

The Blessing

Luke 6:28-29 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Once there was a young boy who lived with his father in a cottage deep in the forest. His father worked him hard from sunrise to sunset and still almost every evening he would hear his father say the same thing: "Poor me! Poor me! I will die a sad old man because you are a fool and will never amount to anything."

But the boy was not a fool, in fact, he showed a lot of wisdom for his age, and he had a generous heart besides. One day, after helping an old widow stack some wood, he was about to go home when she stopped him and placing her hand on his head spoke these words: "You are a reflection of the face of God. The world is brighter for the joy you have given me this day. I bless you my child!"

The boy stepped back, amazed: "What was that?"

"Why, it was a blessing my child! Haven't you ever received a blessing before?"

Back at home he asked his father: "Papa? Why do you curse me? Why do you not bless me?"

"What a ridiculous question! Because it is against my nature to bless and I will not do what feels so unnatural to me. What a ridiculous question. Poor me! Poor me! I will die a sad old man because you are a fool and will never amount to anything."

"Oh." said the boy, and he felt sorry for his father, but that night he decided that no matter how uncomfortable it felt, he would become the kind of person who blessed others. And so he did.

The boy grew to be a man, left the forest and built a home for himself out in the meadowlands. In time had a family of his own. He was still haunted by the curses of his father, and it would make him sad for days at a time, but he had decided to bless, so even though he felt sad, almost every evening, he would call one of his children to himself, lay his hand upon their head and speak these words: "You are a reflection of the face of God. The world is brighter for the joy you give me this day. I bless you my child."

One night he had a dream in which he saw his father and heard him saying over and over: "Poor me! Poor me! I will die a sad old man because you are a fool and will never amount to anything."

And it upset him so much he woke up, got out of bed, and went out into the backyard. He stood there by the trees in the moonlight and was so angry his hands became fists as he spoke out loud to the wind: "What's the point in being someone who blesses? I'm still so haunted by these curses of my father! Well, maybe I should curse as well!"

And he kicked the ground as hard as he could which shook loose a stone. He picked it up to throw and just then the wind became very strong and he thought he heard a voice: "Do not discard your father's heart!"

He looked at the trees and then at the rock in his hands. The voice called again: "Do not discard your father's heart!"

"Who are you?"

"I am the Father of every son and daughter and I tell you, the stone you hold in your hand is like the condition of your father's heart!"

He looked at the rock. He could tell it was badly misshapen, that it had broken off from a larger rock and had many cracks and flaws within.

And then again the voice: "You can try to change this rock. You can press it until your fingers bleed, but you will not succeed in changing the rock! Neither will you succeed in changing the heart of your father by force or manipulation. Hold your father's heart gently within your own and pray for him. You have no idea what forces shaped this rock. Neither do you know the forces that shaped the heart of your father. Hold your father's heart gently within your own and pray for him."

"When did his heart become like this?"

"When he chose to curse instead of bless. But do not become proud...Your heart would look just like this, if I had not blessed you as a child."

"I only remember the old woman."

"The voice was hers, but the words were mine."

"Then why didn't you bless my father when he was a child?"

"I bless every one of my children. But I never force them to bless in return. In eternity you will have no questions. For now, it is enough that you decide to bless and not curse. Hold your father's heart gently within your own, and pray for him"

"Father of every son and daughter, bless my father."

And as soon as he spoke these words, the wind died down and everything became peaceful in the countryside and in the heart of the young man. He went back inside, put the rock in a safe place, laid down and went right to sleep. He had the best night sleep he'd had for a long time. And from then on whenever he recalled one of the curses of his father, he genuinely prayed a blessing on his father, and in time began to experience true healing and a strong peace within.

One evening there was a knock on the front door and as he had raised his children to do, they welcomed in a blind beggar, sat him down at the kitchen table, and gave him some food to eat. The young man walked in and immediately recognized it was his own father. But he didn't reveal his own identity. He listened to the old man speak. And the old man talked about how his son had abandoned him, how he had lost his eyesight, and how he'd been forced to beg in a world where life was hard. Just then his son spoke up: "Grandfather! You're welcome to stay here with us!"

"But I have no money to pay you."

"Oh, we don't need any money; all we ask is that as long as you stay with us, you speak only blessings. - What's the matter?"

"It...it's against my nature to bless!"

"Grandfather, I can tell by your hands that you have worked your whole life. So, begging must be against your nature as well, but see, it has brought you here to us!"

The old man couldn't argue this point, so he agreed to stay, but it was weeks before he spoke a word - it was so against his nature to bless. When he finally did, you could hardly hear him: "What's that Grandfather?"

"I said, bless you for taking an old man in from the cold. I wish my son had turned out like you, but he was a fool and..."

"Ah! Grandfather, only blessings!"

"Well, I wish my son had turned out like you! Bless you!"

Wasn't bad for a first blessing! And a week later he spoke another one and it was a little smoother. And the next day he spoke two - and they were a lot smoother. Then he began to bless every day -- many times in a day. He really got into it! You could say that blessing became... second nature to him.

And the more he blessed, the more he smiled. And the more he smiled the more his face softened. And the more his face softened, the more his heart softened and the more his heart softened, the more joy he began to experience; a different kind of joy than he had known before.

They lived happily for years until one winter the old man fell ill and was near death. As his breathing grew labored, his son sat on the bedside and asked: "Grandfather, is there anything I can get for you?"

"No one can bring me what I most need at this hour."

"Please Grandfather, anything! What would you like?"

"I should like to see my own son once more to give him my blessing. As he was growing I gave only curses. I told him it was against my nature to bless. And, as you can see, I have learned to bless too late..."

Then his son leaned closer and whispered: "Papa! Papa it's me, your own son... I am here! It is not too late! God has seen fit to bring us together these last years...It's not too late! I'm here... I'm here!"

And they embraced. A moment later the old man straightened up, stretched out a trembling hand, laid it upon his son's head, and spoke these words: "You are a reflection of the face of God. Though I cannot see you with my eyes, I see you with my heart and the mercy you have shown me these past years is like a brilliant light, dispelling all shadow as I pass from time into eternity. I will die a happy, happy old man, because I have learned to bless and so...my son... I... bless you."

And with these words, his hand fell back down to his chest and he died with this beautiful smile on his face. Later that night the young man took the stone out of the place he had put it years before and he sat at the kitchen table by candlelight. Turning it over and over in his hands, a single tear fell onto the rock and it split in two. Inside was a priceless stone; smooth to the touch and sparkling in beauty. Just then the wind became very strong outside and he got up to close the shutter, but then again he heard the ancient voice: "Eternity shines brighter for the joy you bring me this day. And I bless you my child."

Then the wind died down and everything became peaceful in the countryside and in the heart of the

young man.

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