

THE LOST BOYS, LUKE 15:11-32

series

◆ What does it mean to be part of a family? Today is a special day because several people will be joining this church family. But what are they saying by doing that? Are they saying, “I have finally cleaned up my act. I’m ready to give up my partying ways and be a part of the holy people huddle.”? That sounds kind of like repentance, but No, that’s not it. Are they saying, “I agree with the beliefs in this club, and I think their rules are good ones, so I agree to to jump through the religious hoops so I can be a member.”? No, that sounds kinda like conversion to a faith, but that’s not it either. What does it mean to be a part of a family.

◆ There’s a famous story of a dad with two lost sons. Jesus tells it after a story of a lost sheep and a lost coin. Most people think of it as the story of the Prodigal Son, but that’s not quite accurate. First of all “prodigal” mean’s lavishly, recklessly spending and the real lavish person in the story is the dad. Second, the son who ran off with the family money is only one of the lost boys. AND its the boy who stayed home who is most lost as we shall see later. So it’s really a story of a Lavish Father with two lost sons. But they don’t seem to know what it means to be part of the family. What does it mean? These two sons represent two mistakes we make about getting into God’s family.

◆ **1. Morality and immorality**

◆ **A.** Some folks are like the **younger brother**: they want the things the Father(God) provides but they are not interested in the Father. They want his goodness, but they want it independently from him. And they think they will be happy.

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- ◆ People like this come to a church because it's fun, or they like the music, or there's a beautiful sense of community there. These are all praise worthy things. But if they are the main reason for coming their membership will be very unstable. When the songs aren't their choice, or a governing decision is made they don't agree with, or someone makes them uncomfortable –they will likely abandon the church family and maybe God's church altogether.
- ◆ B. Some folks are like the **older brother**: he too wants the things, or property of the Father, but really doesn't care much about dad either, whom he sees as a slave driver. For him, obedience is a tool to be sure he ends up with inheritance. Whereas the younger demanded his future by claiming it was his right, the older tries to demand it by claiming good behavior. And his life is equally unhappy as a result.
 - ◆ Some folks join church families in much the same way. They see it as a way to look good in the community, maybe increase sales or clients. Or they hope that their volunteerism at the church, their saying of prayers, and sharing of funds will make up for minor and major discrepancies in their behavior. They have decided it would be better to be good. And while this is true, it is not a solid reason for joining God's family, for inevitably they, like all of us, will discover that they aren't good, and for all their best intentions, they still willingly chose at times, very bad things. They have a nature that is stained. And even joining the church doesn't magically solve that.
- ◆ **2. Loving the Father back.**

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◆ No, the only real reason for joining a church family is the same as joining any other family: **because of love**. We marry into a family because of love. We are adopted into a family because of love.

◆ So let me summarize quickly about our new members here today. By joining with us they are saying, “I love the Father of this family.” Why do they/we love the Father?

◆ A. Because like the dad in the Lost Sons story, God’s arms are always open to embrace and provide for his children. Like the Father in the parable, his eagerness to be in relationship is so bursting at the seams that when he sees a really bad kid coming home, he runs to welcome him in even though the son does not deserve it. And when he is offended by the other child at home who disrespects him and refuses his love –he still urges him to change. The Father is the Prodigal God. The lavishly loving God.

◆ “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” 1 John 3:1, NIV.

◆ “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” John 1:12, 13, NIV.

◆ B. Because like the younger lost son, they realize there are things wrong in them. They, like all of us, have sinned, and have disregarded God’s good ways and need his love and forgiveness.

◆ Romans 3:23

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◆ They have nothing with which to repay or buy back the Father's affection. They realize their sinning hasn't been making life any better and they are banking on the goodness of the Father.

◆ Romans 6:23

◆ C. Because they believe in their older brother Jesus, who unlike the older brother in the parable, actually left home (heaven) to go after the wayward children and bring them back.

◆ "... he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers." Hebrews 2:9-11, NIV.

3. Professions of faith: Today we welcome to our fellowship the following:

◆ Seth and Stephanie Graves and their children Henry and Everly (who we will baptize at a later date.) Their membership transfers to us from Community Reformed Church where they are professing/baptized members.

