

Saint Thomas' Church  
Trinity IX  
August 18,2019  
rmcneely+  
thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine

Today we resume the Trinity Summer Survey of Christian  
Doctrine with probably the most well known  
of Jesus' 30 parables: the Prodigal Son.  
We all know the story well  
and instantly recognize it from its opening verse.

But less well known are the circumstances that led Jesus to give it  
to us.

The Prodigal Son is actually one of three parables  
that Jesus told in series to the Pharisees that day.  
Each one to demonstrate the forgiveness of God  
Each one involved loss and recovery  
Each one ended with the joy of renewal and recovery.  
Each one involving increasing value in that which was lost

It was a time when the troubled Pharisees  
were attempting to bate Jesus  
into saying or doing something  
that would form the basis  
for his prosecution.

This time they were pointing out  
that Jesus spent time with the poor,  
the outcasts of Jewish society.  
He even took meals with them. The Pharisees said Jesus must be  
one of them if He spent so much time there.  
“guilt by association” that they hoped would reduce His  
followers or at least make them question who He was.

All three parables were to the same object:  
God's forgiveness knows no bounds  
He celebrates the repentance of a single sinner.

Jesus was showing the Pharisees that His time with the outcasts  
Was the mission of God  
To save mankind  
To save sinners from themselves and from the Devil.

History documents that the Pharisees were not persuaded.  
Our prayer is that Jesus will be more successful with us.

I have had the privilege of preaching on the Prodigal Son parable  
Every year for the last 6 years and a few times before that.  
Good preaching demands fresh approaches  
So this year  
I thought we'd look at the parable  
from a different angle.

We know the people in the Parable  
The Father represents God  
The older brother represents the Pharisees and also us  
The prodigal represents sinners of all sorts.

We know the sins of the Prodigal  
He crudely demands his inheritance in such a fashion  
as if to seek  
the premature death of his father.  
He seeks to leave the heaven like state  
Of life with his father  
With God.  
He turns his back on God and walks away.

He does nothing with the inheritance to glorify God  
Instead, he selfishly spends the inheritance of God  
On himself  
He squanders it in waste and ruin.

We know the major thrust of the parable  
The unlimited love and forgiveness of God

This morning I want to explore another  
More subtle aspect of the parable.

To do so, let me tell you a story:  
A young man was graduating from university.

His family was of wealth and threw a great party to celebrate.

The son thought he deserved  
And was entitled to an expensive gift from his father.  
He set upon an expensive foreign sports car  
And made his demand quite clear.

At the party,  
His father presented him a beautifully wrapped box.

Perplexed, the young man opened it  
And found a leather Bible  
Inscribed with the young man's name in gold.  
Gilt edged pages  
A thing of beauty.

The son was incensed.  
He had asked for and expected to receive a sports car  
He thrust the Bible at his father and railed at him  
With all your money  
You could think of giving me nothing but a Bible  
He stormed out, slamming the door behind  
His father dumbfounded, watched him leave.

The young man refused to have anything to do with his father after that.

Despite many attempts, the father could never make contact with his son.

Years past, with no contact between father and son

One day the son received word from a solicitor

His father had died leaving everything to the son.

It was months later as he was going through his father's things at the manor house

That he came upon the box

That had been his gift at the graduation party.

Without thinking

He took the Bible out and

And opened it where a red ribbon marked a passage

And as he did, Something fell from the Bible

And made a noise as it hit the floor.

He picked it up

It was a key on a key ring with a tag

naming a foreign car dealer

On it read "Paid in full, Love, Dad"

with the Son's date of graduation many years before.

It was the key to the car the boy had craved.

His father had highlighted a passage in Matthew 7:11:

"If ye then, being evil,

know how to give good gifts unto your children,

how much more shall your Father which is in heaven,

give good things to those that ask Him."

How little the son knew his father.

How little he knew the character, the generosity and love of the man.

In his pride,  
the son had squandered  
one of the most precious things on earth  
The unqualified love of a parent  
He not only denied himself, but his father.  
Wasted the last years of what their lives could have been together.

Are we sometimes like that with our Father in Heaven?  
Do we know and appreciate His love?  
His generosity?

Some say the most interesting character in Jesus' parable of the  
Prodigal Son  
Is the older brother.  
The brother, who will not join the celebration  
Will not rejoice at the return of his young sibling.  
Who remains outside, brooding.

He finally addresses his father  
Complaining that he has been faithful and dutiful  
Yet there was never so much as recognition for his service  
Not a party, no music, no dancing  
Never so much as a goat for the dinner fare.

His father replies  
God replies:  
"Son, thou art ever with me  
And all that I have is thine."

The older brother in the parable represents us, you and me.  
And God is telling us that we are ever with Him

He is ever with us  
 in prayer  
 In communion.  
 In the sacraments  
 In His Word,  
 In creation,  
     That beautifully exquisite flower  
     That dramatic sun rise  
     The moon set  
 The just right comforting word  
     at just the right time from a parent  
 The gentle touch of a lover  
 The gentle guiding hand in a moment of danger  
 The eyes of a new born baby  
 A final breath at the moment of death.  
     He is there.

Have you ever felt His presence?  
 Defying all your senses,  
 you knew that He was with you?

Are we like the young university graduate  
 who abandoned his father  
 Do we know His character and the depth of God's love?

*"All that I have is thine".*

In the parable God promises that everything He has is ours.  
 The Father makes a straightforward testamentary disposition  
     Such as you would find in a Last Will and Testament  
     Giving all that he has to the older son.  
     Promising the inheritance of all God has and is to us.

When can such a promise be fulfilled?  
 At our death?  
 Is that when we inherit all that God has?

The promise then, would have nothing to do with the material things of this life.

It must have to do with  
greater,  
timeless  
and ethereal things.

The only thing we know that we take with us  
into the next life  
is our soul.

Or might there be something else?

Is love immortal?

It certainly survives the loss of those we love.  
Do those whom we have lost maintain their love for us?  
Is heaven and immortal life  
Love fulfilled  
In perpetuity?  
Is that our inheritance from God?

Can we of this life even imagine the eternal inheritance,  
Perpetual life with God,  
Timeless Eternity in heaven?

You are with me always  
Everything I have is thine.

