

Merciful Dad

At the core of my same-sex attraction was the struggle to find a father, and so discover my own masculine power and purpose.

I had a father alright, and a pretty good one: Thomas Augustus Comiskey. But for most of my life I could not apprehend that goodness, much less take it on as my own.

In a language familiar to any desert creature in need of living water, I detached from him early on in my life. My own rebellion, coupled with his relational faults, inspired a wall. Behind that wall, I identified myself as 'other' than him. I thought myself to be superior to him.

In truth I became blind to my own weaknesses and the strengths he possessed.

In the last several years of his life, God in His mercy prompted me to press into relationship with him. My father and I forged a bond. Our focused times together inspired a genuine affection and appreciation toward him; my aggravation and petty judgments began to fall away. Like Jericho, the wall crumbled, and I could welcome this man into my life.

For the first time, I could see and respect his prophetic heart. His personality was wired toward the truth. His face like flint, he was unrelenting toward those who opposed his views on education or politics.

And like the prophets of old, he championed the underdog. He hated how the rich often used their privilege to devalue poor ones. He despised hierarchy and subordination, especially those 'powers' that he felt were cruel and arbitrary.

He was a rebel. Raised by a single mother and responsible for making his own way from the start, he worked hard for everything. He persisted stubbornly though life without blaming anyone but himself.

He struggled to apprehend mercy. Once he recounted to me his resume of hard knocks then concluded: 'That's why I could never depend on your God.' What he meant to say: 'How can I surrender after all these years of self-reliance?'

Two things that prepared his heart for mercy: first, my mother. His steely agnosticism was no match for her Christ-inspired devotion to him. When my sibs and I would grow frustrated at his refusal to pray 'the sinner's prayer', he would remark, his eyes misting: 'But your mother, she is the best Christian.' St. Paul said it best: the believing spouse truly does sanctify the one who does not believe. (1Cor. 7:14)

The second 'tenderizer'? Suffering unto death. My father's last days were filled with physical

pain. He wanted to jump out of his skin. In the midnight hour, my mother gently coaxed him to open himself up to the God of mercy, the God who saves.

My brother Joel cinched the deal by praying with him as he surrendered to Jesus in his last few lucid hours. Twice-born, filled with unfailing love, Thomas Augustus Comiskey exclaimed, 'I should have done this a long time ago.'

'The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome with trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord: 'O Lord, save me!' The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the simple-hearted; when I was in great need, He saved me.

Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.' (PS 116: 3-7)

The Lord had mercy on Thomas Augustus Comiskey. And on his son, who has never been more proud to bear him in his own manhood.

My father is gone, but I shall seek to represent him well in how I live today. I will seek to extend the mercy our Heavenly Father has shown us both.

'As You have shown us mercy, O God, in the desert places of our lives, would You show mercy to the beleaguered state of marriage in the USA? As the Perry vs. Schw. case wends its way to the National Supreme Court, prepare for Yourself a victory. We shall render to Caesar what is Caesar's but we shall prayerfully fight for what is Yours, O God. Prepare the hearts of each justice, especially Justice Anthony Kennedy, to uphold marriage according to Your merciful design. Remember mercy, O God.'