

Parable of the Prodigal Son – or of the Loving Father
BEHOLD WHAT LOVE THE FATHER LAVISHES ON US

I Getting Lost

II Being Broken

III Rejoicing

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

SUNDAY, MARCH 24, 2019 | LENT

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

YEAR C

Old Testament Exodus 3:1–8b, 10–15

Psalm Psalm 38

New Testament 1 Corinthians 10:1–13

Gospel Luke 13:1–9

NON-COMMUNION

GRANTS PASS

The Entrance Hymn or Introit – ELH 284 Go to Dark Gethsemane vv 1-4

Chief Hymn – ELH 500 O Thou that Hear'st when Sinners Cry

Closing Hymn – ELH 442 King of Glory, King of Peace

MEDFORD

Psalm 38, p. 81

Opening Hymn - CW 104 Go to Dark Gethsemane

Hymn of the Day – CW 122 Sin, By Tongue, the Glorious Battle

Closing Hymn - CW 110 vv. 1-4, 7 My Song Is Love Unknown

Faith & Our Savior Lutheran Churches

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Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

¹Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. ²But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³Then Jesus told them this parable:

...[The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin.]

¹¹Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ ²⁰So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²²“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

(Because of the time, I won’t try to deal with the last part of the parable. Stay tuned next week.)

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus: The apostle John reflected on what God our Savior has done for us and wrote by inspiration, 1 John 3:1-3 **How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!**

This image of God’s love is given to us so that we may treasure it ourselves and desire to bring it to others. There is an alternative - that we are like the older brother. Stay tuned for next week.

Luke records this parable of the prodigal son along with the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin that tell us of the joy in heaven over one person who repents. To repent is to turn from unbelief to faith, and so from sin to righteousness.

Repentance is also key to this parable. There are four main characters in this parable – the father who represents God, the impenitent prodigal son, the repentant son, (not a different character, but the previous character, changed) and the older son.

Through it all, Jesus makes clear to us, poor sinners, ...

WHAT LOVE THE FATHER LAVISHES ON US **I Getting Lost**

II Being Broken

III Rejoicing

I Getting Lost

We start with the lost son. How does one become lost? How is it that a child to whom God has come in Baptism, and who has been given saving faith would lose his faith and be dead to God, act as though God is dead?

That is what this man does. He treats his father as though he were dead: ¹¹**Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.**

¹³**“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.**

Although it wasn't unheard of for a father to set up the younger son in business, here we see the son head off to another country. His father meant nothing to him. He did nothing out of regard to his father, nor did he listen to his father or seek his counsel. He might as well have been dead.

It was the other way 'round also. The father heard nothing of his son – it was as though he was in the grave.

So it is with the lost. That child or man or woman, once baptized, once a believer, now acts as though God is dead. God's word is of no importance. It might be remembered, but guide and affect life? No. Lead to daily exchanges with God, speaking in prayer, listening to His word? No. Like they were in the grave, such people are never seen around “the house” (the church) any more.

In Luke 8, Jesus addressed how one becomes lost, loses faith. Jesus mentioned neglect of God's word and he spoke of the worries, riches and pleasures of life. People will follow the desires of the flesh and would rather be damned rather than repent, if in fact they believe in the reality of God's judgment. Scripture teaches: Galatians 5:19-21 ¹⁹**The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.** Unbelief has surely expressed itself in our society through such corruption!

But people are also lost through the life of the mind. Paul counseled Timothy, 1 Timothy 6:20-21 ²⁰**Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, ²¹which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.** This is what we see in the classrooms, media, and elsewhere where anti-Christian philosophy deceives our children- and not just children!

However one loses his or her faith, if they die that way they are lost forever. On judgment day, God says, “Out! I don't know you. I never knew you.”

In spite of their peril, those who have left the faith may consider themselves free or wise. To them Jesus' letter to Laodiceans applies: Revelation 3:17-18 ¹⁷**You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.**

II Being Broken

Without understanding the seriousness of being lost, we can't appreciate the joy of salvation, so In His mercy, God humbles the proud and the impenitent, so that some might finally come to their senses. So, the man in the parable came to his senses. He realized that he was dead, was alienated from his father who gave good things even to his hired servants. He realized that by his behavior he had given up all claims to membership in the family. He would throw himself on the mercy of his father just to get work as a servant.

He had been a prodigal son – wasteful, indulging his desires and lusts, squandering everything that had been given to him. He had no claim on his father.

He has come to his senses. He is now alive to his father. What his father would think or do became important to him again, and so he went home.

As a pastor, I experience the grief of seeing people shrug off everything God says, but I also witness the unspeakable joy of the broken sinner – not necessarily feeding pigs, maybe even prosperous, but poor in every way that matters. Poor in spirit, alone and without God in the world, knowing that if they were to die, it would be hell for them, but now coming to the realization that there is forgiveness for them.

But forget that I have seen it; YOU have seen it. You were this lost. You are welcomed as our Father's child. You are one of the "99," one of the Family because you were once "the one;" the lost. The fact that you went from death to life is how you became part of the family of believers in the first place.

III Rejoicing

But surely there is rejoicing in heaven over anyone who repents and turns from unbelief to faith – whether a new convert, or one returning to his or her baptismal grace. Though we may be unfaithful, and so reject the gifts God gave us in our baptism – forgiveness, life, and salvation – God will never break His promise. So a person returning to faith once again takes hold of the promise that has never ceased to be there. Isaiah 54:10

**¹⁰Though the mountains be shaken
and the hills be removed,
yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken
nor my covenant of peace be removed,"
says the LORD, who has compassion on you.**

Though the son returned with a heart burdened with the knowledge of his own sin and unworthiness, the father never stopped loving, desiring, hoping for his son to return. So with us, because God has carried out his wrath upon Christ, His justice is fulfilled, and there is no obstacle to his love for all who turn to him, all who receive the benefits of Christ's sacrifice in faith.

So let me tell you, should you, God forbid, awaken and find that you have treated God as though he were dead, and so by one means or another departed from the faith, that there are loving arms always waiting to enfold you. That is the good news, the gospel. In such awakening and repentance, believe the gospel.

Better yet, make God's word such a part of your life that you will never be separated from Him. Take just a little time for devotions, with books, computer downloads, and podcasts. Take in a Bible class. Read some on your own. John 8:31 ... **Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.**

Hold to Christ who tells you, "I came to seek and to save the lost, to seek and to save sinners, to seek and to save you." AMEN