

Saint Timothy Lutheran – Edmonds, WA

March 14, 2010 – Rev. Craig A. Patterson

“His Father Ran And Embraced Him...”

(Text: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32)

Context: Jesus was the target of the scorn of the Pharisees and the scribes. They wished to discredit Jesus in any way possible. On this occasion they pointed out the “kind” of people that Jesus was spending time with. The Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Lk. 15:2). They intended to shame Jesus for not choosing the “right kind” of people to spend time with. Jesus masterfully uses a simple illustration to point out how if they lost a single sheep that, most certainly, they would go, search for the sheep, and rejoice when they found it. If this is so with sheep that they own and care for, how much greater in importance is it to go, search for lost people?! Jesus tells the story of the two sons and their father. Both sons got lost, perhaps in different ways, but the father sought both of them out. One of them “came to his senses” and returned to his father. The parable ends abruptly regarding the second son. What was to happen?

- I. **The Pharisees Looked At People In Contrast To People While They Insisted That They Were Following God. (Their eyes were not on God so much as upon others with whom they compared themselves.)**
 - A. In their view, people should spend time with the best (in their estimation) kind of people.
 - B. They were concerned about what other people thought about other people.
 - C. They behaved in a manner so as to impress other people.
 - D. They judged others in connection with their behavior and the people with whom they spent time with.
 - E. They held other people to their, self-made, standards, not God’s.
 - F. They were proud of themselves.
 - G. They were jealous of Jesus’ popularity and following.
- II. **Jesus Told The Story Of The Two Sons And Their Father To Show God’s Love For All People.**
 - A. God, our Father, loves those who take all that God gives them and squander it on self-indulgence like the younger son in this story. (The promises and lures of the sinful world enticed the younger son and people still today.)
 1. The father in the parable never stopped loving his younger son who left him, squandered all of his inheritance, came to his senses, returned to the father, and asked to be treated as but one of his father’s servants.
 2. ‘Coming to his senses’ is the same as conversion, for indeed the sinner who comes to his senses sees his sins clearly and throws himself upon the compassion (mercy) of his father. This is what the younger son did.
 3. Even before the younger son was able to give his full speech of repentance and humility to his father, his father was running to him, embracing him, and rejoicing in his return. (God runs to the repentant ones and rejoices over them.)
 - B. God, our Father, loves those who stay close to Him, but become proud of their own good merits and become impatient and unloving toward others who are far from the father, like the older son did in this story (like the Pharisees and the scribes, themselves).
 1. The father in the story said to his older son, “My child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.”
 - a. Jesus, was saying these words to the Pharisees and scribes for them to hear, if they would only listen. (We don’t know, but that some may have heard the message of God’s merciful love, repented and trusted in Jesus.)
 - C. So, what is your situation? Do you identify more with the younger or older son?
 1. If you have lived a life of squandering God’s gifts to you, followed the promises of this sinful world, and found yourself with an empty soul, God loves you.
 2. If you have been a long time church goer, wondered why others have left the fellowship of believers, they went away and now want to return, and, to be honest, you are a bit angry that God could love them again and love them fully, forgiving them, God loves you, also.
 - D. God, our Father, loves all sinners, no matter their story.
 1. This is good news for people everywhere!
 2. This is good news for people in our families, in our neighborhoods, in the world!
 - a. This good, mercy-filled love of God is meant for all people whether their story is more like the younger or older son.