

# [1] Luke 15<sup>11-32</sup> Becoming like the father – 21 Aug 2011

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## Rembrandt's story

- 17<sup>th</sup> C – successful artist, renowned today
- very rich
- painting *"The Prodigal in Brothel"*
- hard times
  - o death of 5 children, 2 wives
  - o lost money & favour - bankruptcy
  - o died poor & buried in unmarked grave
- end of life paints *"The Return of the prodigal"*

## Parable

- context
  - o end of Chap 14
  - o Pharisees & teachers grumbling
  - o final of 3 stories – sheep 1/100, coin 1/10, sons ½
- Picture of the father
  - o in relation to 2 sons

- younger

older

- o extravagant self-giving love & grace
- o why Jesus came
  - Gods son became flesh so that all the lost children of God could become sons & daughters

## Rembrandts painting

- o father – old man, nearly blind
- o embraces emaciated, "lost" son
  - acceptance
  - compassion
- o older brother stands watching, aloof, removed
  - Pharisees – onlookers
  - failure to join in celebration
- clothes of sons
  - o intended to take fathers place

## Becoming like the father

- the way of spiritual fatherhood
- developing a heart of compassion & love
  - o girls fighting over who empties the dishwasher
  - o silly ways we prevent ourselves from growing Gods heart

### 1. Return to father

- receive his love & forgiveness
- cannot give what have never received
- know the place he gives us
  - o beloved child

### 2. Grief

- result of love
  - o losing something that matters
- Parable
  - o depth of fathers grief evident in overwhelming joy of celebration
- own experience
  - o intensity of experience God feels for us

- process we come to in prayer
  - o grief needs to pierce our hearts
  - o shed tears
  - o see with Gods eyes
- Challenge: get numb
  - o to worlds problems
  - o to neighbours problems
- Prayer – changes us

### 3. Forgiveness

- Parable:
  - o father runs *“filled with compassion” v20*
  - o father went out to older son *“pleaded with him” v28*
  - o father chooses to take no offense to *angry words of v29-30*
- unconditional
  - o heart empty of self-seeking
- climbing over the wall
  - o of arguments, angry feelings, hurts
  - o about you, not other person being remorseful

- remember who I am – forgiveness received
  - o we are that beloved child
  - o when I receive that embrace

#### 4. Generosity

- Parable:
  - o father gives on departure
  - o showers with gifts on return
  - o keeps nothing for himself – *“everything I have is yours” v31*
  - o completely gives himself away
  - o all boundaries of patriarchal behaviour are broken through
- Giving myself to my brothers & sisters is a mark of a true disciple
  - o keeping nothing for myself
  - o can be generous to friend/spouse but usually keep things for ourselves
  - o *prodigal son misused it*
  - o Story of tramping boots

#### Conclusion:

Each small step in this direction is a movement from fear to love

Grief, Forgiveness, Generosity

- ways the image of the father can grow in me

Emptiness of spiritual fatherhood

- no power, no success, no popularity, no easy satisfaction

But

- place of true freedom – nothing left to lose

Illustration:

- junior youth leader
- kayaking trip – kayaking a passion
- Moment in life:
  - o little choice can make a big difference
- silence
- his decision, miss him, thanks for letting me know
- My heart leapt – he was seated in church
- giving time to youth vs self-interest

- A step on the journey towards becoming “like the father”

Time to reflect on Painting

Shall we pray