**June 16th 2024 Third Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: Luke 15:11-32** 0560

**Theme: Two Types of Brothers.**

May the grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus our Savior grant unto each of us repentance unto life. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: Throughout the four Gospels, our Savior taught the people through many parables. The very fact that He said that He was teaching thereby shows unto us that there is a lesson which may be learned from them for each of us. There are many memorable and beloved parables which Jesus spoke, and which we teach our children. We never forget them and the lessons we learn from them seem to be endless. One such parable is the parable of the Good Samaritan. We learn of Christian compassion upon our neighbor, which is all men, and even compassion for our enemies. This compassion extends far beyond just helping our neighbor in his body, though that is certainly included. Primarily it is showing compassion to them by showing unto them the whole will and Law of God, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. In so doing, like the Samaritan, we go unto them, bind up their wounds, and provide care for them continually even if we may be parted from them in the form of a congregation and minister. Today, we consider another parable, probably the most well known and most beloved of all the parables of Jesus. It is a parable which is fitting today, on Father’s Day, for it presents to us the example of our Father in heaven, to which all fathers on earth should strive.

Today’s parable, and the text under consideration is the parable of the prodigal son. Very often, because a parable or a story is so well known, a Christian can be susceptible to passing over it with little consideration of the teaching contained therein. However, we would do well to meditate upon such a parable, knowing that Jesus, our very Lord and Savior, uttered it for the purpose of teaching us. Truly this parable in particular holds many and great lessons for us all. John says in his Gospel: *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* These words are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and say very pointedly, that all those things included in the Gospels are written for our benefit, for our eternal salvation. It is then that we have been given a treasure beyond anything we might imagine. It imparts to us the riches of heaven itself. Can we then pass over these words without meditating upon them? Can we do without the inward digestion of these words and parables? Obviously we cannot afford to be without or lose the priceless treasure given to us here today. With these things in mind let us look at the parable of the prodigal son and see two types of brothers. Our text for today is found in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke beginning at verse eleven.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O Lord God almighty, Thou who dost have mercy upon us, who dost welcome us terrible sinners back into Thy family with true and lasting forgiveness for our riotous living, who dost send unto us Thy Word to cause us to come to ourselves in true sorrow over sin, and realization of the vanity of the things of this present world, and turning us to faith in Thee. Grant us this very thing all our days, though it may cause in us a certain amount of suffering in this life, for we do know that we look for things eternal and hope in the life to come. Teach us, O Lord, as Christians, not to look upon our newly converted brothers and sisters as lesser Christians, or people less worthy to receive Thy grace in Christ, but ever and always to rejoice with exceeding joy when one sinner repents and believes in Thee, just as the angels of heaven do rejoice. Let us rejoice that though he was dead, he is alive again, and though he was lost he is found. Finally do we pray that Thou wouldst return soon to bring us all home unto Thyself in heaven. Hasten that day, O Lord God, and grant that we may receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. We bring these petitions unto Thee in the name of our dear Savior. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us see two types of brothers:

1. **One, converted late.** We read verses eleven through twenty four of our text: **read verses here.** Our Savior opens the parable by giving an idea of one son, the younger, who desired from his father his inheritance early. We want to keep in mind that a parable is a story told to teach a higher, spiritual lesson. Here the younger son asks for the blessing of his father, who is God the Father, and takes that blessing and departs from his Father. This is the story of all men, for all men are sinners, but it also is parallel to those who depart from the faith when they are young, having received instruction from their parents, yea from God Himself, but who yet despise those gifts and depart from God to go and live far from Him. This son also represents those who had never, as yet, received the truth of God in Christ and live their lives apart from Him. This son wastes away the blessing of God with riotous living, later Jesus saying that he had gone in unto harlots, but includes also feasting, being a drunk, the life of partying as it would be called today. There are many who find themselves in this same life today, living for their flesh, living to fulfill the lusts of their flesh: all manner of sexual sins, drinking until drunk, drugs, among many other things. Let us turn to the book of Galatians, chapter 5, and read verses 19-21: **read passages here.** This is the age old story of the life of unbelief, whether that person is in unbelief having fallen away from the faith, or never having received the gift of faith to begin with. In both cases their lives are corrupt through sin, and they waste all their substance with riotous living. This is not just wasting all their money on booze, harlots and the like, but wasting their good name, losing respect, losing the trust of their friends and family, silencing their own conscience, wasting their time of grace. They lose the precious gift of hope, of comfort, of forgiveness and peace in Christ Jesus. They lose a great deal in this sort of life. It is no secret that at one time this is the same sort of life I led, and others here have led. A life of lost substance. A life of sin leading to death. Let us turn to Psalm 10, and read there verses 2-11: **read passages here.** This description is quite accurate for it reflects the living for self that consumes a person of unbelief. They ever live for the next thrill, the next fulfillment of their evil and wicked lust, ever increasing, ever unsatisfying. It is never enough, and they will harm anyone who stands in their way.

