



Lost + Found Reflections—Week 3:

Celebrate



I firmly believe that Christians should know how to party.

Joy is an essential part of our faith. Jesus even said the reason why he came was so that our joy might be complete. I am not sure how we got the reputation for being stogy or overly serious, but if you have been here even one Sunday, you could probably tell that I am doing all I can to change that reputation.

Joy and celebration are at the heart of the story of the prodigal son. **Many people assume the word “prodigal”, means wayward, lost or bad, but actually the word prodigal means extravagant or lavish.** Some people argue that we should stop calling this story the story of the “prodigal son” because it puts the emphasis on his mistakes rather than the grace of the father. Given the actual definition many have said we should call this the story of the prodigal father. Because the **father is lavish with his love, forgiveness, and if you notice, with his stuff, too.**

The father has already given his youngest son half of all he owns, and his son has squandered it. Most of us are moved by the fact that as the son is returning the father

runs to embrace and forgive him before the son can even apologize. But did you notice **what happens next? The father throws a party.** He gets his youngest, the nicest robe he owns, slaps a ring on him, and calls for them to cook their finest meat.

This parable is not comparing prodigal versus prudent. If you compare the younger son with the father (or especially the older son) you begin to see that **it is not a cautionary tale about avoiding lavishness, it is a story about where to place your extravagance.** What is really worth a party or the nicest things you have? It is our loving relationship with God that deserves our best and most lavish giving.

The Bible talks about offering “first fruits” to God. That is because at the harvest the first fruits are the best. Often though when people think about charity, they give the leftovers. I am confident God is grateful for all of his gifts but **this life-saving, world-changing, eternal love of God... well maybe it deserves something a little more prodigal.**

Lost and Found: Special Focus Scripture

For this series we have a theme of the story of the prodigal Son from Luke 15:11-32. Today we're focusing especially on the bolded section below.

Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them.

A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound."

Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."



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The Rev. Les Carpenter
St. Aidan's Episcopal Church