

St. Barnabas Homily. 4TH SUN LENT 03/31/2019 (Luke 15: 1-3 & 11-32) Yr C

THIS WEEK WE CELEBRATE THE 4TH SUNDAY IN OUR LENTEN JOURNEY,, AND I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT

THE PARABLE OF: “THE PRODIGAL SON”

BUT BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT THE PRODIGAL SON,,, ALLOW ME TO TELL YOU ABOUT A LITTLE GIRL AND A BIBLE STUDY CLASS;

A SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS WAS BEING QUIZZED,,, ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON,,, BY THEIR TEACHER. THE TEACHER ASKED A LITTLE GIRL,,, THIS QUESTION: “WHO WAS THE SORRIEST,,, WHEN THE PRODIGAL SON RETURNED HOME?”

AFTER DEEP THOUGHT,,, THE LITTLE GIRL ANSWERED; “THE FATTER CALF”.

IN OUR PARABLE,,, THE MAIN CHARACTER,,, IS THE FORGIVING FATHER,,, WHOSE CHARACTER REMAINS CONSTANT THROUGH THE STORY,, AS A PICTURE OF GOD,,, AND IN TELLING THIS STORY,,, JESUS IDENTIFIES HIMSELF WITH GOD THE FATHER,,, IN HIS LOVING ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LOST.

NOW,,, THE YOUNGER SON,,, SYMBOLIZES THE LOST,,, THE TAX COLLECTORS AND OTHER SINNERS OF THAT DAY.

AND,,, THE ELDER BROTHER,,, REPRESENTS THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS,,, THE PHARISEES AND THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW OF THAT TIME.

THE MAIN THEME OF THIS PARABLE,,, ISN'T SO MUCH,,, ABOUT THE CONVERSION OF THE SINNER,,, RATHER THE RESTORATION OF A BELIEVER,,, INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER.

THIS WEEK,, WE FOCUS ON THE YOUNGER OF TWO SONS,, HE'S "*THE BABY OF THE FAMILY*" WHO GREW UP IN A PRIVILEGED FAMILY,, IN THE LAP OF LUXURY.

WITHOUT MUCH,, RESPONSIBILITY.

HE WAS SOON TO BECOME "*THE PRODIGAL SON!*"

THE WORD PRODIGAL MEANS: *RECKLESSLY EXTRAVAGANT!*

OUR STORY BEGINS WITH THE PRODIGAL SON,, ASKING THE FATHER,, TO GIVE HIM,, HIS FULL AND RIGHTFUL INHERITENCE,, *ONLY,, HE WANTS IT EARLY,, PRIOR TO HIS FATHERS DEATH!*

HE THINKS THAT HE CAN DO ANYTHING,, WITHOUT CONSEQUENCES. *HIS ONLY MOTIVE,, WAS TO RECEIVE HIS REWARD EARLY,,* SO HE COULD GO OUT AND ENJOY THE *HIGH LIFE* WITHOUT ANY RULES OR RESTRICTIONS!

NOW,, IF WE'RE PERFECTLY HONEST WITH EACH OTHER,, I'M SURE THAT SOME,, WOULD AGREE,, THAT WE HAVE EITHER BEEN,, OR AT LEAST,, KNOW SOMEONE,, WHO HAS A PRODIGAL CHILD,, DON'T WE? SO THIS CLASSIC STORY MIGHT NOT COME AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE!

AS WE CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THIS STORY TOGETHER,, LET'S EXAMINE HOW THIS LOVING FATHER HANDLED HIS *PRODIGAL SON!*

THE FATHER,, GAVE HIS YOUNG SON,, HIS REQUESTED INHERITANCE AND HIS SON IMMEDIATELY GATHERED ALL HIS PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND HE TOOK OFF.

RIGHT AWAY,, HE BEGINS TO LIVE THE *HIGH-LIFE*. HE PARTIES AND PARTIES AND THEN,, PARTIES SOME MORE,, IN A FAR OFF COUNTRY! HE WAS LIVING,, WHAT WE CALL *THE FAST LANE OF LIFE!*

WELL,, GUESS WHAT? "*HIS MONEY*" SOON RAN OUT,, AND HE FOUND HIMSELF TOTALLY BROKE AND FRIENDLESS.

NO MONEY,,, NO FRIENDS! THEN,,, ADD TO THAT,,, A SEVERE FAMON OVER THE LAND,,, AND THE RESULT WAS;

“A RECKLESSLY EXTRAVAGANT,,, PRODIGAL SON”
WHO COULDN'T BE SO RECKLESSLY EXTRAVAGANT,,,
OR,,, SO PRODIGAL,,, ANY MORE!

