

St. Barnabas Homily. 4TH SUN LENT 03/27/2022 (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***"

IN OUR PARABLE,, THE MAIN CHARACTER,, IS THE ***FORGIVING FATHER***,, WHOSE CHARACTER REMAINS CONSTANT THROUGH THE STORY,, AS AN IMAGE ***OF GOD THE FATHER!*** IN TELLING THIS STORY,, ***JESUS IDENTIFIES HIMSELF WITH GOD THE FATHER***,, ***IN HIS LOVING ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LOST CHILDREN OF HUMANITY.***

NOW,, ***THE YOUNGER SON***,, SYMBOLIZES THE LOST,, THE TAX COLLECTORS,, AND OTHER SINNERS,, OF HUMANITY. AND,, ***THE ELDER BROTHER***,, REPRESENTS THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS,, THE PHARISEES AND THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND THOSE WHO THINK THAT THEY ARE SO GOOD,, THAT THEY CAN EARN THEIR WAY TO HEAVEN.

THE MAIN THEME OF THIS PARABLE,, IS ABOUT THE CONVERSION OF A SINNER,, AND THE RESTORATION OF A BELIEVER,, INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER.

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

WITHOUT MUCH,, RESPONSIBILITY,, HE WOULD SOON BECOME "***THE PRODIGAL SON!***"

SO WHAT DOES THE WORD THE WORD PRODIGAL MEANS: IT MEANS TO BE: ***RECKLESSLY EXTRAVAGANT!***

OUR STORY BEGINS WITH THE PRODIGAL SON,, ASKING THE FATHER TO GIVE HIM HIS FULL AND RIGHTFUL INHERITENCE,, ***ONLY,, HE SELFISHLY WANTS IT,, BEFORE HIS FATHER'S 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 RECKLESSLY ENJOY THE *HIGH LIFE,,,* WITHOUT ANY RULES,,, LIMITS OR RESTRICTIONS AT ALL!

NOW,,, IF WE'RE PERFECTLY HONEST WITH EACH OTHER,,, I'M SURE THAT SOME OF US,,, 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 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? SOON,,, "*HIS MONEY*" RUNS OUT,,, AND HE FINDS HIMSELF,,, TOTALLY BROKE AND FRIENDLESS. NO MONEY,,, MEANS NO FRIENDS! THEN,,, ADD TO THAT,,, A SEVERE FAMON OVER THE LAND HAPPENED,,, AND THE RESULT WAS; THAT THE

"THE RECKLESSLY EXTRAVAGANT,,, PRODIGAL SON"

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,,, *AND HE'LL HAVE TO WORK!*

BECAUSE OF THE FAMON,,, AND BECAUSE HE HAD NO
MONEY,,, HE HAD NO “***REAL FRIENDS***” EITHER!

SCRIPTURE TELLS US THAT 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,,, BROTHERS
AND SISTERS,,, BEING JEWISH,,, IT'S EVEN WORSE SHAME,,,
BECAUSE YOU SEE,,, PIGS,,, WERE REGARDED AS UNCLEAN.
AND GOOD JEWS,,, WEREN'T EVEN SUPPOSED TO BE
AROUND PIGS,,, LET 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 SOME 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 MOMENT HIS SON LEFT*) FOR THE RETURN OF HIS PRODIGAL SON!

NOW,, WHILE HIS SON WAS STILL A LONG WAY OFF,, THE FATHER SAW HIM COMING AND HE 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.

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,, *NOW,, THIS IS 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 SELF-RIGHTEOUS SPIRIT! IN THEORY,, WE’RE ALL “*KIND OF LIKE THAT*”!

WE SAY,, *IT’S A GREAT STORY!* BUT,, 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 PERHAPS EVEN SOMEWHAT RESENTFUL!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, JESUS IS TEACHING US,, TWO THINGS: *FIRST,, ABOUT REPENTANCE FROM A RECKLESS LIFESTYLE*,, AND *SECOND,, ABOUT GOD’S LOVE,, FOR THOSE WHO DO REPENT* AND WHO RETURN TO HIM AND THEN,, HOW OTHERS SHOULD RESPOND 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! HE HAD TO REACH HIS “*ROCK-BOTTOM*” CONDITION,, THEN,, TO THE PLACE OF REPENTANCE,, AND A CHANGE OF HEART.

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: "*YOU MADE YOUR BED,,, NOW LAY IN IT!*" OR,,, "*I KNEW THAT 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 THOSE WHO HAVE OFFENDED US.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, LET'S FOLLOW GOD'S EXAMPLE AND SINCE HE IS 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 RECEIVE US,,,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*,,, REFLECTS THE ATTITUDE OF THE JUDGEMENTAL SELF-RIGHTEOUS PERSON.

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

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

AND ALTHOUGH WE CONTINUE TO SIN,,, GOD CONTINUES,,, TO BE MERCIFUL TO US AS WE TURN OUR REPENTANT HEARTS TOWARD HIM.

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

***I BLESS YOU ALL,,,
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER
AND THE SON
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT***

AMEN

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(1,526 WDS 7 PGS)