

Matthew 20:1-16

**1** "For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the owner of an estate who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. **2** He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work. **3** "At nine o'clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. **4** So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. **5** At noon and again around three o'clock he did the same thing. **6** At five o'clock that evening he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, 'Why haven't you been working today?' **7** "They replied, 'Because no one hired us' The owner of the estate told them, 'Then go on out and join the others in my vineyard.' **8** "That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. **9** When those hired at five o'clock were paid, each received a full day's wage. **10** When those hired earlier came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day's wage. **11** When they received their pay, they protested, **12** 'Those people worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.' **13** "He answered one of them, 'Friend, I haven't been unfair! Didn't you agree to work all day for the usual wage?' **14** Take it and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. **15** Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be angry because I am kind?' **16** "And so it is, that many who are first now will be last then; and those who are last now will be first then."

Today is a day not only for mourning, but also, a day of thanksgiving.

I am broken-hearted at the loss of my Dad in this life. I will miss his heartfelt laugh, his earnest advice, and his love for me and my family.

Yet, though time will soften this ache, I know all the more that the richness of my father's life is more potent than any pain we may feel now. Indeed, it strips the sting from the tears.

So, for a few moments, please let me tell you about my Dad.

My grandmother named him well; William Albert Arneault. His name means "Determined Protector, Noble One, Who Rules in Majesty Like an Eagle". In the humble man that my father was, his name describes him remarkably well.

He was born in a humble apartment on Garner Street in Cohoes, New York. His father passed onto him the character and history of our family through careful efforts, and Dad, as boys do, reveled in the goodness of my Grandfather.

His life brought him struggles and triumphs, sadness and gladness. The onward journey of life brought him family, success, happiness and love.

Yet it is not the "moments" that defined my father. It was the character within him that defined who he was, and the "moments" were shaped by that great character.

A few months ago, Dad began preparing us, his family, for his soon coming passing. While he was ill, he tried to make sure we were comforted. While he readied his soul, he also comforted our hearts, maintaining that great stature of man that he was to the very end. His noble behavior, even in death's passing, gives honor to his name.

Dad and I were confidants. He shared with me the deepest secrets and thoughts of his heart, and I did the same. I am thankful for our relationship, for his love, and his most excellent honor.

When he made clear to me that he was anticipating this day, I wrote him a letter, which, if you'll allow me to share with you, I hope will reveal to you the greatness of this man whom we loved, who was a friend, protector and truly a leader for us all.

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August 17, 2005

Dad,

It is a sad thing that so often people never say what they truly wished to in life, until time robs away the opportunity, and the words are never spoken. Being mindful of this, I decided to put in writing all those feelings of gratefulness, appreciation, and hope that I have for and of you. In doing so, I think it a better way, in that the words are not lost with the speaking, but can be ready at any moment to remind you of my great love for you.

Firstly, thank you.

In every way, with bonds of fatherly affection and care, you have poured into my life wisdom, honor, duty, love of family, and care for the future. When I consider the inner man of me, at all times I see the echo of your guiding words, the figure of your actions, and the craftsmanship of your patience.

Thank you for passing on to me the wisdom and heritage of your father and grandfather, and of yourself. Rare is the day when I am not reminded of an old saying or lesson which you so often taught me. If I am diligent in all my ways, it is because you taught me, through the hundreds of times I've heard it from your lips, that "idle hands are the devil's play thing". Thusly, as all will attest, mine are rarely idle. Likewise, I have come to love truth, and despise anything less than honesty, for by great patience, you often reminded me that "the truth shall set you free". In all your labor to provide for us, you were careful to teach me to prepare for the future, for you often, in many ways, would say that "tomorrow would come faster than we thought."

Thank you for not only passing on wisdom, but through much effort, ensured that it was planted deep within me. Though my sons and daughters are still young, I am following your example, and even in their early youth, as you did for me, am planting wisdom and care in them at every turn. Many, many times I will catch my myself, as I say something

that you said to me, and I can see your face and hear your voice, though the words are coming from my lips.

Thank you for being my father.

It is written in the Bible, “Children’s children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children are their fathers”. When I consider who I am, these words are confirmed with the strength of steel. You have given me your name, your history, your courage, your friendliness, your honor, and your belief that things can be better than they were. What greater glory could a man ask for from his father? Words can not express my thankfulness to you for being my dad.

Thank you for honoring your father and mother.

In observing, and receiving, your continual care of them, and even protection of them in their old age, I learned of truth what honor means. When you could not do all that you wished, yet you still would seek ways to do more for them. Though your Dad chose to live humbly, you always regarded and treated him as a prince. Such honor does not disappear with the passing of Mimere and Pipere, but returns to you, and to we your children, and to ours, your grand-children. In doing so, you have given a gift that will span generations, and in that, you have given glory to your generations.

Thank you for being a man of honor. There were many times when life had dealt badly with you; yet I watched you keep your word, even when it was to your own hurt. I learned much from that.

