

April 24, 2017
A Family Reunion
Luke 15:11-24

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.

¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.'

²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends. I was glad when they said unto me let us go into the house of the Lord. Why was I glad?

- Because there is room in the Lord's House
- Because there is peace in the Lord's House
- Because there is praise in the Lord's House

But Pastor Carol how can you say there is room, and peace and praise in the Lord's House? I can say it with certainty because I brought it with me.

- I brought my praise for I need to tell Him every day that He is Lord.
- I brought my peace because Jesus gave it to me and you can't take it away.
- I brought room in my heart for all those who are seeking first the kingdom of God.

If you have any idea what I am talking about then make some noise for God. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Today the writers of the David C. Cook Commentary are challenging us with another parable of Jesus. This is a parable recorded only in the gospel of Luke. And it is a familiar parable, for most of us know v 24

²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

The title given for the lesson was **A Family Reunion**. The more I studied and researched the text; the more I tried to hear from the text the message that we needed the more I returned to the rest of the story. Feel free to join me in the 15th chapter of Luke as I read the rest of the story in the NIV.

²⁵“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, ‘Look! 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. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Now looking at the entire parable would you prayerfully consider this title:

IT WILL BE A REUNION WHEN WE ALL GET HOME!

SHALL WE PRAY!

Father God we your people have been influenced by those who have gone on before us. We have used our religious imagination to create a heaven where we are all reunited and gathered around your throne. We have tried to explain and imagine the unexplainable and the unimaginable. But Father, you have told us that there are things we must do here on earth before that time can arrive. You have told us to avoid some things, to forgive some things, to wait on other things. Abba, I ask you to allow me to speak a word on your behalf: a word that helps us to avoid, to forgive, and to wait and to do. In the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen and Amen.

IT WILL BE A REUNION WHEN WE ALL GET HOME!

I have no memory of a family reunion held by the Jamieson (my father) or the Mullen (my mother) side of the family. But I do have a memory of hearing the doorbell ring and seeing a man standing with his back to the door when I peeked thru a crack in the curtain. The man was colored (we had not become black, yet), he was tall, over 6 ft. He wore a watchman cap and a pea coat and his hands were in his pockets as he stood with his back to the door looking out at the street.

I went into the kitchen to respond to Martha Ann's question of who is at the door. "I don't know", I said. I didn't have to say he was colored for that would not have been news (there just were no white people ringing our doorbell except on Saturday when the insurance man came to collect) but I did say he was tall and big and I had not seen him before.

Momma wiped her hands and went to the door. She too peeked through the curtain, but when she saw the man, she opened the door and began to cry, and laugh, and wring her hands all at the same time. My brother, her son was home! I have no memory of a family reunion but I remember when my brother returned from his time as a guest of the state.

IT WILL BE A REUNION WHEN WE ALL GET HOME!

Peaches was my favorite cousin. He was about 4 years older than me and sometimes I would get to stay with him when Momma and Aunt Elnora, his mother were both busy. We played cards, shot marbles, and he told me jokes that I did not always understand but he was trustworthy and honest and in my mind fearless. But the government took him away, too. He was a guest of the United States Armed Forces and he saw action in Viet Nam. While he was gone we were incomplete as a family but when he returned we were still incomplete. The horrors of death and destruction took his good dreams and turned them into nightmares. It would be over 30 years before he would get the help he needed to turn his life around and come home.

IT WILL BE A REUNION WHEN WE ALL GET HOME!

These two men are just a slice of what has happened to our men, our black men in America. Many of them left home to find their piece of the American dream. Many of them took what little their fathers could scrap together to give them and left. Left for greener pastures of money, and get rich quick schemes and an upward mobile crowd, that often landed them in jail. Others left to see the world, earn their GI bill so they could come home and go to college and get their piece of the pie. But all too often the men that returned were not the men we sent away.

IT WILL BE A REUNION WHEN WE ALL GET HOME!

For the past few months I have been working at one of our local high schools. I have been so surprised at the manner of dress of our young men, most of whom are black, that I stayed late one afternoon and read the school

dress code. The dress code for the young women was very traditional but the young men were granted the leeway to wear their pants up to one hand width below their waist, yet at the same time they may not show underwear. What I observed was that very few teachers in the math wing were even attempting to enforce these rules. Well, if the school is not teaching and the parents are not teaching or observing then whose job is it to reach the “least of these”?

IT WILL BE A REUNION WHEN WE ALL GET HOME!

“There was a church that had two different kinds of sons.

One group of sons left the church because it did seem to apply to them.

They wanted what the world had to offer and so that went to the world.

The church talked about their leaving; the church lamented their leaving; but no one contacted them to find out how they could help them come home.

While that first group of sons were out in the world they got caught up in a drug culture; a sex trafficking culture; they fathered children but did not know to parent them; they quit school because they did not know how to study. They lost their hope and their dreams and when they wanted to come back to church, the church did not know how to welcome them. For the church was not expecting them to come back and had not prepared a reentry program.

Then there are the sons who stayed home. If they were not careful they could easily become jealous of all the conversation occurring around the absent sons. They had found a place that was comfortable for them in the church, but no one was teaching them how to help bring their brothers back to the church. No one was teaching them because no one was thinking about how it might be done, or even if it needed to be done. It was as if the church thought that because they are **here** they are ok. It was as if the church thought they had built a wall around them and the outside could not creep in.

Finally one day two of the sons returned home. One had seen the horrors of the Armed Forces and another had seen the horror of a drug culture designed to take his mind

and ultimately his life. One had been a guest of the federal government and the other was on his way to being a guest of state. Their only hope was in the church.

Our challenge today and going forward is to find ways to relate to and bring our men back home. We need to explain to them the significances of acceptable dress. We need to teach them appropriate language. We need to let them know thru our personal testimonies that everything that looks good and feels good and taste good is not good for you. We need to be standing at the door and glazing out the window week after, month after month, year after year and when we see them walking up the path greet them with a “welcome home” “not a pull up your pants”.

Yet don't forget about the sons who stayed at home with us.

Every opportunity you have to praise and encourage is to be seized.

IT WILL BE A REUNION WHEN WE ALL GET HOME!