

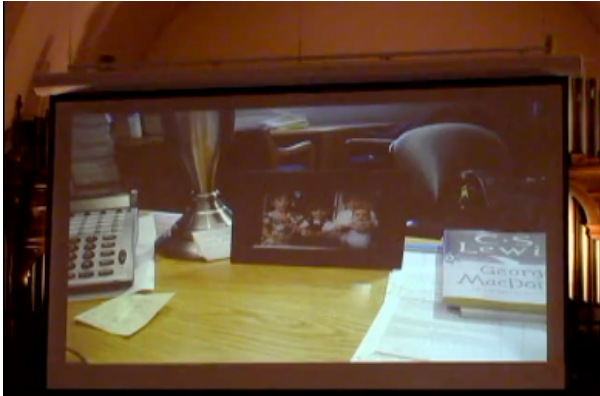
The Picture on the Father's Desk

John 4:3-9; 25-42

Peter Hiatt @ The Sanctuary Downtown

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I think this was my favorite Christmas present this year.



It's a picture that I took 15 years ago, which Susan and the kids placed in this frame, and gave to me as a gift.

Now it sits on my desk, down the hall. Here's a better view of the picture.



These are my kids. Each one is like a deep well.

A. This is Jonathan, my firstborn. No words can adequately describe Him. Jonathan feels things very deeply. That can become a trap within oneself, or that can lead a person to hang on a cross for others. Jon is going to Red Rocks College, and working on staff at Open Doors Ministries, with under-privileged kids. See? He's already practicing on his little brother, Coleman.

B. This is Coleman, my youngest. He's 15 now. I think he may be the most resilient person I've ever met. He's impossible to spank... he doesn't even feel it. He's a warrior, and that's incredibly good **if** you're in the right war. But lots of great kids are born into the wrong war. Maybe we all are. Well, I think Coleman would do anything for me.

C. This is Elizabeth, my second. See, even in this picture, she's telling me what to do. Every night when she was little, she prayed the same prayer with great sincerity: "Thank you, Jesus, that I know everything in the world." Understandably, this hasn't always sat well with her little brother, the Warrior.

When she was little, we figured that she'd either be an international terrorist, or the first female President of the United States. She's studying international relations at CSU, and her heart is far too tender for a career in terrorism. And yet I know that the evil one takes tender little hearts and makes them hard.

D. This is Rebekah. You'll remember that Isaac met Rebekah by a well ... and that's Becky: she's centered and deep. That introspection can become a prison, or it can become a safe house, a fortress, and a harbor. And that's Becky. Once, when she was little, she placed my head on her lap. She stroked my hair and said, "Daddy, I'll be the Mommy, and you be the little baby." That's Christmas ... when the Father becomes the Baby.

Just staring at this picture tears my heart from my chest, like Jesus from the bosom of the Father.

My children: each one like a deep well – a universe – which holds my heart, and my heart holds them.



This is my computer screen, on my desk by the picture.



This was a day last summer on a hike to Hanging Lake, near Glenwood Springs. This is how you might see them today.

But when I (their father) see this, I also see this,



and a whole bunch of things in between ... times in between.

- Times when their well seemed dry – times it flowed with Living Water.
- Times when they were tempted to prisons of fear and shame, and times when they loved like Jesus.
- Times when they were conscripted into the wrong war, and times they fought for Love.
- Times when they were little terrorists, and times they led the way with Grace.

And now ... this is really strange when you reflect upon it... But when they were little terrors and when they were Big Terrors, I didn't love them less. In fact, it felt like I loved them more. And when they were trapped in prisons of self-pity, fear, and shame, my heart was trapped with them.

When they share those places of terror and shame, it's there I receive the greatest gift: a broken and fertile heart. It's there Faith and Mercy take root. The stories are too personal to tell, but it's there I know them best, and they know me best ... communion.

Those people in the picture frame on my desk... I am them, and they are me. And I think it's become impossible for me to **not** love them.

Now, there are those that would say, "That's dangerous. That makes you a bad father, for they can sin and your grace will abound, and they don't have to fear you..." Yet, that's another strange thing: actually, they should fear me most ... not because I don't love them, but because I do, and my love will not stop.

I mean, if one of their friends starts taking dope, flunking classes, and lying to their parents, I'll say, "Golly, that's too bad." But that kid certainly need not fear me. I don't care.

However, if that kid is one of my kids, it's another story.

And they'd better fear me, cause I'll love 'em ... a lot. I'll love 'em by grounding them (to outer darkness, in their room, where they will weep and gnash their teeth). I'll love 'em, and my love will burn like fire. If they run, and if they hide, I'll find 'em.

