

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 36 Sunday 09 September_2018.

Background text READ Luke 15: **God's household and two sons.**

This year we are exploring what it means to become truly, fully human and to bring glory to God. (In such a statement we are already linking together in relationship God and human beings as a foundation about what we want to say about being human).

(PP2) Last two times I spoke was on the metaphor God the Potter and Human Clay Pots and last week on the metaphor of us as the vessels in God's Household.

Metaphors and other devises e.g. Parables are used throughout the Bible to illustrate truths about God and God's relationship with people. Other metaphors of "lostness" in Luke 15: Shepherd and sheep; Father and child; God the woman and the lost dowry coin.

Today we are focussing on the metaphor in the Parable generally called "The Prodigal Son" which in parable depicts God as Father and 2 sons who behave very differently from one another as regards their responsibilities to their father and their inheritance.

Last week we said that: Human identity is closely linked to knowing our purpose – God given. (*Chief purpose to glorify God and enjoy God forever...Presbyterians*)

Paul to Timothy (2 Tim 2) clear and strong advice: **v19 "All who say that they belong to the Lord must turn away from wrong doing"**. To me this reads as an imperative – something we must do. Also, according to Paul, a sign of being fully mature as a human person is **having left behind your particular youthful passions**, (no explanation of what these are) - being able to let God help us to control and direct our strong feelings. This is certainly part of the parable of the prodigals.

(PP3) In the case of at least one of the sons there is REPENTANCE – a change of mind, heart and actions. We are told that the son who left home and went far away – **v17 Came to himself – (came to his senses TEV).**

This parable can enable us to reflect on our attitudes and behaviour choices and about being fully human.

JESUS told this parable cos the Pharisees and Scribes were grumbling about his eating and associating with the outcasts from respectable Jewish society. Caird calls these people the renegades.

The Parable of the "Lost Son" is really about TWO SONS and the self-righteous son, who stayed at home and was so angry about the returning younger brother and the party that was held is surely meant to speak to the Pharisees and us about our attitudes especially when the outcasts and renegades return to God's household.

In our year's theme of: Becoming Human Giving Glory we see that the younger son uses his capacity to choose to ask for his property inheritance early (which was permitted - *Deuteronomy 21: 17 First born 2/3 of estate and second son 1/3*) but after a few days he decides to sell it, take the cash and opt out of the family business. He both leaves home but also goes "far away" and wastes the money on "reckless living". Basically, he squanders it all and there's nothing left. Also, a famine hits the land and he

takes-up working for a citizen of the city as a pig man (not exactly an admire occupation for a Jew). He is starving, and no kindness is shown to him. He remembers that even his father's servants are treated better than this. As he comes to his senses he decides on an action plan:

(PP4) I will get up, go to my father, and confess – *Father I have sinned against God and you*". Essentially, I will throw myself on Father's mercy.

Response from the father is very clear – recognizing his son in the distance he rushes to meet and welcome him home...

Response from the elder brother return from the fields is one of anger and accusation and a refusal to join in the celebration. He is full of resentment against his father not just his brother. He accuses his brother of using his inheritance on prostitutes (maybe he accuses his brother of the sins he commits in his own imagination) and accuses his father of treating him unfairly and not giving him anything. He opts out at this point of the celebration and refuses to enter the house. Basically, he is obviously not enjoying being who he is/ has become.

Response of the father to the elder brother (who has been "obedient" not disobedient) – he comes out to speak to him and he speaks in a kind way: he tells him that he still has his full inheritance and that they have always been together. He calls upon the elder brother to recognize that he's got his brother back as he has his son back.

Remember this is JESUS telling us this parable (some say it's his best known and best loved – but I guess most people don't know the detail of it).

What can we learn about Becoming Human and also the relationship of God with people? **Both brothers are selfish and self centred – they are incapable of imagining or reflecting on how their father felt.** He harangues his father and shows his real attitude to his father. He disowns his brother calling him, "this son of yours" and his father gently reminds him "this your brother was dead and is alive, was lost and is found".

This parable (according to Caird) was told *not to offer a generous pardon to the nation's prodigals, but to entreat respectable Jews to rejoice with God over the restoration of sinners, and to warn them, until they learn to do this, they would remain estranged from their heavenly father and pitifully ignorant of his true character*". **God always flavours justice with mercy. Barclay calls this "The parable of the loving father" (PP5)**

"He came to himself" (Greek) Jesus inferred that as long as a person is away from God they are not fully themselves- but that in "coming home" to God he becomes himself/ herself. (So, coming to his right mind is a bit like the Gadarene demoniac sitting clothed and in his right mind).

The father in the parable did not take the younger son as a day labourer (hireling) or even a household slave but he gave him a robe, a ring, shoes and killed the fated calf. He covered his shame and gave him identity and place – for all to see and rejoiced as a household. This is the MERCY OF GOD. The one who was dead is alive, the one who was lost is found.

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God is the waiting father – waiting for us. The father took the initiative with BOTH brothers. He went out to both and was kind to both. The elder brother will still inherit the farm.

The question JESUS leaves us with is: will the elder brother enter in and share the Father's joy at the return of his lost brother or will he exclude himself?

This question leads us into the invitation to join the celebration of **the LORD'S Supper** – will we join the Father around his table and sit with all the others who come?