

'Our Prodigal God'

Psalm 32; Luke 15:11-32

March 27, 2022

- I. Losing Things
 - I lose things all the time
 - One of the worst things ever, is to lose your keys
 - o Always happens when you're running late
 - Natalie put in a key holder near the entrance to the door, saves my bacon more days than I'd care to admit.
 - Feeling when lost things are found?
 - o Fantastic, isn't it?
- II. Lostness
 - Today we're going to talk a lot about being lost.
 - Sometimes we think that the lost people are the skid row bums and the prostitutes and the ilk
 - o And they're lost
 - o But sometimes, so are we
 - Today, we get the story of not One but TWO lost brothers
 - o Only one of them gets found though.
- III. Read the Passage
- IV. Story – The Far Country
 - Randy didn't want to find himself lost
 - He started life like any kid but, according to him, he got full of himself
 - o Then he got into drugs
 - Next thing you know, Randy robbed three convenience stores with a gun and is sentenced to 12 years in the penitentiary.
 - I met him doing Kairos
 - He talks so powerfully about being lost but what's interesting is if you take the details out of it, the emotions he describes, well, we all understand
 - o You may never have been strung out on drugs or robbing stores, but if you've lived a few years on this side of eternity, you know exactly what it's like to feel lost
 - IT's a feeling that nobody is watching and that worse, nobody cares
 - It's feeling that because nobody is watching and that nobody cares, you can do whatever you want
 - Seems like it'll be freeing
 - o No morality
 - o No ethics
 - o No rules
 - But living that way? It only amplifies your loneliness as life becomes a collection of hangers on and half-hearted friends who can't be counted on.
 - In that self-manufactured isolation from others as well as God, we become inclined to selfishness
 - o The selfishness is what dooms us.
 - Every one of us travels to the far country on occasion
 - Where is the Far country?
 - o I always think of it as being Vegas
 - After all, there's sin aplenty to be found there!
 - Everything the younger brother was after
 - o Sex, gambling, the bright lights of the big city.

- But it doesn't have to be Vegas
 - It Could be North Carolina, it could be Charlotte, heck, the far country can and is on occasion no further away from us than Coulwood.
- The fact of the matter is the far country is wherever we are when we're travelling without God.
 - That's what the Younger Brother wanted to do. He KNEW IT AND EVEN TOLD HIS DAD.

The Younger Brother

- We can't go on enough about how out of whack the younger brother is.
 - Jewish law made it clear
 - No inheritance until AFTER the dad dies
 - Older brother is supposed to get double the inheritance (two portions)
 - Thus, what this younger brother wanted was doubly wrong.
 - Triply when you figure that asking your dad for your inheritance to run away with is treating your dad and family very disrespectfully.
- And, in a way, we're glad the way his story turns out
 - What if he'd been successful? Wouldn't be much of a story in that
- But he's not successful
 - He struggles
 - He blows all his money and is forced to the ultimate indignity
 - Feeding pigs
 - Ceremonially unclean animal
 - Even though it's a story, this detail would've shocked the original hearers of the parable.

Older Brother

- His lostness is a bit harder to see but it's there, nevertheless
- It becomes clear that he desires exactly the same thing from his father
 - His stuff
 - But not a relationship
 - He won't come to the party and is angry at his dad's forgiveness
 - He's also resentful
 - "Not even a goat for my parties" or whatever
- There is also, a harness of heart.
- Jesus originally told this parable to Pharisees
 - Why were Pharisees Pharisaical?
 - The nation was in the crapper
 - Romans had come, defiled the Temple and were exacting ruinous taxes
 - The Pharisees believed that it was entirely because the people of God weren't HOLY
 - That's right, they believed a return to old morality and ways was the certain answer to the Roman problem.
 - In a whole lot of ways, they're like us when we think, "weren't things better when...."
- The Older Brother is in his own Far Country
 - It wasn't Vegas, it was right at home

The Prodigal God

- It's easy to get caught up in the brother's drama but, in the end, this is a story about lostness BUT MORE SPECIFICALLY
 - IT SHOWS US GOD'S RESPONSE TO LOSTNESS
- God is always waiting
- The he runs

- Very odd for an old man to run
- Remember when we talked about the feeling you get when you find your keys?
 - Listen to this verse, “there is more rejoicing in heaven when one sinner repents
 - **Luke 15:7** – *“Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”*
- Prodigal definitions
 - Wasteful
 - Extravagantly generous