They'd better fear me, because this love won't stop. It's eternal.

They'd better fear me, until they can look me in the eye and say, "Daddy, I know you love me, so I'll no longer run and hide ... I'm no longer afraid."

They'd better fear me, because I love them.

They'd better fear me, 'till my love casts out that very fear. "It was Grace that taught my heart to fear, and Grace my fears relieved..."

I can't **not** love them. It's become my nature. Not perfectly ... I'm not love as God is Love ... but I am being made in His image. And I think I'd gladly die for anyone in this picture.

So, their joy is my joy.

Their sorrow is my sorrow.

If they're trapped in hell, I'm trapped in hell with them.

And if you hurt one of them, you hurt me.

And if you harm one of them, I bleed ... WRATH.

It shocked me as a new father, for all at once I understood wrath. Love bleeds wrath. Wrath.

If YOU harm them, I bleed wrath ... but what do I do if one of them harms himself? What do I do with the wrath?

What do I do if one of my children harms another of my children? What do I do with the wrath?

What if some of them gang up on one of them ... perhaps it's jealousy... but they exclude him, reject him, beat him, then sell him into bondage, faking his death to deceive me? (It sounds far-fetched, I know, but these things do happen.)

What do I do if my kids go to war with each other? What do I do with all that wrath? That passion?

Well, I absolutely hate it when they hate each other, but it thrills me when they love each other. The greatest gift they give me is believing my love and loving in return. And the second is just like it: to love each other. ... to see what I see – priceless treasure in one picture frame on my desk.

Now, some of you may be thinking, “Gosh, I’m alone, and this topic hurts. I want nothing more than to have my picture in a frame on a desk of a Father who loves me and considers that picture his best Christmas present ever. I want nothing more.”

Well, you see, I think that’s just what you have. And when you see it, that revelation will change everything.

[John 4:3]

[Jesus] left Judea and departed again for Galilee. And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

The animosity between modern-day Palestinians and Jews is probably mild compared to the animosity between Samaritans and Jews in Jesus’ day. There had been open warfare at times. The temple on Gerazim had been destroyed by Judah. The Romans stopped the warfare, but not the hatred. In John 8:48, when “The Jews”

hurl insults at Jesus, they don't use our standard potty words. They say, "Ain't it the truth? You're a Samaritan, and you got a demon!"

Well, Jesus has a conversation with an *outcast* outcast... this lonely Samaritan woman. It moves from thirst to promiscuity to worship. It's what we preached on last week.

[John 4:25]

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or "Why are you talking with her?" So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the town and were coming to him.

Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work."

"Teleioo" – Like, "It is finished."

"My food is to finish his work." Work that is food ... that's weird. ¹

Normally, work expends energy, and food replenishes energy. But this work **is** food. What kind of work is it? "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work." So what's his work?

[verse 35]

"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?' (That's hard work, but the harvest is food.) Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest."

"The fields are white for harvest... Look, look, look, look, look!" says Jesus. And what do they see? Samaria, and Samaritans... not a Jew's definition of a fertile field.

[verse 36]

"Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together."

That's like a prophecy in Amos 9:13. ²

¹ "My food is to give." Like we said a few weeks ago, all food in this world is "food we take," life we "take." And His is something he gives... work. That's weird.

Jesus sows and reaps, yet that happens through many people over time.

[verse 37]

"(For in this) the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Well, the work of the Father is the Harvest of the Earth.

What do we know about the Harvest?

The Harvest

1. What the Harvest is:
 - "Worship" (Jesus just said his father is seeking worshipers)
 - Another way to say that is, "Faith in Mercy"
 - In the Revelation, it's grain and grapes (which is bread and wine)
2. Where it Grows:
 - In broken soil and excrement ... humble hearts
 - Our hearts. "We are God's field."
3. How it Grows: No one knows. It's Life, and Jesus is Life.
 - It needs light (Jesus is Light) and water (Jesus provides Living Water)
4. How it's Measured: It's not. At least not by us.
 - One Samaritan is everything to Jesus, and one seed contains the entire kingdom. And God is the one who separates wheat from tares, and kernel from chaff.
5. How it is Sown: As a seed. The seed is the Word, and the Word is Jesus
 - The seed dies ... like body broken and blood shed
6. How it is Harvested: Like fruit. It's bread and wine.
 - The harvest is Jesus. It's the life of Jesus in us.

Well, how do we work the Harvest?

