

Accidental Pharisees – Thinning the Herd or Expanding the Family

Are men & women different? Do moms & dads handle things the same way? I have a son leaving to go off to college in August... Do you think my approach to this coming transition in our lives is different than Kristin's?

How do you think she is going to handle move in day... compared to me?

For many dads, having a child that turns 18 and goes off to college is all about "thinning the herd!" For moms, the only positive thing about this day is the hope of future additions to the family, by momentary subtraction!

In our homes, some of us want less, because we think less is more... And some of us want more, because we think... more is more!

What about in the church? Is it better to thin the herd because there would be less inconvenience... risk... conflict... or is it better to open wide the doors & expand the family, even if that means letting some "riffraff" & conflict in?

Far too many churches see themselves as country clubs... rather than as hospitals... refugee camps... instruction facilities... Co-ops...

If we are honest, which do we most resemble? Which do we aspire to be?

In the Father's House – *"Prodigals come home. The helpless find hope. Love is on the move when the Father's in the room! Prison doors swing wide. The dead come to life... Miracles take place. The cynical find faith... The Jericho walls are quaking. Strongholds now are shaking. Love is breaking through..."*

"Better is one day in Your courts. Better is one day in Your house! Better is one day in Your courts than thousands elsewhere!" Why? Because it's a place where none of us belong, but the Father welcomes us in & says welcome home!

I remember after I moved out of my parent's house, & one day I just showed up unannounced... I probably opened the fridge & sat down on the couch...

Do you know what my step-father said... "This is not your house anymore!"
Do you know what my mom said... "Home is wherever mom is!"

This response from my mom is even more true of my/our heavenly Father!

"We all start on the outside, the outside looking in. This is where grace begins. We were hungry, we were thirsty, with nothing left to give... & He said 'Come to the table... Take your place beside the Savior... Sit down and be set free..."

Listen to this list (from the bridge of that song)... Are these the kinds of

people we want around our table... in our church... part of our family?

Luke 15:11-32 – It's the story of the prodigal son... and the prodigal father "Prodigal" applied to both... & the older brother despised them both for it!

How would we respond as the older brother? As we often are in the church!

Matthew 23:13 – ***"But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in."***

When we put conditions on others for entrance into the party/Kingdom/ church, the result is conditions on ourselves as well... *"If they... Then I'll..."*

The only condition that the prodigal Father put on entrance into the party was "sonship"! The same is true with our heavenly Father!

John 1:12 – ***"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..."***

My mom has 3 very different kids... but what we all hold in common is that we are her children! It's that status alone that qualifies us in her home!

I may think I'm the best child... most deserving... the favorite... but our status in that house is the same, because of who our mom is... We all belong!

If a person is called a child of God, their status in the Father's house is the same as ours... no matter how undeserving we may think they are!

When we start to think that our own works is what qualifies us in the house of the Lord, then we too will want to up the ante in order to thin the herd!

Our sinful tendency is to exclude, rather than include... To elevate ourselves at the expense of others... To make it more about us, than about God!

Psalms 103:8-11 – ***"The Lord is merciful & gracious, slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love... He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him."***

If we aren't careful, we will lose sight of the gospel! & think that we belong in the Father's house more than others do, whom God has chosen to call His own!

On this Mother's Day let's remember & celebrate a mother's love... but even more so let's remember & celebrate the love of our heavenly parent... Let's do as Jesus did & focus on expanding the family, not thinning the herd!

Accidental Pharisees – Thinning the Herd or Expanding the Family

Are men & women different? Do moms & dads handle things the same way? I have a son leaving to go off to college in August... Do you think my approach to this coming transition in our lives is different than Kristin's?

How do you think she is going to handle _____ compared to me?

For many dads, having a child that turns 18 and goes off to college is all about _____. For moms, the only positive thing about this day is the hope of _____ to the family, by momentary subtraction!

In our homes, some of us want less, because we think less is more... And some of us want more, because we think... more is more!

What about in _____ Is it better to thin the herd because there would be less inconvenience... risk... conflict... or is it better to open wide the doors & expand the family, even if that means letting some "riffraff" & conflict in?

Far too many churches see themselves as _____ rather than as hospitals... refugee camps... instruction facilities... Co-ops...

If we are honest, which do we most resemble? Which do we aspire to be?

In the _____ – "Prodigals come home. The helpless find hope. Love is on the move when the Father's in the room! Prison doors swing wide. The dead come to life... Miracles take place. The cynical find faith... The Jericho walls are quaking. Strongholds now are shaking. Love is breaking through..."

"Better is one day in Your courts. Better is one day in Your house! Better is one day in Your courts than thousands elsewhere!" Why? Because it's a place where none of us belong, but the Father welcomes us in & says _____

I remember after I moved out of my parent's house, & one day I just showed up unannounced... I probably opened the fridge & sat down on the couch...

Do you know what my step-father said... *"This is _____ anymore!"*
Do you know what my mom said... *"Home is wherever _____!"*

This response from my mom is even more true of my/our heavenly Father!

"We all start on the outside, the outside looking in. This is where grace begins. We were hungry, we were thirsty, with nothing left to give... & He said 'Come to the table... Take your place beside the Savior... Sit down and be set free..."

Listen to this list (from the bridge of that song)... Are these the kinds of

people we want around _____... in our church... part of our family?

Luke 15:11-32 – It's the story of the prodigal _____... & the prodigal _____ "Prodigal" applied to both... & the older brother despised them both for it!

How would we respond as the _____ As we often are in the church!

Matthew 23:13 – *"But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in."*

When we put conditions on others for entrance into the party/Kingdom/ church, the result is conditions on _____ as well... *"If they... Then I'll..."*

The only condition that the prodigal Father put on entrance into the party was _____ The same is true with our heavenly Father!

John 1:12 – *"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..."*

My mom has 3 very different kids... but what we all hold in common is that we are her children! It's that status alone that qualifies us in her home!

I may think I'm the best child... most deserving... the favorite... but our status in that house is the same, because of who our mom is... We all _____

If a person is called a child of God, their status in the Father's house is the same as ours... no matter how undeserving we may think they are!

When we start to think that our own works is what qualifies us in the house of the Lord, then we too will want to up the ante in order to thin the herd!

Our sinful tendency is to _____ rather than include... To elevate ourselves at the expense of others... To make it more about _____ than about _____

Psalms 103:8-11 – *"The Lord is merciful & gracious, slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love... He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him."*

If we aren't careful, we will lose sight of _____ & think that we belong in the Father's house more than others do, whom God has chosen to call His own!

On this Mother's Day let's remember & celebrate a mother's love... but even more so let's remember & celebrate the love of our heavenly parent... Let's do as Jesus did & focus on _____ not thinning the herd!