whom God brought back home, I have one testimony. In the last 25 years, my life has proved and proved and proved again that when God calls the prodigal home, he provides for him. And this is the freedom that we have in Jesus.

Then next, my last word. The prodigal now is sitting at the table. There are all ^{types} ~~sorts~~ of people round this table. The only qualification to come in is to come empty-handed that's all. You don't claim anything to come in, all you want to come in - all you need is to be the brother of the prodigal. If you despise the prodigal, you can't come in. Remember the brother? He couldn't come in, because you see he was despising the prodigal. His heart was out of tune to the father's heart. He couldn't enjoy it. Now this is the fellowship. You know this is the secret of fellowship? When you meet like that at the father's table and you sit round looking at each other and all you can see is just prodigality and all you can pray for is just provision the father has made. And as you look at each one of these people, they will have a robe

provided by the father.

There's no business there of despising one another or picking at each other or criticizing each other worrying about each other's goodness, no nothing at all. What matters here is what the father has done - not what the man does. This is the secret of fellowship. Most of our fellowships suffer because instead of praising what the father has done, we simply look at each other and we expect tremendous kind of righteous and we make ourselves the standard ^{the} ~~for~~ measuring stick. Did you realize that? Whenever you criticize other people, you think they should all come to your standard. If they were like you, my! that would be wonderful and all the world would become Christian like you. What a poor specimen it would be! Like Jesus - that is the standard. I

In the father's home - all provided, all debtors of grace, all rejoicing and singing, praise the Lord. Today we have looked at the grace provided for our sins. You can take what you like and you can reject what you don't like - it's up to you. God never forces anyone. God put all you need there and he allows you to come forward and take it. If you don't want to you can sit back and enjoy the and go on starving when your father has provided everything for you. It's up to you. Calvary tells us one thing. All is provided. All is provided: forgiveness, renewal, reconciliation, covering, cleansing, all is provided. Come along and rejoice and sing:

Nothing in my hands I bring

Simply to the Cross I cling

Imcling. I don't come and go, no, I cling. ~~Exdxxxxxxx~~ If I come and go I'll become a prodigal again. So I cling to the cross and here I find ~~myxxxxxxx~~ grace, sufficient grace, and here I find cleansing from filthiness and here I can sing the forgiven sinner's song of praise to God

debtors of grace