1. Jesus was vulnerable. He asked her for a glass of water. This is a Samaritan woman in Samaria. There's a gay bathhouse down the street @ 32nd and Zuni. If you were thirsty, would you ask them for a glass of water?

² At the start of Amos 9, God says he'll destroy all Israel (the Northern Kingdom, that is), and at the end of 9, sower and reaper meet, like at the end of time, and God "restores" Israel, whom he already "destroyed." And Jesus seems to say that is happening in Him ... sowing and reaping ... and even the end of time (the ages).

2. Jesus didn't take offense when he was offended.
3. He asked questions and cared about the answers
4. He spoke truth ... painful truth that could break a heart.
5. He spoke Love ... like seed into broken soil.
6. Then the woman did the same thing. She bore witness.
 - She had no "evangelism training."
 - She didn't know "the four spiritual laws" or even "the plan of salvation."
 - She just knew Jesus.

And Jesus didn't tell her, "Now you need to go witness." She wanted to witness. It was not like work. It was like food. Jesus gave her water and food.

What kind of work gives you energy like food?
 Most of the time, I find my work to be totally exhausting ...

You know what my kids used to do at this age?



They played church. I think Elizabeth usually preached. But they wrote songs, said prayers, pretended to read the Bible while Coleman ate stuff off the floor.

They played Church, and I didn't tell them to do it. They wanted to do it. It gave them energy. They wanted to do what they saw their father doing, and it was joy.

Why?

Play is **work** without **responsibility**.

So, play is **work** without **fear**.

Play is **work** with **faith** – that "it is finished." *Teleioo*.

When I used to witness, my testimony was just laced with fear. I thought I had to defend Jesus, explain Jesus, get all creative to make Jesus look good ... a creative witness. The last thing a judge wants is a “creative witness.” A witness just shares what they’ve seen and what they’ve heard.

Well, I was terrified that I’d fail... that if I messed up explaining how much God loved a person, that person wouldn’t believe God loved them, and then God wouldn’t love them ... but torture them! I was terrified because I thought God’s Love depended on our choices.

The Reformers –Calvin and Luther – taught: NO... His Love isn’t dependent on our choices, but his choice... But if you don’t choose (in this life), it means you’re not chosen, and not loved... So that’s better ... but way worse!

See, I’d witness in fear, terrified that people I loved weren’t in the picture on my Father’s desk... either because God never loved them and never would love them, or because it was **up to me** to make God love them.

So, I’d witness in fear, which is witnessing to faithlessness. I’d witness in fear; fear that God would not save... which is witnessing to my faith that I am the Savior... that I love people more than God, and I am more mighty to save. My fear is faith in **me**: that I am the savior of the world. Talk about stress.

I used to hate, hate, HATE witnessing, and I didn’t need more training or more fear. I needed to **get the picture**.

[verse 39]

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”

That means these Samaritans are saved, and in the picture. Saved from “condemnation already” (John 3:18), and from the “wrath of God that was already on them” (John 3:36). Saved, because “God so loved the world” (John 3:16).

[verse 40]

So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

“This truly is the Savior of the world!” What does that mean? It means that I am not the savior of the world, and Jesus truly is “The Savior of the World.” He came to “finish” his Father’s work, and he did ... “knowing that all was now finished.” Lifted up on the cross (John 19:30), he said, “It is finished,” bowed his head and gave up his spirit... which is why he said in John 12:32, “When I’m lifted up, I’ll draw all people to myself.”

“This truly is the Savior of the world.” Not “some of the world.” “Savior of the world,” said the Samaritans. And check this out: Jesus is standing in Samaria.

In Matthew 10:5, Jesus tells his disciples “Go nowhere among the gentiles. Enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep (*apollumi* sheep, perished sheep) of the House of Israel.”

But check this out: the Samaritan woman just called Jacob her father, and Jesus doesn’t correct her. Jacob is Israel. The Samaritans believed they were the “lost sheep of the House of Israel (the Northern Kingdom)”, descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh. They believed... had faith. Paul even taught that we’re children of Israel by Faith.

Well, the Jews in Judah (the Southern Kingdom) said, “NO, Samaritans! You’re Assyrians, or half-breeds at best... you’re out of the picture.”

Are they?

This is rather amazing, but there still is an ethnically pure group of a few hundred Samaritans still living by Mt. Gerazim. And recent Genetic testing clearly reveals ethnic descent from males in the tribes of Levi, Ephraim, and Manasseh. That’s Israel! Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph, of whom the brothers grew Jealous, so they sold him into slavery in Egypt, faked his death, and lied to their father. They lost Joseph on purpose.

