

March 9th – Tuesday

Centering Breath Prayer: Celebrate, O Lord...for the lost is found.

Compassionate Lord, I come today with fresh eyes and an open heart to continue the journey of love. May I find a new perspective through the love of the Father in whose name, I pray. Amen.

Scriptures: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Key Verses: Luke 15:20, 24:

(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. (24) ‘For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate” (NIV).

The stage is set for act two and the return of the younger son. He is prepared to abase himself in order to partake of his father’s bounty. But his father sees him coming from a long way off and runs to greet him with great joy. The father doesn’t even listen to the son’s prepared speech. The father is so glad to have him back he doesn’t care what he did with his money or his decisions, only that he is back home. Not only does he celebrate with laughter and joy, he puts his best coat and a ring on his son and calls for a feast with their friends and neighbors. The father responds with overwhelming generosity. Now, in the midst of this wild celebration comes the stay-at-home son. He has been the dutiful, self-sacrificing son. Does he rejoice with his father over the homecoming of the younger son? Of course not! He hasn’t got a forgiving bone in his body! All he can think about is how dutiful he’s been without any special favors and his spendthrift brother is getting more attention! If his brother has used up his inheritance, too bad, he deserves his ill fate, let him starve! All he can do is whine about the lack of celebrations he has had while staying home as the dutiful son. He wants justice, not mercy and grace.

But the father, oh the loving father! His son was dead to him. A son he had cherished and loved from infancy had left, leaving no word of his whereabouts or his welfare. The father had mourned him like he had died. There was never any anger or division about which son he loved more. He just missed the one who had left and had, absolutely had to celebrate his return. He didn’t want to slight the other son, he always loved him and would give him all that he had. But, he hadn’t expected to see the lost son again. He could do nothing else. His heart was full to overflowing with love and he needed to celebrate. Did either son really get it? Did either son change his self-serving ways? Did either one receive the loving spirit which the father was offering? We are not really told. Yes, we hear the words of the younger son, “*Father, I have sinned against you and am no longer worthy to be called your son.*” But, does “*coming to himself*” really constitute a new perspective or just a realigning into a new self-serving attitude? He had certainly suffered. And he had been lavishly welcomed home. But where is he going from here? What kind of life will he live now?

Where do we find ourselves within this story? Are we aching to take the money and run? Are we out there on our own caught up in things from a “human point of view” as we will explore in another scripture passage yet this week? Are we eating pods with

the pigs? Are we on our way home? Are we in the embrace of return? Are we at the party? And where do we go from here? Perhaps, instead of the prodigal, we find ourselves in tune with the other son, the one who never left home, feeling left out and unloved. Is there room for a new view in our lives then? Can we leave our “self” view behind us so that we move into a view which embraces the love of the father?

In the story Jesus told, neither son recognized the reality of what already existed. Everything was already theirs. In reality – in God’s perspective – no one gets what they deserve, everyone gets treated with lavish generosity; even the servants have more than enough. In the world of the father, no one makes it all on his own. It’s an inheritance, we don’t build our own life. Our life and all that we have is a gift. All that the father has is ours. Neither son really talked to the father. They only made statements based on their own “human or worldly point of view.” The sons lived in the world of a loving, giving and rich abundance, a world that welcomed them, and yet they lived as refugees and paupers. How do we live? What’s our perspective of the Christ and one another? As we continue love’s triumphant journey, let’s also continue to probe this new perspective, one in which we live in the world of a loving, generous, welcoming father and can, in turn, become just like him.

Questions for reflection and/or journaling:

There are a number of questions posed within the body of the message. Use any or all of them for your reflection and/or journaling today.

Suggestions for action:

Put yourself into the story. There are several perspectives you might choose: the father, the older son, the younger son, the servants, the guests at the celebration. You may want to use more than one perspective, one at a time, of course, to see where you fit. What works today may be different from yesterday or tomorrow.

Precious Father, how can I ever thank you enough for the love you have lavished upon me? As we travel love’s triumphant journey, I realize that the whole journey is wrapped up in your love for me and for the rest of this world. I was lost, but now am found. I was dead but now I am alive because of Jesus. I can never, ever repay the debt I owe. The younger son may not have gotten the message, but I have. In the name of the loving Father I offer these words. Amen.