

Worship At Home

27th March 2022

"Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be— you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean. Count yourself lucky— GOD holds nothing against you and you're holding nothing back from him.

When I kept it all inside, my bones turned to powder,
my words became daylong groans.

The pressure never let up; all the juices of my life dried up.
Then I let it all out; I said, "I'll come clean
about my failures to GOD."

Suddenly the pressure was gone— my guilt dissolved, my sin
disappeared.

Keep your slate
clean ...

Let me give you some good advice; I'm looking you in the eye and giving it to you straight:
"Don't be ornery like a horse or mule that needs bit and bridle to stay on track." God defilers
are always in trouble; GOD-affirmers find themselves loved every time they turn around.
Celebrate GOD. Sing together—everyone! All you honest hearts, raise the roof!"

Psalm 32

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 549 How deep the Father's love for

1 How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory

2 Behold the man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished

3 I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no power, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom



CCL 1160072

<https://youtu.be/cs8WTFXcEW>

Let us pray together

God, our father, we quieten ourselves to be present to ourselves, to you and to each other.
We come as we are, sometimes lost, because we choose our way and not yours, because we
make an outward show of your way, but without love - and that is not your way.

Thank you for your outrageous love, always and forever welcoming us home. God of steadfast
love, you give us so many reasons to rejoice - the best reason of all is having been brought so
close to you in Jesus . Through him you enable us to be new people - part of your new
creation. And you have entrusted us with the task of continuing to give shape to this new
creation by commissioning us as ambassadors of Christ. By aligning our hearts with yours, we
can speak the words to others which you have spoken to us in Christ: "You are loved. You are
forgiven. You are saved." We praise you and adore you, O God, as we offer this prayer in
Jesus' name. Living God, you do not save us from our mistakes, but you release us to learn
from them. Thank you for being there to welcome us back when we have lost our way, to

challenge our resentment when we have lost our grace, to embrace our need when we have exhausted our self sufficiency. We are so grateful. We are sorry when we doubt your love, and our pride prevents us from admitting our mistakes. Forgive us and help us to find our way home. We are sorry when we resent your generosity towards others and judge their failures more harshly than our own. Forgive us and help us to find our way home. We are sorry when we hurt those we love and abuse their trust. **Forgive us and just like the Prodigal son help us to find our way home.** In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Reading: Luke 15.1-3,11b-32

Reflection: Lost and found

In 1986 Henri Nouwen, a Dutch theologian and writer, toured St. Petersburg, Russia, then called Leningrad. While there he visited the famous Hermitage where he saw, among other things, Rembrandt's painting of the Prodigal Son. The painting was in a hallway and received the natural light of a nearby window. Nouwen stood for two hours, mesmerized by this remarkable painting. As he stood there the sun changed, and at every change of the light's angle he saw a different aspect of the painting revealed. He would later write: "There were as many paintings in the Prodigal Son as there were changes in the day." But he also told this story of a real lost son.

One morning he witnessed the father and son journeying across the city by bus. They were counting the stops before they got off the bus. So, all the boy had to do to go back to their apartment was to get on the bus and count the stops.

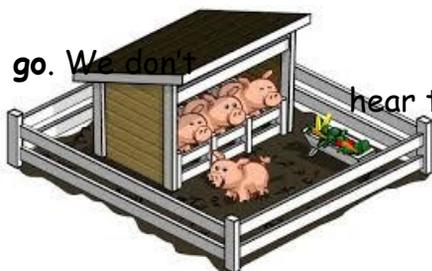


A few days later he heard that the son had got lost and he joined the search for the boy. The boy and his dad were heading home during rush hour. The bus was crowded, and the boy and his dad were separated on the bus, because everyone stands on the bus. The boy did as he had done so often with his dad and counted the number of stops to where he thought they were due to get off he got off, thinking his dad was right behind him. But his father remained on the bus as he wasn't counting the stops but looking for the correct street. Unknown to them both, during rush hour the bus made extra stops to pick up factory workers along the route, needless to say, his dad did not get off and did not realise that his son had got off until several more stops down the road.

Now, the boy was lost in a strange city of over 5 million people where he spoke very little Russian. The first thing the boy's dad did was to start calling everyone he knew in the city and asked them to start praying for the boy and for God to bring him home safely.

But God, was already watching, and an elderly lady saw the boy getting off the bus by himself. Curious she approached him and realising that he spoke English took him to the US Embassy where they were able to trace down his parents. The boy was lost for 4 hours and although he was no doubt afraid and a little surprised that his dad stayed on the bus. The boy trusted the goodness of the lady and found his way home.

The parable of the Lost Son, is actually about 2 sons and a father. There are 3 simple scenes in the parable. And each scene is about a father and his love. **The first scene is of a father who loves his son enough to let him**



go. We don't hear that the father tried to talk his son out of going. He did not tell his son how bad of a mistake he was making, we call that "tough love" today. Although, many parents today would be tempted to do that to their children. Instead he gave his son his inheritance, which in fact was an insult to his father, and let

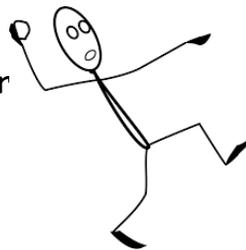
Sometime later the boy hit rock bottom, lost all his money and realised that he was lost. A Jewish boy working in a pigsty, not good, was considered unclean for life....