◆ Robert and Tricia Johnson and daughter Olivia are professing/baptized Christians from Northbrook Church, TN. So today they will reaffirm their faith, and their son Case will profess his faith and be baptized.

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- ◆ Judy Gipson, who had some association with Jesus church at different times in her life and is now desires to take a stand for Christ and be baptized in his name.
- ◆ The following, having already been baptized as children, will today confirm the truth taught in baptism and declare their faith in Jesus:
Carlie Huffer, Sara Pruijm, Penelope Vanderkleed, Ellen VanDokkenburg, Zack White, Josh White.
- ◆ So now if you will all stand, I will ask you all the same questions, observing that for some it is reaffirmation of a faith you have already taken a stand for, while for others it is a profession for the first time to the public that your heart belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord...

◆ Since you have responded by God's grace

to the call of the gospel to believe and have been baptized,
we ask you, before God and his people,
to reject sin and to profess your faith in Jesus Christ.

Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of evil
that rebel against God?

I renounce them!

Do you renounce all sinful desires
that draw you from the love of God?

I renounce them!

Do you turn to Jesus Christ, the Son of God –sent to redeem the world, as the one who saves
you from your sin?

Yes! I trust in him as my Lord and Savior.

Do you intend to be Christ's faithful disciple,
trusting his promises,
obeying his word, the Bible
honoring his church,
and showing his love,
as long as you live?

Yes! God helping me.

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Baptism: Invite Case and Judy forward:

Case Johnson, following our Lords command to mark those in his family with water baptism, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the one true God as revealed in the Scriptures.

Judy R. Gipson following our Lords command to mark those in his family with water baptism, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the one true God as revealed in the Scriptures.

(All new members are invited forward for testimonies and welcome.)

Testimonies: ... (conclude with VD video testimony)

The Welcome

[The congregation to rise.]

Minister: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I now welcome you to all the privileges of full communion. I welcome you to full participation in the life of the church. I welcome you to its responsibilities, its joys, and its sufferings. "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20-21).

Congregation, repeat with me: **Thanks be to God! / We promise you our love, encouragement, and prayers.**

Presentation of Gifts and Prayer: Mike O.

◆4. **Lets continue where we left off earlier.** Why do people join God's family? In a phrase: because they love God back!

◆1) They realize God loved them first, even before they were born and even after their rebellion.

◆2) They realize they have rebelled and need a payment for that sin which they cannot make.

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◆3) They believe in their older brother Jesus, who unlike the older brother in the parable, actually left home (heaven) to go after the wayward children and bring them back.

◆“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” Luke 19:10, NIV.

◆Let us be clear. We do not love Jesus because he shows us the way to heaven. We love him because he and he alone IS the way to heaven. (John 14:6) We do not love Jesus because we have found him. We love him because he found us. Jesus is not for us a model of how to be, though we desire to become like him. He is for us the payment for what we have not been, and the inheritance of holiness promised us. He is both our debits and our credits. He takes our debts, and he give us his credit. God does not accept us because we are good. He makes us good by accepting us through his son.

◆See, the older brother in the Lost Sons parable didn't go after his brother, even though in his culture it would have been his responsibility. And, when the younger brother came back, his share in dad's wealth was gone. Everything left belonged to the older brother now. So it cost the older brother for the younger to come home and be welcomed as a son, not a hired man! Likewise it cost Christ a great deal to bring us back to God.

◆*“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago*

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when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." 1 Peter 3:18-22, NIV.

◆ In contrast, we have an older brother who came after us. And we have true older brother who it cost personally to have us back in the family.

◆ *"How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." Hebrews 9:14, 15, NIV.*

◆ So in the end, the reason one becomes a christian is primarily because they find that their heart loves God back for the love and forgiveness he gave them through his son our savior, Jesus Christ.

◆ Now, if you love God the Father and God the Son back as I have been describing, you are welcome at the Lord's Table to declare and celebrate his love today. If you are moved by this crazy, prodigal love of God for you

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and have not turned your life over to him and asked for forgiveness, do it now. Do it today, and come.