

Luke 15: 11-32

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 traveled 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.’”

Together, let us praise God’s greatness
LET THE HUMBLE LISTEN AND REJOICE

We need to be reminded that at its heart Christianity is joy and that laughter and freedom and the reaching out of arms are the essence of it.

Frederick Buechner

The more our being in God is embraced, the more our doing will reflect the image of God.

Tilden Edwards

Some of us begin a life with God, the journey of spiritual growth, of spiritual formation, thinking we want to be in control. We think we know how to do this stuff. We are pretty sure we know it's supposed to make us happy, more fulfilled. We are pretty sure it's supposed to make us more likeable, more lovable. The spiritual life is about feeling good! So the spiritual life becomes a pursuit of happiness, of happy or satisfying experiences.

The culture is pretty good at selling happiness. Especially instant happiness. The quick fix. The sudden breakthrough. The latest this or the latest that. Sometimes enlightenment gets marketed too...as if it were a product to be consumed. Lots of so-called gurus out there in the world, offering an easy path to nirvana. Easy perhaps, but not inexpensive! Other teachers are actually pretty good, pretty wise, doing good work.

But not one of them is God. Something is missing. We can find ourselves confused, not as happy as we had planned to become. And God seems very far away. Is there a way, we ask, to come face to face with God? Is there a way simply to look into God's eyes as God looks into our eyes? THAT's what we hunger for. No books. No mountaintop retreats. No bells and whistles. We've been trying to find happiness through all kinds of experiences. But the experiences are not God. We realize, finally, only God can nourish our souls. Only God can form and transform. And so, hungry, humbled, and clueless, we offer ourselves, empty handed, back to God. Only God. Only God. It seems too simple. But it's all we can do now. Only God. Only God. And we find that we are all God ever wanted too. Only us. Only us. We have finally made the right choice. We are home.

Now, others of us in pursuit of a life with God, a life of spiritual growth and spiritual formation, and convinced that we know what that looks like, are pretty sure that what God wants is for us to be very busy doing the things we THINK will please God. So we spend our days taking care of all the things that need taking care of... and we just know that the more stuff we take care of, the more God will be pleased with us, and that will make us very happy. The world is a mess and we've got to do as much as we can to straighten it out, even though we ourselves are a bit of a mess. Dutiful and diligent, we keep ourselves very busy for God, but somehow never realizing we are not having much REAL day to day contact with God. With all there is to do, there is never a thought of just BEING with God... because, we have always assumed, God is very busy too. There is never a thought of asking the Father for help planning a feast for some friends, a chance to kick back and savor the gift of those relationships and of our relationship with the Father. Nope. There is too much to do, and we know best how it should be done. Are we worthy of the Father's love? We sure would like to be. Is what we are doing enough for the Father? Enough to make us worthy of his love?

Sometimes, on the faces of others, we see what looks like real joy. And we ask ourselves, what have they done to deserve such joy? And why, with everything we are doing, why have we never felt joy like that? People kissing. People hugging. People laughing. People eating and drinking the day away. What would the Father think of such frivolity?

Little do we realize. THAT'S the saving question.

...YOU ARE ALWAYS WITH ME

NORTH OAK CHRISTIAN CHURCH-DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

March 31, 2019 FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

In Jesus' Name, Greetings!

Music for Gathering—Elzene Gourley

Jesus comes to wash our feet. Jesus comes to take our hand.

JESUS COMES TO POUR OUR WINE. JESUS COMES TO BREAK OUR BREAD.

Jesus comes to heal our wounds.

JESUS COMES TO LEAD OUR SONG.

Lighting of the Candles

“Divine love attracts all to itself.” Thomas Keating

284 Gather Us In vs 1, 3, 4

Sharing Christ's Peace

523 Live in Charity 3X

The Morning Prayer and Musical Response

Silence

“Words are all we have and words won't do” Alan Jones

Children's Circle

All children thru 5th grade are welcome to come forward. A small outreach offering will be collected for our money jar. Following this time of sharing and prayer, children may attend their very own

“Worship and Wonder” time together in our classroom annex. Child care is offered for infants and toddlers but they are also welcome in the sanctuary.