When you dealt with others, you took care as to how they would receive your actions, so that what you aimed for would be achieved. You would often take more time than most would think required, because you wanted to make sure everyone truly understood what was being done or what was being agreed to. In even these things, you often let me sit in the corner and watch, and as a result, I garnered more, I think, than you imagined, to my great benefit.

Thank you for investing in me.

With money, time, words, and opportunity, you have taken from yourself so that my life might be more. The sacrifices you made for me, I hope that even now, but even more so in the future, have paid excellent dividends, not only for me, but for our family, and my generations to come.

I have a very good life. I am very aware that the successes, accomplishments, and benefits of my life are built upon a foundation which is built upon your effort, your patience, and your sacrifice. God’s blessings in my life are laid on those I’ve received through you.

You often told me that you wanted me to have a greater life than you or your father had. I never took that to mean a life full of possessions, but to mean I should endeavor to be the best man I could possibly be, and to build a great life, so that my children, in turn, would out-strip me in theirs. It is a most excellent thing, that we should make our children to be the best ideal of ourselves, and for each succeeding generation to grow greater and greater.

I hope that the man that I have worked to become, and that I endeavor to be, shows the gratefulness and respect I have for you, especially for all these things you have done and given.

I want to thank you for nobility.

You have given to me, and through me, to my children, not only the nobility of family and stature, but more importantly, and more long lasting and effectual, the nobleness of character and of action. In all my youth, and through often reminders in my adulthood, you have sought that I should act with honor and rightfulness, and to continually seek to be more than I was. I learned from you that men can only be great if they have an honorable character, and that possession, birth, or position could not give people the nobility which can only be gotten by careful attention to the man within. I hope that I reflect the nobility and honor through my life, which our name, especially because of our forefathers, Pipere and the Great White Father amongst them, so richly deserve.

I am still young, and have much yet to accomplish in life. Though I have done much, I know that there is far more ahead than is behind. I am so very proud to be your son, and in anything I might succeed in, I am glad that it brings honor to your name.

I see two vital goals in my life as some repayment of the debts I owe you for all you've done for me. Firstly, is to do the same for my children as you have done for me; that in doing so their lives and accomplishments will heap greater honor to your memory long after you and I have gone on. Secondly, in my own life, to accomplish in this side of eternity and for the other, all that I might possibly do, and in doing so, heap greater honor and opportunity upon my children, so they might do even more than I have done. In all of this, it is my great hope that beyond any task or position that we might attain, the people that we were, the character that is a reflection of you, will be remembered, and not the deeds alone.

In closing, may I say how wonderful of a life I have gotten and live because of your love for me. I have always felt it, could always trust it, and I grew into manhood, I was amazed at how deeply you loved me. As a child, I felt it, but as a man, I truly know it, being all the more evident through reflection. I love you Dad, because of who you are, what you are, and who you've worked so hard to fashion me into.

With this, I hope that we will have many more years together, and that my children, your grandchildren and namesakes, will learn from you and see in you the great man that I have come to discover over the years. It is my greatest hope that we may, together, all of

us, join hands around the eternal throne and rejoice in the glory of Jesus Christ, and that He will be well pleased with the men that we were for our families.

I am forever your son.

Love,  
Jonathan

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I am thankful for my father's life. He protected our family, it's values, it's character, and carefully passed it on to future generations. He nobly gave us himself, with humility and happy laughter at every turn. He led us with kindness and compassion like a father, and cared for his friends beyond what they could hope for.

In his last few months, my Dad, as was his way, took the opportunity of the time he was given to truly look into the state of his soul as he prepared himself for this life's final journey. We spoke often on the phone, and his desire for what was true and right outstripped his traditions. While he continued to honor the legacy of his forefathers, he was certain that to honor Jesus Christ in obedience and faith was paramount to fulfilling his duty in this life. He came to believe the scriptures directly, and in my last conversation with him a week ago today, he made sure I knew he repented, and though he could not be baptized, he trusted in the mercy of Christ to know his desire to be obedient would overcome his inability to fulfill this. He wanted me to know he hoped in the goodness of God, and was ready to go on. While it was the hardest conversation I've had in my life, I am thankful to my Dad for caring for me right up to the very end.

There were two major groups of scriptures that opened for my Dad the knowledge of faith in Jesus. After so many years, I was so grateful that the seed sown had sprung up in faith.

2 Corinthians 10:5 says: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. In this, Dad found that while the heritage and honor of tradition can be good, if it keeps one from obeying Christ, it must be brought into subjection so that every man may do his Duty to Jesus, not to religion alone.

And he found the direction to heaven through lips of the Apostle Peter, who said: "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, each one of you, that your sins can be remitted, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." This simple direction led him to repentance, and desire to be baptized in the name of Jesus.

It is therefore, with hope for eternity, that I can trust in Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, the merciful, kind, good and Living God, to keep this great man safe, and to help build in our family, the ongoing richness and legacy, which my father so carefully preserved for us.

It is written:

*51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

I hope to see my father on that day, and to thank my God, My Savior, and My king, for his mercy and kindness to all the generations of men.

...And until that day, I will be thankful for the life that my father lived, and the legacy he built with determination, for all his generations to come.