Scene 2 is the father loves enough to let his Son come back home. In the pig pen without food, without friends without home we see that the boy came to his senses. We see the boy realise he was better off to be a slave (or lowly, even humble worker) in his fathers' house than to be free in a pigsty. We see the boy heading home with the intention of asking his father to allow him to be a servant, but the father did not allow the son to finish talking. The father wanted to celebrate. Neither did his father say "I told you so".

Scene 3 and the father lovingly deals with his older son in his anger. (read v29 "But he answered his father, '.. All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.") We can understand how upset the older son was, BUT the father wants a relationship based on Grace, not performance. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9 And, notice the celebration here.

Something else strike's me as important: The father not only ran out to welcome his son home but he embraced him and kissed him. Surely this is a wonderful illustration of what Jesus does for each of us. In Jewish law the boy was considered unclean after working in the pigsty. But that did not matter to the father. He embraced his son and allowed that uncleanliness to pass over to him, who was clean. Isn't that what God has done for each of us that has accepted Him as Lord and Saviour. And is willing to do for anyone that wants to be cleansed? He has taken our sin and has made us clean.

Another thing is that it was very uncommon for the men to run in Jesus' day, yet the father ran to meet his son. Why? One obvious reason was his love for his son and his desire to show that love. But there is something else to consider here. This wayward son had brought disgrace to his family and the village and according to Deuteronomy 21:18-21, he should have been stoned to death. But, think of this, if the neighbours had started to stone the boy, they would have hit the father who was embracing him! Again, what a picture of what Jesus did for you and for me at the cross.



As we saw in the story of the 9 year old boy who was lost in the city of 5 million people, we saw there was an ending with rejoicing, for he found his way back home. And even although the boys loving father took steps to keep him safe, the boy still got lost but found safety. We too get lost - who do we turn to? Our friends or God?

In the "Parable of the Prodigal Son" the boy realises that the grass was not any greener on the other side of the fence and he came home to a time of rejoicing. There is only one way to come to the Father, and it is through faith in Jesus Christ. Tell this story to other's this week and maybe there will be more who were lost but are now found.

Let us pray

Loving God, thank you that you are ready to welcome us home whenever we wander away. In our prayers for others we pray for those who face exclusion because of race, colour, sexuality or disability. Help us in our actions to imitate your inclusive love.

We pray for all for whom 'home' is not a safe place, where instead it is a place of fear and violence. We pray for those far from 'home' seeking refuge in foreign lands waiting for a time when it will be safe to return.

We pray for those where 'home' is a borrowed sofa or worse still a shop door. Longing for a warm bed to call their own. Those for whom the future is uncertain. Help us, O God, to be

people of welcome to all who need it.

Gracious God, we pray that your reconciling love may bring harmony to our world. We pray for those caught up in conflicts between nations and states; for all who live in fear of the bullet or the bomb. May the leaders of the nations listen to each other and commit themselves to peace.

We pray for those whose relationships have broken down. May your love bring reconciliation, your peace dissolve bitterness, and your grace disperse anger. We bring to you homes that are filled with conflict and pray for all who suffer from domestic violence and abuse.

Bring healing to those who bear the scars of the ways they have been treated and enable them to experience love. We pray for all who seek to mediate, to bring reconciliation and peace, that they may have wisdom, patience and compassion.

Today we pray in gratitude for our mothers and for all the women who have helped you on your life's journey. Grant to all mothers the courage they need to face the future that life with children always brings. Give them the strength to live and to be loved in return, not perfectly, but humanly.

We pray for mother's and grandmother's who have found themselves having to flee from their homes, often with children but having to leave their husbands behind. Grant to them the strength they need to support their children and give them the wisdom to turn to you for help when they need it most.

We bring our prayer in the name of Christ, through whom all are reconciled to you, our God. **Amen.**

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 519 Love Divine

1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heav'n, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art.
Visit us with thy salvation;
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

3 Come, Almighty, to deliver,
let us all thy life receive.
Suddenly return, and never,
nevermore they temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

2 Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
into ev'ry troubled breast.
Let us all in thee inherit,
let us find the promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be.
End of faith, as its beginning,
set our hearts at liberty.

4 Finish, then, thy new creation;
true and spotless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee.
Changed from glory into glory,
till in heav'n we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.

CCL 1160072

<https://youtu.be/JGgcqhkSnQ8>

God of outrageous love! Thank you that we cannot fall out of your love, no matter what our mistakes, no matter how mean and grudging our love is. As you welcome us with ever open arms, enlarge our hearts and minds, to serve faithfully and to love outrageously!

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. **Amen.**

Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day.

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If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you. 4