Don’t go to “Samaritans” ... what you call “Samaritans” ... said Jesus. But go to your brothers, the lost brothers of the House of Israel.

Do you see what I’m saying?

There is a picture on the Father’s desk, and in the frame, there is not one son named Judah (the Jews), but there are 12 sons. And Jesus sees that picture. 12 sons, each a different well, each a different story, but each in the same picture with the same Father. And Jesus sees the picture. So, he isn’t talking to a Samaritan outcast outside the picture. He’s talking to Joseph and a daughter of Joseph – a very, very deep well. He feels the pain of rejection, and he knows his Father’s delight. She’s a lost sheep of his Father’s house.

In Matthew 15:24, I think Jesus even reveals that a gentile Canaanite woman is not a dog under the table. Her faith reveals that she’s a lost sheep of the House of Israel.

In Ezekiel 16, God tells Jerusalem that “on that day,” he will restore Sodom and Samaria and give them to Jerusalem as sisters. That Gentiles and Samaritans are in the House of Israel.

SEE? The Father has a picture on his desk, and inside the same frame is Joseph and Judah; Samaritan and Jew. Inside the same frame is Isaac and Ishmael; Jew and Arab. Inside the same frame is Jacob and Esau... Isaac blessed **both**. I wish we had time to talk about Esau. God hated him, yet God is Love. Even that hatred is a form of Love.

[According to] Psalm 5:5, God hates all workers of iniquity. That's everybody. Except Jesus, who became sin for us, and God hated him on our behalf. The firstborn from whom we stole the birthright, in whose clothes we dress ourselves to receive the Father's blessing.

Inside the same frame is Cain and Abel. Like Paul says in Acts 17, we are all God's offspring. Many lost, many perished, many destroyed; just like the prodigal son, who though lost was found, and though dead was made alive.

Deuteronomy 32:8 – *"Is He not your Father who created you?"* asks Moses. We're estranged, lost, dead, perished, destroyed. Yes, but sons. Just like the prodigal son—lost and dead, but our Father is mighty to save.

See? The Father has a picture on his desk. It's found in Genesis 1:31, where everything God created is GOOD (the 7th day). And it's also found in Revelation 5:13 (it's that 7th day):

"And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them saying ... singing, 'To him who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb...'"

You see, that's the Lamb who is slain ... that's Jesus who delivers an entire new creation to his Father for Christmas – The whole family in one frame before the throne on the desk. When you see that picture, it changes everything: every breath you take, every move you make ... everything. For you're no longer controlled by fear, but love.

2 Corinthians 5:14 – *"The Love of Christ controls us,"* writes Paul, *"because we have concluded this: that one has died for all."*

All are in his picture, and he is mighty to save, and he loves to save, and he wants me to share his joy. With a gleam in his eye, he calls, "Peter, let's harvest!!"

"Indeed, He is the Savior of the World."

Isaiah 45:

Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.

(In two verses, he refers to these people as the children of Israel.)

I Timothy 4:10:

“For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the Living God (not us). On the Living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially those who believe. Command and teach these things.”

(Savior of all, but they don't know it until they believe. And believing is salvation.)

“Indeed he is the Savior of the World.”

Now, that doesn't mean judgment won't be severe. Indeed, it will be more severe than you ever imagined.

It doesn't mean that nations won't go into the Eternal Fire, and Kolasin.

It doesn't mean that some won't be cast to *gehenna* with their sins.

It doesn't mean that sons won't gnash their teeth in outer darkness.

No, it doesn't mean that... it means that THAT is not THE END.

It means that wrath, pain, and death is NOT THE END, but a means to the END.

What is the END? Rather, who is the End? He told You.

“I AM the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.”

His name is Jesus. It means, “God is Salvation.” And he is the End.

There is nothing more thrilling, and nothing more terrifying.

Thrilling, for the ones you love are in the picture on your Father's desk.

And terrifying, for this man may be in the picture too.



Do you still want to be in the picture?

If not, maybe you're not in the picture, or perhaps the picture burns you like Eternal Fire. Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of these, my brothers (I think that includes Ishmael, son of Abraham and father of the Arabs) ... Whatever you do to the least of these, my brothers, you do to me."

That's the judgment, says Jesus. (Matthew 25) How you feel about Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Joseph, or Judah – the brothers – is your judgment.

Jonah hated them, and judged himself out of the boat and into hell. That's what the text says: Hell. Until he repented and hell barfed him out and onto the beach, in order to preach.

The early workers in the Vineyard hated the late workers and grace, and so judged themselves out of the picture.

