

Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 2011: Out of Alignment with the Father's Love. Luke 15:25-32

We began last week to look at the story of the lost son and in doing so we focused strongly on the love of God the Father that Jesus illustrates through it. This morning we continue with the parable and as we do so we come to the climax of the story, and the climax is a party.

It's noisy and exciting with the very best food on offer. The younger son is still walking around in a state of shock. He keeps pinching himself to make sure that he is not dreaming. He returned home with dread in his heart—not sure of the welcome he would receive, if in fact there would be a welcome at all—only to be overwhelmed by his Father's acceptance, Grace, forgiveness and acts of restoration. Just days before he had been starving to death in a pig pen. Now he is surrounded again by his old friends who keep patting him on the back and telling him how lucky he is, while the old man can't stop hugging him whenever he passes by. But there is one obvious person who is not there and is not happy. His older brother.

He had been working late in the fields. Heard the party noise. Sent a servant to find out what was going on and when he heard the news about his brother's return was so angry that he refused to go into the house. He then made sure that the father knew he was there, and also knew he was cross, and waited for the father to make the next move.

And even as the Father moved so quickly towards the first son in order to pour out upon him his love, forgiveness and acceptance, so it is the Father who now goes out to find the older son. What a picture of God the Father this is. Always reaching out with His love, mercy, understanding to us, whether we are lost souls looking to be rescued; or believers out of alignment with the Father's love.

For that clearly was the position of the older son. He was in the family alright. He was greatly loved by the father. But he didn't really know the father. He felt that he did, but in reality the picture he had in his heart of his father was all wrong. Because of that wrong picture he had expectations of the father behaving in a certain way, and when the father didn't act that way—when instead of chastising the prodigal and sending him packing the father welcomes him with open arms and throws a party for him—the older brother is both confused and angry.

The reason for his attitude becomes apparent when we take a closer look at the words he spoke to his father. Just three sentences. That's all that Jesus has him saying. But those three sentences give us plenty of insight into the state of his heart.

***'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. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'***

Consider the words that really stand out here? Words that have been said in the heat of the moment but tell us so much about the way he felt.

He had lived his whole life in an effort to earn his father's love. To him it felt as though he had slaved away and received little for it. He had kept the rules—never disobeyed the father's orders. As far as he was concerned he had never been given anything like the celebration that was now happening.

He had earned the right to be treated as the most favoured son by the father and as far as he was concerned it just wasn't happening. And the very fact that the father was now happy to overlook the obvious wrongs of his brother hurt. He didn't want a father who was that fickle. Who could forgive so quickly and in doing so make him feel that his attitude to his errant brother was wrong. That he, not the prodigal, was the bad one.

He had dismissed his brother from his life and from the family. He had wiped him out because of his wrongdoing. And now when he talks about him to his father he doesn't refer to him by name, or as my brother, but as this **son of yours**.

Of course this parable was just a story that Jesus was telling, but everyone would have guessed who the older brother represented. The Pharisees and other self-righteous people. They also believed that they had earned a good standing before God because of all their hard work and keeping of the rules. To suggest, as Jesus did, that sinners could obtain that same good standing despite their blatant wrong doing from God simply by saying I'm sorry, was not only despicable but undermined the position they had worked so hard for. Yet that was clearly what Jesus was suggesting in this story. Is it any wonder that they hated Him so!

But Jesus also cared about those Pharisees and the words of the father in the story to the older brother show that the love of God the Father extends to them too. Look at verse 31

**<sup>31</sup> "My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours."**

In the story the father does not condemn his son for his attitude. In complete contrast he emphasizes his sonship and the closeness they have as father and son. You are always with me. Always in my heart. You don't have to slave away for my love—you have it already. And everything I have is yours. You can have an hundred fatted calves if you want—it's always been that way. The only restrictions have been in your mind. You have just never asked.

**<sup>32</sup> 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."**

But we had to celebrate even as we have to have mercy, compassion and grace, for that is the type of father I am. I won't change that. And though you may not think you need it, I am that way to you too. And this son of mine, as you call him, who I so readily embraced again, is also this brother of yours, who was dead and is now alive.

I'm sure we can understand where the older brother was coming from, and even sympathize with him, for we too become pharisaical and judgmental in our response to others, particularly to those who deserve such a response. It's part of our old nature that so quickly rises to the surface.

But we too need to allow God to touch our hearts with the names of those that we are treating like that even now, and to accept anew that God loves them just as much as He loves us. That despite the way they hurt Him, us, others, He loves them and cares for them as much as he does for us who serve Him so hard and so faithfully. That they too are our brother; our sister whose return to His family should be our greatest desire.

On our recent holiday I had a rather unfortunate experience. In a moment of confusion and thoughtlessness I broke a minor road rule and happened to do so under the watchful eye of a policeman. He pulled me over, explained what I had done wrong and cheerfully accepted that it had been an unintentional mistake. Indeed he was lovely, gracious, understanding and basically a happy fellow. Until the moment that he said, "I'm sorry Sir but I will have to give you an infringement notice that will result in a fine and demerit points". Then I saw him in a rather different light.