However, this sort of life will always lead to poverty. We hear in Proverbs: *“The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead. He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.” (Prov. 21:16-17)***.** Now it is our experience that often very wicked people are not at all in poverty, but live very well. However, again this parable and much of Scripture teach eternal things, not temporal, and here it is the same. He had nothing left, he was in poverty of soul. You see the longer a person remains in such a life of sin, the more dark his heart becomes. His life brings him to entire poverty of morality. For example, after a while, pornography will no longer offer the same satisfaction as it once did, and the sinner will turn to harlotry, but again that loses its satisfaction, he then turns to incest or homosexuality, but again it is not enough, and he turns to rape or pedophilia. It is a constant progression, and this is where the younger son now finds himself. Destitute of any morality whatsoever, without God, without God’s Word, with no food for His soul, and he clings to anything that might satisfy his hunger even if it be an empty husk. Very often men, when they reach this point will turn to anything that resembles hope, that resembles food for their soul. Thus, they buy into all sorts of spiritual perversions such as cults, to psychology, to fortune telling, consulting the dead, and the like. It appears to be help, it appears to be spiritual food, but is nothing but an empty husk, with no substance and offering nothing real.

However, it is in these low moments that God can finally perform the necessary work on a soul, that could not be done previously, because now the soul has been emptied. The text says that the younger son came to himself, which is the Law of God awaking in him sorrow over his sin, and the Gospel engendering faith in his heart. At this low moment, when he was grasping at straws, God came to him with the life saving Word and changed everything for him. The conversion to faith is the very thing that makes it possible for him to come unto the Father, as he does, and receive forgiveness for all he has done. Yes he had grieved his Father sore, yes he had wasted much of his own time of grace, yes he sinned and is no longer worthy to be called a son, but the wonderful part of this story is that it matters not any longer, for his Father receives him again into his family, and more than that grants unto him all the best of what he has. In the same way those who are converted as adults, or those who have fallen away and are received again, have their sins forgiven and receive of God great and glorious gifts. We are adopted again as sons of God, given liberty, granted forgiveness, our Father puts His arms around us, the angels in heaven rejoice, and we receive the salvation of our souls. What a great and glorious parable. It teaches that no matter who you were, no matter what you have done, no matter how deceived and blind you were, no matter how lost you were, no matter how dead your soul was, God can make all things new and receive you again through the preaching of the Gospel. Let us never forget His patience, His long suffering, His mercy, and His grace, for they are great. Thus we see two types of brothers, one converted late, and:

1. **One, a faithful servant.** We read verses twenty five through thirty two of our text: **read verses here.** Now Jesus turns our attention to the older son. He was out in the field when his brother came home, and heard the celebration taking place and found out all that had occurred. It is noteworthy that this son was faithfully about His Father’s business. He, by the grace of his Father, did not live according to his flesh, but denied the lusts of the flesh in favor of living to serve his Father. This brother represents all Christians who, from their infancy have believed and served God. There are many among us who are as this older brother, and we must note here that Jesus is not attempting to disparage the faithful older brother, but rather speaks to the old man which still clings to him. Many very faithful Christians often wonder to themselves, proceeding from their flesh, why it is that those who come late to faith receive the same forgiveness and the same salvation, and that there is rejoicing in heaven over their conversion. Jesus is using this parable to teach the Christian to rejoice along with heaven over every sinner that repents, for it is joyous. But notice also how the father in the parable addresses this brother as “son.” He does not rebuke his son, but simply reminds him of all the continued blessings that he has and has been privileged to have enjoyed over the years. This is something that we, as Christians, should keep in mind, for we have week after week and year after year, the privilege of eating at the Father’s abundant table, eating of the abundance of the Father’s blessings. We receive His Word, His sacraments, sitting at His feet and ever learning of the grace of God in Christ. We are constantly assured of the forgiveness of our sins, of peace with God and peace of conscience, of the hope of eternal life. These are not small things, but great treasures of the bounty of God’s hand. Let us not forget what God has done and continues to do for us, and in remembering these things, it becomes no great task at all to rejoice that others also receive these same benefits, the benefits we have enjoyed over many years. Let us turn to Psalm 103, and read there verses 1-12: **read passages here.** Beyond this the father came out to him and lovingly shows unto him the truth of the situation. And he explains to the son that it is fitting that there should be joy for the younger brother was dead and is alive again, he was lost is found. These words should cheer our hearts, knowing that another soul has been rescued from sin, death, and the devil and will be taken to live eternally with us and with our wondrous and gracious God.

Let us then remember all the things that the Father has done and continues to do for us day after day, and how abundantly we have received at his hand all good things. And let us rejoice with His angels over every sinner that repents and believes the Gospel of Jesus Christ and is rescued from his life of sin and turned to a life of faith, forgiveness, and salvation. Let us thank God whether we were converted later in life, or if we received the blessings of the Father in infant baptism and have faithfully served Him for many years, for both have been saved and are brothers and sisters of one another and of their Savior Jesus Christ, creating a heavenly family to be united together forevermore in heaven. Amen.