



# REFLECTIONS

October 2, 2016

**celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"**

*Luke 15:32*

## Immensity of God's Love

Henri sat alone in silence. The painting before him commanded his entire attention. The scene captured the emotions of two sons and their father. One son remorsefully hugged his face into his father's chest, receiving love underserved. The other frowned in disgust believing his life of obedience had gone unrewarded. The grateful father's hands rested on the shoulders of his remorseful son with an expression of blessing that revealed his love for them both.

Mesmerized by Rembrandt's captivating depiction of the Jesus parable, Henri studied for hours at a time, thinking, analyzing, and envisioning the fullness of the story illustrated before him. Day after day over the course of many months, Henri sat before the paintings examining the scene as Rembrandt envisioned the parable Jesus told (Luke 15:11-32). From his study he discovered parts of it he had never considered. But the most surprising discovery found *himself* in the midst of it, "not on the outside looking in, but sitting squarely in the middle of it all waiting his turn to ask his Father's forgiveness and receive the grace of his Father's love."

Henri Nouwen recounted his study of Rembrandt's painting of *The Return of the Prodigal Son* in a book by the same title. In the painting he finds remorse in the prodigal son and resentment boiling within his obedient brother. But of perhaps the most impactful observation to his own life he writes, "For years I had instructed students on the different aspect of the spiritual life, trying to help them see the importance of Irving it. But had I, myself, really ever dared to step into the center, kneel down and let myself be held by a forgiving God?"

In today's fast-paced world, too little time is given to fully study the stories presented around us. There are lots lessons within them if we take the time to hear them speak. From an artist's masterpiece Henri Nouwen learned remorse from a prodigal son and jealousy's darkness from the resentful brother. But in conclusion he discovers what God called him to be.

"I stand with awe at the place where Rembrandt brought me. He led me from the kneeling, disheveled young son to the standing bent-over kid father, from the place of being blessed to the place of blessing. As I look at my own aging hands, I know that they have been given to me to stretch out toward all who suffer, to rest upon the shoulders of all who come, and to offer blessing that emerges from the immensity of God's love."

Isn't that God's call to us all?

*You are the light of the world,*

*Richard +*

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