

John Bonner
March 18, 2007
4 Lent

Reconciliation & Forgiveness

The Great topics of Lent...

Last week was **Redemption**...

Today's is **Reconciliation & Forgiveness** ...

Story of Tony ...

Father says 'if you leave don't ever come back'

Tony goes out to make it, but doesn't.

Calls home and leaves a message ...

"If I can come home please leave a light on in the front window."

Driver says "I once said those harsh words to my Father and I never saw him again.

Don't do it. Tell him you love him."

As they get to turn towards his house he asks the man to see if there is a light on in the front window and as they approach his home every light in the house is on. That is God's way."

The Parable of the Loving Father

Most familiar of all of Jesus' Parables

The focus of the parable is the father: "There was a man who had two sons."

Three parables known more by their negative features ... "*lost sheep*", "*lost coin*", and "*prodigal son*."

We devote too much to that which is "lost" and not that which is "found" don't we! That's not the gospel! It is 'joy' that stands out.

There is a condition worse than death, to be lost; there is a condition better than life, to be found. [Craddock]

Jesus is telling the Pharisees and scribes of the joy God feels in those who are found not those who are 'lost'.

Two points often neglected in the story"

First is the party. The older son is offended by the party. There is provision in Judaism for a penitent returnee but not to music and dancing. Rather to sackcloth, tears, ashes and kneeling.....

The father, **secondly**, not only HAD two sons but he LOVED two sons and he went out to each and was generous to each. Our society says there have to be winners and losers BUT God's love is both/and not either/or. The embrace of the younger does not mean the rejection of the elder; the love of tax collectors and sinners does not at all negate love of Pharisees and scribes. We find it difficult not to be offended by God's grace toward another, especially if we have serious questions about the person's conduct and character.

Note that the Father does not qualify. As a matter of fact he does not say a word to the returning younger son...He is found...Lets Party!!! In all three of the "lost" parables 'joy' in the finding results in a party. That is heaven's way! He has been raised from the dead by His Father's embrace. It is God's character that drives this parable. WE don't know Him well enough!

God's Reconciling Love is always ON; God Forgives ALWAYS!!! Will we?