Yet in fact he was just doing his job. I had broken the rule and there was no room for compassion, or kindness, or mercy under his understanding of that situation. And he reminded me a lot of the older brother. Dad, your son has badly broken the rules. He has lost any right of appeal. There is no room for mercy and compassion here.

But what the father says and what God says is that there is always mercy and compassion with me. And I sense that in this parable the father is saying to the older son, you may feel that you haven't benefitted from my compassion, mercy and love, but you have, and you will in the future. Not to the same extent as your brother, but you have received it. Now open your heart to your brother as I have always opened my heart to you. Aligned your love for your brother with my love for him.

And that's what God wants us to do. To align our love with His. To see past the sin that is so easy to condemn to a person for whom Christ died. To love others and to show them compassion, kindness and mercy. To keep at the fore front of our thinking that such is the way God loves—even the most undeserving. And especially, that is how He has first loved us.

Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 2011: Out of Alignment with the Father's Love. Luke 15:25-32

**We began last**.....focused strongly on....**Today**..continue with....come to...climax..**PARTY**

**It's noisy &**...best food...**The younger**...still walking around...Pinching.. He returned home with dread.....only to be overwhelmed by.....

**Just days b4**....starving to...now...surrounded by old...keep patting...&telling ..**while the old**...can't stop hugging...**But**...one obvious...not...& **not** happy..

**He had been working**...**Heard**...**Sent**....& when he heard....so angry that... .refused to...**HE** then made sure...father knew....& cross....& **waited**...

**And even as** father moved so quickly....in order to pour...love,forgiveness & **So it is the**....who now goes....to find....**What a pic**...God the...this is!! Always reaching...with His love....to us...whether...lost...looking to be rescued or believers...out of alignment with

**For that**...position...of older.....**HE** was in family....Greatly loved by.....**But**.. .didn't really know the.....**He felt** that he did...but in reality...pic had in heart **-of father....all wrong**

**Because of**...that wrong...had expectations Father behaving...certain way.... **& when** father didn't—when instead of chastising...welcomes....party **→the older.....confused and angry**

**The reason for**...attitude...becomes apparent when...closer look...words he.. **Just 3** sentences...That's all Jesus had....But these 3...give insight...state of..

***'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. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'***

**Consider**...words that really stand out...Words said..heat of...but tell so much...**Way he felt**

**He**...lived whole life...effort to earn....**To him** it felt....slaved...received little.. **He**..kept rules....**As far** as he concerned...never been given anything like...

**He**..earned right...to be treated as most favoured by...just wasn't happening  
**And**...very fact...father now happy...to overlook.....**hurt**...**He didn't want**..  
A Father..that fickle...**Who** could forgive so quickly....and in doing....  
..make him feel...his attitude to....was wrong....**That he**...not...bad one

**He had** dismissed...his...life & family...**Wiped him**...because of ...wrongdoing  
**& now**...when..talks to his...about...doesn't refer....**but** as this son of yours

**Of course this par...**just a story...but everyone...guessed who...represented  
**The Pharisees** &....**THEY** also believed.....had earned a good standing b4..  
..because of.....**TO** suggest as Jesus did....sinners could attain..simply by..  
**Not only despicable**....but undermined position...worked so hard for

**But Jesus also cared**...those Pharisees...**& words** of Father to....show....  
Love of.....extends to them to....**Look at v31**

<sup>31</sup> ***"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.***

**In the story**....father does not condemn...IN complete contrast...emphasizes  
his sonship....**closeness** they have as...**You**..always with...**Always** in my

**You don't have**..slave...for my love—you have...already...**&** everything I....  
You can have a 100 fatted....always been that way...**The** only restrictions...  
...been in your mind.....**Just never asked**..

<sup>32</sup> ***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.***"

**But we had to**...even as...have to have mercy...for that...type of Father I am  
I wont change...**And tho you**...think you don't need...I am that way to you..  
**And** this son of mine....who I so readily embraced...**is also** this brother of..

**I'm sure we**...understand where....coming from.....**for** its human nature to  
Become pharisaical...judgmental in our response....**partic to**...who deserve

**But we too**...need to allow God...to touch our hearts....names...treating like that.....**To accept** anew...God loves them...just as much as....loves us

**That despite**..hurt Him...us/others....He loves &...for them..as much as He...  
.for us...**serve** Him so hard....faithfully...**That** they too....our brother/sister  
..**whose return** into...God's family....our greatest desire...

**That older boy**...felt that his brother...had broken the rules...and....  
**No** room for compassion...kindness.....mercy...**Loss** any right of appeal

**But what**...Father says.....what God says....always compassion & mercy with  
me,,,,**And I sense**...that in this.....father saying to....you may feel...you  
haven't needed.....to benefit from....but you have.....

**Now open**...heart to your.....as I ...always opened my...to you  
**Aligned** your love for your brother....**with my** love for him...and for you

**& that's what God wants**.....us to do.....To align our...with His...To see past  
Sin.....so easy...condemn...**TO** a person for whom Christ died.....

**To love others**.....show them compassion....**To keep**....fore front....thinking  
**That such**....way God loves—even the most undeserving

**And especially...that....How He continues to love us...**