Prayer for Illumination

Light from light, creation from chaos, life from death, all your gifts, all your love, all your power

ALL FROM YOUR WORD, FRESH FROM YOUR WORD, SAVING GOD. AMEN.

THE GOSPEL LUKE 15: 11-32

The Meditation “And They Began to Celebrate” Rev. Rob Carr

We come to you, God of all Wisdom, in our incompleteness, that you might complete us.

We come to you in our broken-ness, that you might make us whole.

We come to you in our dis-ease, that you might heal us. We lovingly offer you the depths of our hearts, that you may accomplish in us that which you purpose for us.

For all you are doing, for all you are going to do, we give you praise and thanks. Amen

Silent and spoken personal prayers of thanksgiving confession, intercession

“El Shaddai” (God Almighty) Elzene Gourley

God in the highest, Oh, Lord We will love You, Oh, Lord (translation of Hebrew)

The Offering

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below

Praise God above ye heavenly host, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.
As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.

420 I Come With Joy

If we claim to be sinless, we are self-deceived

AND STRANGERS TO THE TRUTH

If we confess our sins, God may be trusted

TO CLEANSE US FROM EVERY KIND OF WRONG

Welcome to the Table
The Words of Institution

Praise and glory to you our Savior Jesus Christ

YOU RENOUNCED THE WAY OF EASE FOR THE WAY OF TRUTH AND LIFE

You do not call the righteous, but sinners to repentance

A CONTRITE HEART, O GOD, YOU WILL NOT DESPISE

Create in us clean hearts O God

RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT WITHIN US

The Communion Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen.

Following the Lord's Prayer, please come forward by rows to receive the loaf and the cup.

The cup is non-alcoholic by choice of the congregation

Gluten free crackers are available on the table for those who prefer this option

Children also celebrate communion weekly as part of "Worship and Wonder"

611 Rise Up O Saints of God

We are marked as Christ's own, held in God's constant love

LIVE YOUR YEARNING IN US O GOD, FOR LOVE IS STRONG AS DEATH. AMEN

TO OUR GUESTS-----WELCOME!

SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD AND GRACED AT CHRIST'S TABLE

WE WALK HUMBLY, LOVE DEEPLY, LIVE SIMPLY, AND SERVE JOYFULLY

We are delighted to include you today. Your presence and participation is a gift to us all. We hope you experience among us the warm spirit of our family of faith and the gracious touch of Christ upon your life. Refreshments and welcoming conversation are available after worship in the Community Room just down the hall. More information about NOCC and the Disciples of Christ is available via

Facebook and these websites

www.nocckc.org www.kcdisciples.org www.disciples.org

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

THIS WEEK

Today Following Worship All Church Pot Luck All Are Welcome

Monday 6PM Troop 900

Monday 630PM NOCC Elders

Tuesday 945AM Men's Bible Group

Tuesday 7PMPM Women's Bible Group

Tuesday 6PM Pack 900

Wednesday 6PM SOUP SUPPER

Wednesday 7PM Music Ministry

Saturday 745AM Men's Breakfast

Saturday 9AM Centering Prayer

Saturday 2PM Troop 900 Eagle Court of Honor

NEXT SUNDAY 5PM SERVICE OF PRAYER FOR HEALING AND WHOLENESS

UPCOMING

APRIL 1 LAST DAY TO SIGN UP FOR EASTERTIDE RETREAT!

REZOUND BELL CHOIR IN CONCERT APRIL 14 3PM

EASTERTIDE RETREAT APRIL 26-28 MARILLAC CENTER

YOU, ME AND THE ENNEAGRAM MAY 11, 16, 23

JULY 22-23 DISCIPLES GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN DES MOINES

Keep these items in mind as you consider the remarkable ministry of our friends at CHERITH BROOK with those experiencing homelessness. Blankets Blankets Blankets! Tennis Shoes, Cold Meds, Band-aids, Bike Locks, Gloves, Hats, Chapstick, Belts of any size, men's and women's undergarments. Cherith Brook Local Honey for Sale! Contact Eric 816-241-8047

We are seeking an NOCC person to serve as a liaison between the church and our Scout Troop and Pack. This person would offer occasional presence at their meetings and extend NOCC hospitality to our Scout friends to assure a healthy working relationship. Contact Rob or Elzene if interested.