

Ascension Lutheran Church

Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of March 14, 20 10

The Merciful Father (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for today's homily is from the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke:

"²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against the heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."

This is the text.

Dear friends in the Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, We heard Paul's inspired word to rejoice in the Lord with a parable that has become one of the most well-known and beloved parables of the Bible. We call it "The Parable of the Lost Son" or "The parable of the Prodigal Son".

Jesus told this story to illustrate a point to the Pharisees and Scribes. These were the religious elite in Israel. They were men full of ego who criticized Jesus for spending time with open ly sinful people such as prostitutes and dishonest tax collectors. But these religious elite had a glaring flaw themselves. They did not understand compassion and mercy as they did to keep the letter of the Law they failed to realize that at His heart, God welcomes repentant sinners and whose joy is when His lost children come home again.

In the parable, the young man finds himself completely lost. He takes his share of the inheritance, blows it on wild living it says, maybe gambling, booze and prostitutes, we can only speculate what he might have spent it on and he finds himself destitute, hungry, and with a lowly job of feeding pigs, which for a Jew is the lowest of the low.

And where do we see the Father in the story? He is waiting. He is watching, He is looking for His beloved lost son to come home again. He senses and realizes what a foolish choice he has made and remembers that in his father's household he had a much better life, he sets out to practice what he will say, "Father, I have sinned against the heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."

This was more than a want for a better life to have a nice place to sleep and good food in his father's house again. It was a genuine repentance. And this is what the prostitutes and tax collectors were going through. They wanted to come home to God through Jesus. They knew that they were not worthy but they had hope in God's grace.

We can see here that when the son demanded his share, he not stop him. He gave him what he wanted and he let doubt would have encouraged his son to stay but he does God force people to follow Him. If we set out lazy or wasteful with our time, letting our temper others, etc... or doing anything even though we know follow His way.

of the inheritance the Father did him make his own mistakes. He would not force his son to stay. Nor to do our own thing, be it stealing, being get the better of us, gossiping about we shouldn't God doesn't force us to

In Hebrews 12:7 it says, "Endure hardship as discipline what son is not disciplined by his father?" Sometimes Father is to let our unscriptural decisions run the turn to Him and come to know His grace on an even

line; God is treating you as sons. For God's form of discipline as our good courses so we might see our error and deeper level.

And when we are led back in repentance He is always forgiveness. In the story when the Father sees his walk to him; He runs. He runs to welcome His son who

ready to restore us with His Word of son off in the distance, He does not me.

As our Good Shepherd God looks for His lost sheep and He brings us back when we stray. In the 23rd Psalm which many of us know so well the Psalmist says, "Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The word "follow" in the original Hebrew is more aptly translated, "pursue". So, in essence, God's goodness and mercy pursue us. He is not passive; He is active in leading us and working to set us on the right path again.

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Some people think that God has forgotten His creation; that He created the world but that He has lost interest in it and is letting it spin out of control. But on the contrary, our Lord Jesus Christ says in John 5:17, "My Father is always working." We see God at work in the birth of each child, while in the womb the child is formed and moulded by our Lord. Each day God is working to take care of His creation, as He gives us all that we have, our food, our home, our family and friends, our clothes, and the list goes on and on. These things He gives all out of His mercy.

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Did you know that in the beginning Adam and Eve had they were naked and they were not ashamed. They had complete, open and honest trust in God. But when the sin into the world they lost this glory. It says, "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (Gen. 3:7). Their former glory had become their shame. When you put on your shirt, pants, or dress, and shoes, you may not even think about what your clothing mean to God. But the fact that we are ashamed to be naked is a reminder of our sin and the shame that sin brings.

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But God's ultimate goal for us is not to leave us feeling ashamed. He leads us to repent and ask Him for forgiveness. His ultimate aim is to show you His abundant mercy. Let's look at Adam and Eve once again. God could have taken the whole fallen sinful world and crunched it up like a paper ball and thrown it into the garbage but instead He saw it as something worth loving and something worth redeeming. It says, "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them". And so, in essence, clothing symbolizes God's mercy. When the father in the para

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and come home he said to his servants, "Bring quick putar in on his hand, and shoes on his feet."

The Lord receives sinners. Here receives all who repent and acknowledge your sins before God, believing in Jesus receives you and He keeps you in His kingdom. Your mercy on you and delivered to you personally what C Paul wrote in Galatians 3, "All of you who were Baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." This being clothed with His great work of mercy.

God works through His Word, friends, His holy precious Word in the Bible that too often God works to call people into His kingdom, to call sinners to know Him as Saviour. And He calls us back to when our hearts or our thoughts have strayed. If doubts creep in our Good Shepherd pursues us with His Word of consolation. Christ says, "I am with you always to the very end of the age" (Mt. 28:20); He says, "Take heart, your sins are forgiven" (Mt. 9:2). Jesus says, "Come to me you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). He says, I am with you always to the very end of the age"

Whoever believes in us we would not say that they are young in the parable had acted irresponsibly and selfishly. And yet he himself on his father's mercy, he claimed no merit beggar ready to receive whatever the father might give. He was worthy of his father's grace. He had hope in his father's mercy. He threw off his own; he came simply as a humble servant to provide for him. He was humbled so his

This shows God's grace works, friends. He opposes the proud but draws near to the humble. We are saved only by the sheer grace of God who was willing to suffer and be put on a cross so we could be with Him forever. Now that is love!

As we commune today we celebrate a feast given by God. At the Lord's Table all of heaven celebrates repentance and the salvation we have in Christ. We celebrate His atoning death and resurrection for us; and with expectant hope we look forward to His

When you hear the word, "repent" does it bring you a harsh threatening command. And yet this parable celebrates repentance. We see the father's joy in heaven rejoices when you repent. God wants to soften our hearts, to forgive that person who has hurt us just as we have been forgiven in Jesus.

When someone else repents and comes to faith He invites us to rejoice with Him, not like the proud older brother in the story who was jealous of not getting all the attention. Our gracious Heavenly Father invites us to share in the joy of finding the lost. As the Father says, "It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found." Amen. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your mind

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and come to Him. And if you see Christ as Saviour, the Lord surely Baptism is where He lavished His mercy so lovingly won on the cross. As He has clothed you with Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. This being clothed with His great work of mercy.

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Soli Deo Gloria