

30th September 2020

The Shift - A Call to Repentance

Luke 15:11-32 (NLT) - Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. ¹² The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. ¹³ "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴ About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. ¹⁵ He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."²⁰ "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹ His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. ²² "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³ And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began. ²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, ²⁶ and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'²⁸ "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, ²⁹ but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. ³⁰ Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'³¹ "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. ³² We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'

The Shift

Many of us would have heard the term paradigm shift; it is defined as "an **important change** that happens when the usual way of thinking about or doing something is **replaced by a new and different way.**" The word shift means to move; in this parable it is a **move from blindness to sight.**

The Prodigal Son

The parable starts with vs 11 “**to illustrate the point further**” here Jesus was making a point by using 3 parables, the first 2 parables before this was about The Lost Sheep & The Lost Coin.

The first parable involved a sheep that wandered away and the shepherd goes to look for it and the next was a coin that got lost and the woman who lost it looks for it. Both the sheep and the coin do not realize that they are lost and it is the owner who goes to look for it, once it is found there is great rejoicing.

Unlike the first two parables, in the parable of the lost son Jesus is now speaking of a person who chooses to intentionally leave his father’s house to pursue what he thinks is good for him. He does not realize that his decision would cause him to become lost and he is confronted in a situation that makes him come to realize the state of his being. This son has lived in his father’s house for many years, he would have worked on the father’s property and we can assume that he knows his father well i.e. he knows his father’s love, care, wishes, character, the way he does things, makes decisions etc. However from his decision to leave his father’s home we can state that he does not know his father; because he thinks that living without the Father’s covering or protection will provide him a better life than living under the father’s safeguarding.

Soon everything that he thought that would afford him a good life is gone. His money and friends whom he thought were faithful and true were all gone, the things he put his hope and trust upon had vanished; now he was alone.

17 “When he finally **came to his senses**, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, 19 and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”’

And in the lowest point of his life the prodigal son experiences an epiphany: a moment that comes as a result of new vision, of blindness being turned to sight, an experience of a paradigmatic shift. An epiphany reorients, it changes the focus or direction, and it reconsiders the truth and the way we live causing a decision to be made. He decided to do something of his situation and the truth dawned on him that the only person, who would accept him would be his father, who would listen to his plea and hire him as a hired servant.

Repentance

To go back to his father's house would require him to humble himself and repent of his ways, admitting that he was foolish, selfish, prideful and disrespectful of his father. It is a humbling process, being remorseful of his actions and coming before his father in contriteness. It is a turning around or a turning toward; a turning away from that which diminishes life (SIN), and turning toward the One who provides fullness of life (JESUS). It is about aligning our lives with the values of His kingdom.

Luke 3:8-9

*⁸ **Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.** And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

This is John the Baptist calling for repentance from the wilderness. As Luke's narrative continues, three groups come to John asking him what they should do to prepare for the King and his kingdom, and avoid this terrible and awesome fate. John tells those who have an abundance to share food and clothing with those who have none; he exhorts tax collectors to exercise fair business practices, and he tells soldiers not to take money by force, accuse anyone falsely, and to be

content with their wages. To bear good fruit involves the treatment of others, generosity, fair measures, the proper use of wealth and resources, and a sense of contentment.

What Is Our Posture?

Do we hear His call to repentance; out of our busyness, our own preoccupation with comfort and our own self-interested desires, are we straining our ears to hear Him calling us through the din of all other voices, calling us out of the wilderness? Or do we remain stubborn, justifying our actions, giving excuses for our behavior, feeling sorry for ourselves?

The Elder Son (vs.25-32)

The elder son was feeling sorry for himself, he was the one who slaved for His father and never refused to do a single thing that his father instructed him to do but he says “you never threw me a party.”

How many of us have felt like this?

ALL of us!

Sometimes we live with them as our “crosses”, we find ourselves slipping into bitterness, apathy and gloom as we reflect upon the hardships, the failures, the heartbreaks and the missed opportunities we have experienced.

How have we responded?

Sigh, shrug our shoulders and dole out theological words: “Well, I guess God doesn’t have that for me”, “I guess it wasn’t His will”, “I don’t understand this, but God is good, right?”

While the theology of these statements may be good enough, however according to J. I. Packer, **the attitude** with which they are often spoken evidences a **lacking in the knowledge of God.**

We focus on our past hurts, and respond to them with “dried up stoicism.” We carry our hurts as “crosses” to bear, and the “unspeakable joy” of knowing God is nowhere to be found.

These private mock heroics have no place at all in the minds of those who really know God. They never brood on might-have-beens; they never think of the things they have missed, **only of what they have gained.** (J.I. Packer)

Philippians 3:7-10

*⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—
¹⁰ **that I may know him** and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.*

Paul, who considers “everything a loss” when compared to knowing Christ. He considers everything else rubbish in light of what he’s gained in knowing God through Christ. **The glory of knowing God trumps everything, such that any failure (or success) and hurt (or pleasure) pales in comparison.**

HOW DO WE KNOW GOD?

Turn each truth that we learn about God into meditation before God, which then would lead us to prayer and praise.

Meditation	Calling the mind, thinking over, dwelling over, applying to oneself the works, ways, purposes and promises of God.
	Holy thought which is consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God as a means of communion with God.
	Matter of talking to oneself about God, arguing with oneself, reasoning with oneself out of moods, doubt, and unbelief into a clear understanding of God’s power and grace.

Prayer Points

- **Psalm 51:1-3**

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me,

- **Psalm 51:10**

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

- **Isaiah 55:6-7**

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call in him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

- **Psalm 32:5**

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Life Church

- A church that loves God's Word and that will walk in His wisdom, humility and strength.
- A church which would faithfully show love to a hurting world.
- Salvation – family members
- Surrounding community
- Personal encounters – breakthroughs
- Deepen our love for one another and make us eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

Healing

- Elisa – chronic renal failure
- Suba
- Bro. Harold (Connie & Mel's dad) – mass in lung
- Sis. Lily (Jacq's mum) – heart

Covid-19 Pandemic

- Sabah
- Protection
- Vaccine
- Economy

Malaysia

- Churches
- Unity
- Leaders
- Salvation