

# Promises

Many of our family tropes have roots in the iconic movie "The Princess Bride", a 1987 film directed by Bob Riehnart and starring Cary Elwes and Robin Wright. Family conversations frequently include dialog from the film, like "Inconceivable!" and "As you wish" (you have to have seen the movie 20 times!). But my favorite is what Westley says to Buttercup when she attempts to justify her consenting to the evil Prince Humperdink's proposal by saying "I thought you were dead". Westley takes her hands and says, "Know this: I will always come for you."

That promise struck a chord in my heart that has been there ever since. Perhaps it was the substance of what I believed about my dad, fortified by the many occasions when he *did* come for me, but more importantly, that at times of loss, or disappointment, or confusion, or despair, or when I had problems I didn't know how to handle, I believed that if I called my dad, he would come for me, without qualification or limitations, and whatever I faced would be taken care of. Of course, I knew enough to reserve this promise for the extremity that never occurred, but it was the core of my understanding of Love. At some point, I adopted Westley's promise as my way of saying "I love you" to the people I am closest to – my beloved Chris, my children, my extended family, and a very few others. "I will always come for you", I say, knowing my limitations, but certain of my commitment.

It's a ridiculous promise, really. For one thing, it's not qualified. What about the cost, or the circumstances, or most daunting, death? When my father was in his 90's, I still knew he would be there for me if I needed him, and even now, he is still not far away, and will come in my need. I have known the Father's love for me.

Lately, our pastor's sermons have focused on *showing up* for each other as the essential demonstration of Love that Christ asks of each of us. When we are hungry or naked, sick or imprisoned, lonely or lost, despairing or dispirited – we can love each other by *showing up*, coming for each other. The designer of this plan, of course, is God himself, who *showed up* faithfully for Israel from Abraham's time to the day when angels announced:

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord".

God is still *showing up*, every Christmas, every Advent, every day and hour. That is the message from the manger that we can celebrate – that God in the person of his Son Jesus will always come for us. Because I live in Him, and love you all, I dare to say the same.

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