

Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond
the Church

October 4, 2020

Day 1: Luke 15:11-13

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

This parable gives us insight into the love of God. The story begins very reasonably as the younger son wants to make his own way in life and not work for his brother, who will receive the land. A number of current day reasons could be offered as to how the boy spent his money. He could have lost it gambling, speculating in the market or drinking. The story implies that whatever he did, it was foolish and wasteful.

Question: How did the father give the son his share? Did he sell some land, take a loan, or how would he actually do this?

Challenge: Do you have a will or estate plan? How would you divide up your assets if you had to do it now?

Scripture: Luke 15:1-10

Day 2: Luke 15:14-19

When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'

The famine comes at the wrong time. Just when the boy runs out of money so does everybody else. He cannot even get alms. The boy goes against his religious training and feeds pigs. This shows how desperate he was, he went against his basic religious principles in order to just survive. Violating ones basic religious principles can cause either an awakening or a deep depression. In the boy's case it caused an awakening. "He came to himself" means that he made a move toward health. His move was to get out of the mud and manure and go back to his father's house. His attitude, as he begins to go back, has changed from when he left. Asking for forgiveness is a strong move, not a weak one. The younger son demonstrates strength by going back to his home and dealing with problems.

Question: Have you ever felt like the younger son?

Challenge: Do some research on the Jewish prohibition against eating pork.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 14:3-13

Day 3: Luke 15:20-21

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. " Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

The love of God goes so far beyond our ability to love. Before the words of "forgive me" are out of the boy's mouth his father runs to hug and kiss him. Words will not convey how the father feels at the return of his son; only a kiss will suffice.

Question: Have you felt someone else loving you without using words? What happened?

Challenge: Have you shown someone you love them without words? What happened?

Scripture: Isaiah 60:1-7, 19-22

Day 4: Luke 15:22-24

But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

The father does not respond to the boys words of "I am sorry" with "I told you so" or some other disapproving look. The father does not ask for "a pound of flesh" before he accepts the boy. The father gave the boy all the indicators to the world that the boy is the son. The robe, ring, sandals and the dinner all point to the boy as being a son.

Question: Do you freely forgive or do you find yourself wanting the other to "pay" for the wrong done to you?

Challenge: What are the indicators (in your family) that you belong to your family. Now think about the indicator that you are in God's family.

Scripture: Isaiah 54:5-15

Day 5: Luke 15:25-28

'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.

The elder son has more of the usual response to someone asking for forgiveness. We want to extract some punishment from the person before we accept them back and then when they are accepted back we make them feel less than, because of what they did. If we were held accountable for a bad decision we have made in life then who could stand blameless before the world? Forgiveness is one of the most difficult actions humans can perform. Some have held onto their anger over a hurt for 10, 15, 20 years and sometimes even after the other has died. The inability to forgive causes one to punish oneself. Without forgiveness every time we are reminded of the hurt it feels as raw as when it first happened.

Question: Have you ever felt like the older son?

Challenge: Take inventory of yourself and see if there are any past hurts you have not forgiven.

Scripture: Genesis 25:19-34

Day 6: Luke 15:29-32

But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes; you killed the fatted calf for him!" Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."

The father reminds the elder son that he will receive all the father has. When we want to hold a grudge God reminds us that we have been forgiven and set free. We are set free of our resentment and free to love. The price that was paid for us ought to make us think twice before we withhold forgiveness. The fathers love was great enough for both boys. The brother who has come back did not diminish the fathers love for the older brother. The love God has for one sinner who repents is not greater than it is for all others.

Question: How did the older son know the younger was with prostitutes? It does not say in the story how he used his money.

Challenge: Think about the father's reasoning. Does it make sense and why? Or why not?

Scripture: Romans 10:5-13, Luke 15:1-10