

## Daily Devotional Guide

**Monday** – Read Luke 15:11-12. Isn't it interesting that through the years the church has referred to this parable as the "Parable of the Lost Son" or "Prodigal Son?" The parable begins, "There was a man who had two sons." Clearly the parable is about a father, a loving father. So often the church focuses on the conditions that the gospel addresses (*lost* sheep, *lost* coin, *lost* son) instead of celebrating the transformative effects of the gospel. Notice in Luke 15 that each of the parables end with a party. Why?

**Tuesday** – Read Luke 15:13-16. In these verses we read that the younger son had reached the lowest point. He had spent all of his inheritance on "wild living" and was homeless and hungry. What's more is that he associated with pigs which put him outside of the Judaic covenant. He could only hope for eating from the pods of the carob tree, something only animals and the extremely poor did. He was at rock bottom. It is often the case that only until we are flat on our backs that we begin to look up! Can you think of a time in your life when this was the case?

**Wednesday** – Read Luke 15:17-20. Verse 17 is a significant verse in scripture. Sometimes it is translated, "He came to himself." Those who participate in 12 step programs would call this "a moment of clarity." The younger son realized who he had become was not who he wanted to be. When he returned to the father, the response he received was quite shocking. His father was hoping he would return because he saw his son from far away. The father *ran* to his son (something considered undignified for Jewish men to do at the time), threw his arms around him and kissed him. No lecture, not chastening, no guilt trip! Are you surprised? What does this say about the father?

**Thursday** – Read Luke 15:21-24. The son had only gotten out half of his rehearsed speech when the father interrupted and called for a big bash for his son. Not only did the father embrace the son but threw an extravagant party for him! Jesus' original listeners were no doubt offended by this parable. The son had shamed the family by his deplorable actions. The son deserved punishment, not a party. Look closely at verse 24. The father gives the reason for the party. If you had lived next door to this family, would you have attended the party?

**Friday** – Read Luke 15:25-31. The older son's issue was not with his younger brother's return. Within the Judaic covenant there was room for repentance and restoration. The older son took issue with the party! Why a party? Make him sleep in the barn for awhile and just feed him bread and water, right? Instead, the father treats him like royalty and gives him a feast fit for a king. The older son resented this and refused to go in to the party. Notice the father also "went out" to the older son and "pleaded" with him, telling him he loved him just as much. The father went on to repeat himself (verse 24) that the party "had" to happen because the younger son was "found" and "alive." Jesus ends the parable here. Why? We do not know what the older son did. What do you think he did?



### PASADENA COMMUNITY CHURCH

a United Methodist Congregation

227 - 70th Street South ~ St Petersburg, FL 33707  
(727) 381-2499 email: [pasadena@pccumc.org](mailto:pasadena@pccumc.org)  
[www.pasadenacommunitychurch.org](http://www.pasadenacommunitychurch.org)

## Pasadena Community Church

~ Living With No Regrets ~

Let Your Life Speak

Sunday, August 28, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Luke 15: 11 - 32

Bronnie Ware was a caretaker for the dying. She became very close to the people she was comforting. Ware quickly discovered that when people are faced with their own mortality they are no longer afraid to be vulnerable. In fact, many people would share their regrets with Ware. She was surprised to hear the same regrets over and over again. She was so taken by these repeated regrets from such a wide range of people that she decided to publish an article on the internet about it. She calls it, "The Five Regrets." She is also working on a book that takes a closer look at these regrets.

I don't know Ware's religious affiliation, but I believe that many who hear my voice on Sunday have these same regrets. As I looked over these five regrets, I thought, "People don't have to live life weighed down with these regrets!" You know why? The power of the Christian faith has a healing solution for each regret. So I want to spend the next few weeks taking closer look at these five regrets and show you how our faith can empower us to rise above them.

We begin with a regret that Ware heard over and over again. It was, "**I wish I would have had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.**" Now, some of us may think, "How sad to come to the end of your life and realize you didn't live the life you were created for!" Well, it happens. It happens more than we realize.

Allow me to ask you a vital question. Are you living the life you were intended to live? Is the real you alive or asleep? Henry Thoreau

once said, "Most people are living lives of quiet desperation." Does this describe you today? Oh maybe on the outside you present yourself as a happy person who has it all together, but inside you are desperate to really live.

Let me tell you some great news: When God created you, He put creativity, genius, and power into you! As we grow up, we have a tendency to forget our worth. We begin to listen to destructive voices telling us who we are. Why do we think Jesus said that unless we receive the Kingdom like a child, we can never enter it?

"The Help" is a remarkable movie. If you have not seen it, I hope you will make time to go. Aibileene plays an African American maid in the 60's. In addition to doing the cooking and cleaning for a white suburban home, she takes care of a toddler whose mother does not give her much attention. The toddler's name is Mae Mobley. Aibileene loves Mae Mobley and Mae Mobley loves Aibileene. Mae Mobley has yet to learn the evil of prejudice and hate. She hasn't been tainted by the destructive voices around her. Aibileene's voice is the only one she listens to. Every morning Aibileene wakes up Mae Mobley, puts her on her lap, and says, "You're kind. You're smart. You're important. Don't you forget that." Aibileene hopes Mae Mobley will not turn out like her cruel mother.

I want you to know today that you are also kind, smart and important! You are! God made you that way. How do we lose sight of that? As we grow up we listen to other voices tell us what we should or should not do – who we should be or who we should not be. The

pressures of life and the expectations of others cause us to become cynical about life and ourselves. One day we wake up and realize we are numb and the real person inside of us is asleep.