HE WAS BROKE! ACCORDING TO (*LUKE 15: 11-13*) ***“HE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE WITH RIOTOUS LIVING”***. AND NOW,,, HE WAS LEFT WITH LITTLE CHOICE,,, EXCEPT **TO GET A JOB,,, HE'LL HAVE TO WORK!**

BECAUSE OF THE FAMON,,, AND BECAUSE HE HAD NO MONEY,,, HE HAD NO “REAL” FRIENDS EITHER! THIS ***“PRIVILEGED”***,,, YOUNG SON,,, HAD TO ACCEPT,,, **THE DIRTY AND SMELLY JOB,,, OF FEEDING PIGS!**

AS YOU CAN IMAGINE,,, THIS WAS A MUCH DIFFERENT LIFESTYLE,,, THAN WHAT HE WAS USED TO.

SO,,, WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL,,, ABOUT THE JOB OF FEEDING THE PIGS,,, ANYWAY?

WELL,,, THE YOUNG MAN DID GET A JOB,,, BUT,,, BEING JEWISH,,, IT'S EVEN WORSE SHAME,,, BECAUSE PIGS,,, WERE REGARDED AS UNCLEAN. AND GOOD JEWS,,, WEREN'T EVEN SUPPOSED TO BE AROUND PIGS,,, LESS ALONE FEEDING THEM. HE HAD TO WORK,,, TO EAT!

HE WAS SO HUNGRY,,, HE DIDN'T HAVE ***THE “ANY TIME YOU WANT IT”,,, KITCHEN PRIVILEGES,,, LIKE HE HAD AT HOME.*** SCRIPTURE SAYS;

“HE LONGED TO EAT HIS FILL OF THE PODS ON WHICH THE SWINE FED,,, BUT NOBODY GAVE HIM ANY”.

BUT,,, THERE IS GOOD NEWS: AS IS USUALLY THE CASE,,, THE YOUNG SON,,, AFTER REALIZING,,, THAT EVEN HIS FATHERS HIRED WORKERS,,, HAD MORE TO EAT THAN HE DID,,, HE FINALLY CAME TO HIS SENSES AND DECIDED TO RETURN TO HIS FATHER AND SAY:

FATHER,, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN AND AGAINST YOU. I NO LONGER DESERVE TO BE CALLED YOUR SON; TREAT ME,, AS YOU WOULD,, ONE OF YOUR HIRED WORKERS”.

THIS LOVING AND FORGIVING FATHER HAD WAITED A LONG TIME (*PROBABLY FROM THE SECOND HIS SON LEFT*) FOR THE RETURN OF HIS PRODIGAL SON!

WHILE HIS SON WAS STILL A LONG WAY OFF,, THE FATHER SAW HIM COMING AND WAS FILLED WITH COMPASSION. HE RAN TO HIS SON,, HUGGED HIM AND WELCOMED HIM BACK HOME WITHOUT ANY CONDITIONS. (*UNCONDITIONAL LOVE!*) THE PRODIGAL SON DROPPED TO HIS KNEES AND REPENTED IMMEDIATELY.

THEN THE FATHER ORDERED HIS SERVANTS TO DRESS HIM WITH THE FINEST ROBES,, PLACE A RING ON HIS FINGER,, PUT SANDALS ON HIS FEET,, AND HE ORDERED A GRAND CELEBRATION FEAST,, SAYING:

“THIS SON OF MINE WAS DEAD,, AND HAS COME TO LIFE AGAIN; HE WAS LOST AND HAS BEEN FOUND!”

BUT,, WHEN THE ELDER SON,, WHO WAS WORKING IN THE FIELDS,, *THE SAME SON THAT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR HIS FATHER*,, HEARD OF HIS YOUNGER BROTHERS RETURN,, AND THEN SEEING THE MANNER IN WHICH HIS FATHER WAS TREATING THIS **PRODIGAL SON,, HE BECAME ANGRY,, BECAUSE HE FELT THAT HE WAS THE ONE,, THAT WAS ALWAYS THERE FOR HIS FATHER.**

BESIDES,, THE ELDER SON,, WAS NEVER TREATED IN THE SAME MANNER. HE DIDN'T LEAVE THE FAMILY,, HE DIDN'T SQUANDER HIS INHERITANCE AND HE NEVER DISOBEYED HIS FATHER.

THIS LOVING FATHER,, SAID TO HIS ELDEST SON; *MY SON,, YOU ARE HERE WITH ME ALWAYS;*

EVERYTHING I HAVE IS YOURS. BUT NOW,,, WE MUST CELEBRATE AND REJOICE,,, BECAUSE YOUR BROTHER WAS DEAD,,, AND HAS COME TO LIFE AGAIN; HE WAS LOST,,,AND HAS BEEN FOUND!”

THIS PRODIGAL SON HAD TO LEARN A VERY DIFFICULT LESSON,,, AND THAT WAS; THAT;

THE LOVE OF A FATHER FOR HIS SON,,, WOULD BE ENOUGH!

HE HAD TO SWALLOW HIS PRIDE,,, AND ADMIT HIS WRONGDOING.

