

Trinity 9  
July 27, 2024  
Luke 11:32

The passage selected for the sermon today comes from today's Gospel reading- the Gospel according to St. Luke in the 15:20.

But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen.

We've all seen the videos of the surprise coming home of our members of the military with all the tears and hugs and kisses. There's also many where spouses are waiting in the airport- no surprise, but anticipation. The moment they are past the security point, what do they do? They run, they hug and kiss them and say I love you! There is no shame or hesitation.

In today's Gospel, we see the father, who in this parable represents God the Father run to the Prodigal son. There are three lessons to learn from this verse: first, that God is LOOKING and WAITING for the prodigal. The second is The Father has compassion on his prodigal. And finally, God the Father RUNS to the prodigal and celebrates his return. As we look at these lessons, let's examine our hearts to see if we remember a time when God ran to us in his compassion.

In the first ten verses of this chapter, there are two parables to answer the Pharisees as to why he received sinners and ate with them. The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin demonstrates how God is willing to seek those that are lost. The Good Shepherd left the 99 to seek the one who was lost is an interesting thought. Common sense dictates that you don't leave 99 sheep alone in the wilderness. Equally odd is having a celebration for recovering that lost sheep. But that is the beauty of God's love for us is. He will always look for us when we are lost.

While seeking a lost sheep and leaving the others behind seems silly, the woman seeking for the lost coin could be seen as more practical. The coin was the approximate value of a day's labor, so losing it was certainly cause for looking for it until found. Again, we see a celebration when finding that what was lost.

In those two parables, there was an active search for the lost. In this parable, the Father was not just waiting for the return of the prodigal, but watching for him because he believed that he would return. And when he saw his son, he went to him. He met him halfway. And he celebrated his son's return.

There is no sense on fluctuating value between these parables, because we are the lost sheep, and coin. The prodigal son represents US when we run from God. Always remember that no matter how far away from God we THINK we are, he is always seeking us. He values EVERY one of us, no matter how much we run away.

The Second lesson is that God has absolute compassion for us. In chapter 7 of Luke, Jesus had compassion on the widow of Nain, whose only son had died. He raised him from death. The parable of the Good Samaritan in chapter 10, which showed God's compassion, even in the caring of a cultural enemy.

When the prodigal son started his rehearsed confession, his father interrupted him! He embraced and kissed him. His "compassion, demonstrated by his actions, teaches how the heavenly "Father is merciful." "(Gadenz, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture: The Gospel of LUKE; p277)

Luke 6:36 says "be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

And in his mercy, he not only called for a celebration, but put clothing and jewelry to show that he saw his son as still his son, and not just a guest. He restored him to his position in the family. He described his son as having been dead but has come to life again. The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:1, 4-5, "you were dead in your transgressions and sins...but God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ."

The final lesson to learn from this parable is that no matter how far away you are in your sin, the moment that we make the decision to return home, God doesn't just reach for you. He doesn't wait for you; he RUNS TO YOU.

To the Pharisees, they would see running to greet your lost son was beneath the dignity of an old man. But Jesus shows us in this parable that his dignity is in the forgiveness of sins and in welcoming home the son who was lost.

I'd like to share a verse from a Christian singer named Benny Hester. The song is called "When God Ran."

The day I left Home,  
I knew I'd broken His heart  
I wondered if  
Things would ever be the same,

Then one night,  
I remembered His love for me  
And down that dusty road, ahead I could see  
It was the only time,  
the only time I ever saw Him run

Was when He ran to me,  
Took me in His arms, held my head to His chest  
And said "My son's come home again".  
Looked in my face, wiped the tears from my eyes  
With forgiveness in His voice  
He said "Son, do you know I still love you?"

It caught me by surprise, It dropped me to my knees  
When God ran

God runs to us with forgiveness, compassion and love. He waits for us, he looks for us, and when we return, he runs to us. He treats us as his sons and daughters. He restores us, clothes us in righteousness and treats us to a feast. Luke 15:7, Jesus said, "I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who no need of repentance."

In just few moments, we will begin the celebration of the Mass. Let us all spend a moment of contemplation before our confession to make sure we are prepared for the feast. And may we all turn to our Heavenly Father who runs to us with love and compassion.

Amen.