Bernie Segal is a well known doctor and writer. Segal once said, "I see so many people who have died to stay alive." Segal goes on to describe what he meant by the statement by saying, "I see individuals who become people they don't want to be. They have allowed themselves to be forced into roles that are meaningless to them. You know, people can commit suicide without hurting themselves physically." It can happen. Through defeat and compromise we can kill the authentic person inside of us.

The great news today is that you don't have to live a lie. You don't have to keep your true self hidden. You can allow the true person inside you to live! Today can be a new date of birth for you. Today, you can decide to be a new creation. You can claim the person God had created you to be and never look back!

How can we let our true life speak? By taking to heart one of the greatest love stories ever told – what we know as "The Parable of the Prodigal Son." The parable should be called "The Parable of the Loving Father" for that is what it is really about. But through the years the church has referred to it as a parable about a lost son, along with the lost coin and sheep in Luke 15. The church has a tendency to focus more on the negative conditions the gospel addresses than the positive power of the gospel itself. Just take a look at each of the parables in Luke 15. They all end with a party!

Heaven likes to party! In fact, the Bible tells us that two things go on in heaven: worshipping and partying. I tell people that if they don't like going to parties or going to worship they will not like heaven very much.

Let's hear this wonderful story fresh this morning. It all begins with a younger son who started to grow up, and he began to listen to other voices around him tell him who he was and who he should be. He asked his dad to give him 1/3 of his inheritance early and he gave it to him. In

those days, it was customary for a Jewish son to receive 1/3 of his father's inheritance when his father died. For some reason, in this story the son receives it early. Well, the son went out and spent all of his inheritance on "wild living," whatever that conjures up in your mind.

It wasn't long before the son realized that all those voices he listened to were telling him lies! He was lost. He found himself homeless and hungry, sleeping and eating with pigs (something that put him outside of the Jewish covenant). He was flat on his back with nothing. He didn't know who he was.

Then this young man had what the 12 step program calls "a moment of clarity." Jesus put it this way, "He came to himself." His true life began to speak! He came to the place where who he was not who he wanted to be. He knew he was made for more than this! He began to rehearse his apology speech and made the long journey home.

When he got to the end of the drive way, his father saw him. Jesus said, "While he was still far off, the father saw him and had compassion." This means that his father had been looking for him, hoping he would return. I imagine a father leaving his breakfast at the table and looking desperately out the window for his son. When the father saw him, he RAN out the door. At the time, no adult Jewish male ever ran. It was considered undignified. But he did run, and he threw his arms around his son and kissed him. No lecture, no guilt trip, no sermon, just a loving embrace.

The son immediately went into his apology speech. The father interrupted him and told his servants to get his son's best suit and put it on him. He told them to call the DJ and the caterer because they were going to have a huge party. Why? Because his son has been found! He was not dead, but alive!

Meanwhile, the older brother heard the dancing and music and wondered what was going on. When he found out what the party was all about, he became angry and refused to go in. The older brother's issue was not with the fact that his brother had returned. The covenant made room for penitence. His issue was with the

party! Why a party? Make him sleep in the barn and eat bread and water for awhile. Make sure he is sorry.

The father went out to his older son and asked him why he would not go in. "Aren't you excited about your brother returning?" The older son went into his rant about how he had been faithful and obedient and never received a party like this. And his younger brother goes out and participates in all kinds of debauchery and then gets a huge bash! The father said, "Son, I love you just as much as him. Everything I have is yours. But don't you see? Your brother has been found! He is alive. We HAD to celebrate." Jesus ends it here. We don't know what the older brother did. What do you think he did?

You want to know one of the morals of this story? You can go home again! Have you lost your way? Have you forgotten your worth? Do you not know who you are? Is your life is broken? Just run back to the Heavenly Father and he will be running toward you! He is ready to throw his arms around you and tell the Angels to get the party ready. He is ready to show you the life he has for you! He is ready to show you the person he has made you to be! Just return to the Father today and ask him for his love and forgiveness. This is where it begins.

Your real life is found in a relationship with God. God created you and you can never find real life until you discover and experience God's love for you. You will never be satisfied until you begin to see yourself the way God sees you! "God don't make no junk!" Now, that's bad grammar, but good gospel! By the grace of God, you are loved, you are kind, smart, and important! Claim it and live it!

Take a look at St. Bernard's four stages of spiritual growth:

- 1) Love of self for self's sake
- 2) Love of God for self's sake
- 3) Love of God for God's sake
- 4) Love of self for God's sake – to love myself the way God loves me

A couple of years ago I was in Atlanta doing doctoral work. It was over a weekend and I had a Sunday off. I woke up that Sunday

morning and was exhausted. It was raining outside and I did not have my usual pep. I found a church in which to worship. The minister gave a good sermon. In the sermon he told a true story about himself that I will never forget. He recalled the time his grandfather died. He loved his grandfather very much. He was a strong Christian with a loving spirit. The minister said that his grandfather gave him the encouragement he needed to become a minister.

As he sat at his grandfather's bedside, his grandfather handed him a crinkled up piece of paper. His grandfather was very weak and could not speak, but the minister knew it was a note from his grandfather. Moments later, his grandfather died. The minister said he vividly remembers walking out of the hospital room with tears in his eyes opening up that crinkled piece of paper. Inside were five words written in pencil by his grandfather - "Always remember who you are."

By the grace of God, you are loved, you are kind, smart and important. Let your life speak! Amen.