NOW,,, *WE HAVE THE ELDER BROTHER*. HE WAS THE “*GOOD GUY*”,,, AND HE WAS ANGRY! FOR YEARS,,, HE’S DONE ALL THE RIGHT THINGS,,, *BUT HE DIDN’T UNDERSTAND THE REPENTANCE OF HIS YOUNGER BROTHER,,, NOR,,, HIS FATHER’S LOVE*. HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED,,, THAT HIS YOUNGER BROTHER STAY LOST AND DEAD. HE DIDN’T GET IT,,, BECAUSE HE HAD THE WRONG SPIRIT!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, IN THEORY,,, WE’RE ALL “*KIND OF LIKE THAT*”!

IT’S A GREAT STORY! HOWEVER,,, IF IT HAPPENED TO US IN REAL LIFE,,, AND IN OUR OWN PERSONAL SITUATIONS,,, WE MIGHT NOT LIKE IT MUCH EITHER. WE TOO,,, MIGHT BE JUST A BIT,,, JUDGEMENTAL AND SOMEWHAT RESENTFUL!

AS LONG AS WE KEEP THESE KINDS OF STORIES,,, FIRMLY FIXED IN THE PAST,,, WITH NO LINK TO THE FUTURE,,, THEN THY’RE “*JUST GREAT*” AND,,, TOTALLY “*SAFE*”.

BUT JESUS ISN’T TRYING TO TEACH US,,, *ABOUT REPENTANCE FROM A RECKLESS LIFESTYLE!*

NO,,, ITS ABOUT GOD'S LOVE,,, FOR THOSE WHO REPENT,,, WHO RETURN TO HIM,,, AND HOW OTHERS SHOULD REACT,,, AND ACT,,, TOWARDS THOSE WHO DO REPENT.

THE LESSON ISN'T THAT RECKLESS ACTS GO UNPUNISHED!
NOR IS IT JUSTIFICATION FOR SOMEONE TO LIVE A SINFUL,,, DANGEROUS,,, OR RECKLESSLY EXTRAVAGANT LIFESTYLE.

EVEN THE PRODIGAL SON WAS PUNISHED,,, BY HAVING TO REACH HIS "*ROCK-BOTTOM*" STATE. THEN,,, TO THE PLACE OF REPENTANCE,,, AND A CHANGE OF HIS HEART.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, WHEN A PERSON COMES TO US TO REPENT,,, AND TO MAKE AMENDS FOR THEIR WRONGS,,, WE AS CHRISTIANS,,, MUST BE READY TO FORGIVE THEM,,, JUST AS GOD FORGIVES US.

GOD DOESN'T SAY THINGS LIKE: "*WELL,,, YOU MADE YOUR BED,,, NOW LAY IN IT!*" OR,,, "*I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN*".

GOD FORGIVES US IMMEDIATELY AND UNCONDITIONALLY BECAUSE OF THE "**BLOOD OF CHRIST**".

THE PICTURE OF THE FATHER RECEIVING THE SON BACK INTO RELATIONSHIP,,, IS A PICTURE OF HOW WE TOO SHOULD RESPOND,,, TO REPENTENT SINNERS,,, OR TO THOSE,,, WHO HAVE OFFENDED US.

LET'S FOLLOW GOD'S EXAMPLE AND SINCE HES READY TO FORGIVE US,,, LET'S DO LIKewise AND FORGIVE OTHERS!

AS SINNERS,,, *WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE CALLED GOD'S CHILDREN*,,, NOT EVEN *TO BE CALLED HIS HIRED HANDS*.

WE DON'T DESERVE IT,,, AND,,, WE CAN'T EARN IT,,, YET,,, LIKE THE FATHER IN THE PARABLE,,, WHEN WE REPENT OF OUR SINS,,, BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE,,, GOD RUNS,,, WITH OPEN ARMS TO WELCOME US BACK,,,AS HIS CHILDREN.

IN TODAY'S PARABLE,,, ***THE FATHER*** MIRRORS GOD,,, THE FORGIVING FATHER. THE SAME FATHER,,, WHO'S ALWAYS THERE FOR US AND WILLING TO TAKE US BACK,,, EVEN AFTER LONG PERIODS OF RECKLESSNESS.

THE PRODIGAL SON,,, MIRRORS THE SINNER WHO REPENTS,,, AND,,, ***THE ELDER SON***,,, ***THE BEGRUDGING OLDER BROTHER***,,, MIRRORS THE ATTITUDE OF THE PHARISEES IN NOT DESIRING SINNERS RETURN TO GOD.

BY TELLING THIS STORY,,, JESUS IS DEFENDING HIS RIGHT TO ASSOCIATE WITH SINNERS,,, FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL AND FOR OUR SALVATION.

WE'VE BEEN GIVEN SO MUCH LOVE AND GRACE BY GOD,,, THAT ***EVEN WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS,,, CHRIST DIED FOR US!***

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, ALTHOUGH WE CONTINUE TO SIN,,, GOD CONTINUES,,, TO BE MERCIFUL TO US.

NOW,,, IS THE TIME TO SHOW OTHERS,,, THE SAME LOVE,,, MERCY,,, GRACE AND FORGIVENESS,,, THAT OUR FATHER SHOWS TO US EVERYDAY!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

AMEN

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(1,557 WDS 7 PGS)