Remember in the story of the prodigal son? The older brother hates his little brother ... "His lost brother." And that means he hates his Father, which means the party burns him. So, he judges himself into a field in outer darkness.

Do you want to be in the picture if this person is also? Well, if he is, he won't be the same, and you won't be the same. Together, you will not be able to stop singing about the Lamb. Not LAW but GRACE: "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound."

Well, do you want to be in the picture... if the person you **hate most** in all the world is in the picture? My guess is that that person is not this guy (Osama bin Laden). My guess is that that person is a father, a mother, a husband, wife, sister, brother, step-brother, half-brother, or a neighbor. If you lived in Jesus' day, and you wanted to curse them, you'd call them a Samaritan.

In John 8:48, they said to Jesus, "Ain't it the truth you are a Samaritan and you have a demon?" You may say, "Well, Jesus was a Jew from the house of Judah." Yes, but check his family tree. It includes Rachel, the Canaanite prostitute, Ruth the Moabite, Bathsheeba the Hittite—plenty of gentile blood, plenty of Samaritan blood.

Remember, the Samaritan descended from Joseph, and Joseph was a picture of Jesus... rejected by all His brothers, and yet he saved all His brothers.

And that wasn't the last time a Jew was saved by a Samaritan. In Luke 10, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. It's clear from the story (and the early church fathers agreed with this analysis) that we are the man half-dead, lost, and perishing on the side of the road. The law doesn't save us; religion doesn't save us. The Samaritan is the one that saves us, and his name is Jesus.

And this is the judgment: Will you let him save you?
Will you let the One you've learned to hate save you?

Will you let the One you nailed to a tree save you?

With every sin, every lack of grace, you nail him to the tree, because he made himself your brother.

When you see that,
When your heart is humbled and broken,
When your heart is ready to put faith in his Mercy,
When your heart is ready to worship,
When you know you're lost,
You're ready to be found ... It's time for harvest.

So, in Samaria, among the lost sheep of the House of Israel, Jesus said, "Look, the fields are white unto harvest."

I think he's still saying, "Look! Look, my Sanctuary Downtown! Do you see outcasts? Do you see broken hearts and dirty fields? Do you see people humbled and broken and ready for Grace? Look, the fields are white unto harvest!"

Get the picture? They're in the picture. So go tell 'em!

The fields were white in Samaria, because the Samaritans were ready to be saved by a Jew. The fields did not seem so white in Judah, for the Jews in power were not willing to be saved by someone they called a Samaritan, or even someone who let Samaritans into the picture.

Actually, they didn't want **you** in the picture. And you have not wanted others in the picture – the Father's picture.

What does your Father do with all that wrath? Well, he breaks his own body, and he tramples the grapes of wrath and bleeding his own blood.

Revelation 14: It's the harvest of this earth. It's food of which this world does not yet know.

But you do.

So, Jesus took bread and broke it saying, "This is my Body, given to you. Take and eat." And in the same manner, He took the cup, saying, "This is the New Covenant in my blood. Drink of it, all of you."

A recent Gallup poll asked Americans what they most long to hear.
The top three answers:

1. I love you
2. I forgive you
3. It's time for dinner

What they most want to hear is what God asks you to say.

My kids love to preach to each other, "It's time for dinner!" It energizes them.

It's time for dinner.

Believe the Gospel, and go preach the Gospel.

So, I'm an ok father. But God is a great father. I mean, he's not a worse father than me. He's a better father than me. And he sits at a desk, on a throne, and he governs the universe... every quantum particle, every supernova billions of light years away from us, every hormone in your body and thought in your brain.

He governs the universe, and if he's a better father than me, then there's a picture on his desk. And every now and then, he just stops and stares at it. You are in the picture.

Now, I said something in my sermon that may have caught you. I said, "What if the person you hate most is in the picture?"

Perhaps you thought to yourself: "That person is **me**."

Well, if that's you, I believe God says, "Sweetheart, I cleanse you. I make all things new ... but you see? I really make them new, and that includes you. You haven't yet seen the real you. I wash away the dirt ... that "you"... that you hate, and I reveal the true you ... you in the picture."

You are in the picture.

And when you see that, and you see what he went through to get you in that picture ... that you didn't deserve it, that he did it... when you see how he loves you, and you stare at that picture, and you stare at him, you start thinking to yourself, "Well, I'd like you do to that for her... and for him. If you saved me, could you save them?"

And then I think the Father says, "Hey, take another look at the picture. Go tell 'em what I did for them."

When you believe his love for you, then you want it for everybody.

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