

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, March 27th, Lent IV
Joshua 5:9-12, Psalm 32, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Today the parable of the prodigal son. Jesus tells this after being accused of eating with tax collectors and sinners.

It is an oversimplification, but we move away from God perhaps from for two reasons. The ones who condemn because they think they are better and don't need God and those who think they are beyond God's help.

We are both one time or another and maybe that is the point. That our care for others comes from a realization that we need community and relationship as much as the community needs us so it's both and.

There is the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector from Luke chapter 18 verses 9 to 14. Two men went up the temple to pray, one a pharisee and the other a tax collector. The pharisee standing by himself was praying thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other people thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give a tenth of all my income. But the tax collector standing far off would not even look up to heaven but was beating his breast and saying God be merciful to me a Sinner. I tell you this man went down to his home justified rather than the other for all who exalt themselves will be humbled but all who humble themselves will be exalted.

So, there are times when we act like the pharisee or the tax collector or one or the other of the brothers.

Anthony de Mello in his book the Song of the Bird tells another parable that relates to the prodigal son.

Jesus began to teach in parables. He said:

The Kingdom of God is like two brothers who were called by God to give up all they had and serve humanity.

The older responded to the call generously, though he had to wrench his heart from his family and the girl he loved and dreamed of marrying. He eventually went off to a distant land where he spent himself in the service of the poorest of the poor. A persecution arose in that country, and he was arrested, falsely accused, tortured, and put to death.

And the Lord said to him, well done good and faithful servant you gave me a thousand talents worth of service. I shall now give you a billion, billion talents worth of reward enter into the joy of your Lord.

The younger boy's response to the call was less than generous. He decided to ignore it and go ahead and marry the girl he loved. He enjoyed a happy married life, his business prospered, and he became famous and rich. Occasionally he would give alms to the poor.

And when it was his turn to die, the Lord said to him, well done good and faithful servant you have given me 10 talents worth of service. I shall give you a billion, billion talents worth of reward enter into the joy of your Lord.

The older boy was surprised when he heard that his brother was to get the same reward as he. And he was pleased. He said Lord knowing this as I do if I were to be born and lived my life again I would still do exactly what I did for you.

It has been said that the Parable of the Prodigal Son is really about the Forgiving Father. How do you respond to this loving, merciful and forgiving God?

Amen