

“Feast”

Sermon for March 31, 2019

Joshua 5:9-12, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21,

Luke 15:25-32

And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

Romans 4:5, English Standard Version

You remember what we did when we were younger and knew we messed up and had to “eat humble pie.” The son gave the little speech he had been practicing all the way back:

Father I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

But the father called back to his servants and said --

‘Bring out the best robe, and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. Bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us feast and celebrate; for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found. They began to celebrate.

This is our story. Christ calls us back to God. We

were made by God, created by God, God’s life was

breathed into us at birth as it was breathed into the

first human beings. We were not and are not

strangers to God, even though we may have been or

may still be estranged. The story of the prodigal is

our story. The end of the story is always the same. God stands in anticipation of declaring over us—

This daughter, this son lost their way, but now have found it again. Let us celebrate, let's have a party, let's have a feast. Give him dress apparel with the best accessories, and prepare the best food, the best drink, for we are having a party, everybody's rejoicing, dancing to the music and embracing the one who has come to her or himself.

The Gospel tells us that in the midst of his disgrace and brokenness, he came to himself. Returning to God is returning to our true selves. Returning to God is rediscovering our humanity. Returning to God is returning to the humanity and sacred worth of others. Returning to God is returning to the feast. Suddenly Luke shifts spotlight to the older brother, who instead of being a part of the celebration – was out working in the field. God deliver us from man-made religion. God deliver us from works righteousness, whereby we think we can earn God's love, earn God's favor, create God's grace.

The older brother was a paragon of virtue – the over-achiever –

- By the time he was two years old, he had potty trained himself and learned his ABCs
 - By THREE, he was tagging along with his father, trying to help with the chores
 - By the time he turned FIVE, he was carrying his own weight
 - At EIGHT he could run a team of mules and plow an acre a day
 - By the time he turned TWELVE and celebrated his Bar-Mitzvah, he was, in effect, managing the whole farm
- He was definitely not happy at all that his younger brother, had returned and been received with a feast. He became angry and refused to go inside. He was unable to join the feast of life. We remember the famous line from the play “Auntie Mame”—
Life is a banquet, but most poor suckers are starving to death.

God’s response is always the same—you could and can join the party with me whenever you like, but you choose the law, the work, the self-made religion that leads only to anger, envy, frustration and

jealousy. Now that I have reminded you—Don't miss the party. It's a simple message. Galatians 5:14-15:

14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Once we who are busy striving and struggling and being so serious with God get the message, we, too will join the feast. To the One who is the life of the party and calls us to life in all its fullness. Amen.