

3/27/22 St. Peter Lutheran Church, Doss, Texas

Luke 15:1-3, *Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach.*

² *This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!* ³ *So Jesus told them this story: 11 To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. 12 The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. 13 “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. 14 About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. 15 He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. 16 The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. 17 “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, 19 and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”’ 20 “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. 22 “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So, the party began. 25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, 26 and he asked one of the servants what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’ 28 “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, 29 but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to*

do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. 30 Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’ 31 “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. 32 We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

After Prayer – Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus. To reach out and touch Him and tell Him we love Him. Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen. Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.

Sing: “The prodigal son he’d been away a while. He was working his way back home now over many a ragged mile. When he finally crossed the river and his father saw him there, there was a joyful noise for all the world to hear.”

Each year, Holy Ghost Lutheran asks members to write a page for a devotional book. Many of them are personal testimonies like this one here.

A young woman wrote, “I know many of us have asked ourselves this at least once in our lives and that is ‘Who is God?’ We can be assured that He is our Savior, our strength in our struggles and our gracious loving Father. No matter what the devil and world throw at us, we can be confident that God is always by our side.

There was a situation this past year that I found really hard to get through. I had a lot going on with sports and schoolwork when this obstacle arose. I won’t go into detail but this wasn’t like anything I had ever faced before. While I had friends who I talked to and got encouragement from, it wasn’t exactly what I needed to help me get through. So, what did I do?

I turned to Jesus. His Words spoke to me and His Holy Spirit filled me. I remember sitting, working on homework and praying constantly that He would get me through. I prayed: *God, I need Your strength.* I felt His light overcome the darkness around me, just

like John 1:5 says. I was covered and able to rest peacefully knowing that no matter what else would come, God was by my side, and holding me up. I don't think I would have been able to make it through without His mighty love fighting for me. During this time, I also used inspirational songs to help me release everything to God. It's amazing the ways God makes His voice heard."

Turning to our heavenly Father brought this young lady help and peace.

The parable from today's Gospel has also been called the 'parable of the loving father.' It is a story about our heavenly Father welcoming us home without recriminations. His love is overpowering. He is joyful beyond imagining. He has waited a long time. With no electronic communication, there was no way for him to know what had happened to his son or if he'd ever see him again.

With our God, He does know what is happening with us, what our thoughts and feelings are. And yet, He waits and waits. You might say that He knows what will happen to each of us, but maybe- just maybe- we can surprise Him since we do have free will. He respects our free will, but our free will is also tainted by sin. We have one foot in the world and one foot in heaven with our God.

The son comes home repentant. Think of all the friends he had because he was spending money left and right and then he was broke. Reminds me of the song, "Nobody know you when you're down and out." The words go:

Once I lived the life of a millionaire, spent all my money, I just did not care. Took all my friends out for a good time, bought bootleg liquor, champagne and wine. Then I began to feel so low, lost all my good friends, I had nowhere to go. If I ever get my hands on a dollar again, I'm gonna hang on to it till that eagle grins.

'Cause nobody knows you when you're down and out. In your pocket, you haven't got a penny, and as for friends, you don't have too many. When you finally get back on your feet

again, everybody wants to be your long-lost friend. So, it's mighty strange, without a doubt, nobody knows you when you're down and out.

The fact is that the son came home. He wasn't prideful nor arrogant. He had his hands full with a brother who was. One modern version of this story was that the older brother began to listen to his younger brother days after the welcoming home party. He learned some things about ranch management that he didn't know before that would improve things.

The younger son in the parable had to be surprised that he was received with such love from his father. As he came home, "there was a joyful sound for all the world to hear." As we look at our relationship with Jesus, maybe the words of this song ("May the Words of My Mouth") just might be helpful in showing us the direction of growing in our love for the Lord.

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart bless your name, bless your name, Jesus. And the deeds of the day and the truth in my way speak of You, speak of You, Jesus.

For this is what I'm glad to do. It's time to live a life of love that pleases You. And I will give my all to You, surrender everything I have and follow You.

Lord, will You be my vision, Lord, will You be my guide? Be my hope, be my life, and the Way. And I'll look not for riches, nor praises on earth; only You'll be the first of my heart.

Can that be your song? Will that be your song as we move through Lent toward that Good Friday when Christ Jesus gave His all for each of us. May be God grant you the strength to do so. Amen