Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor David Bennett
7 June 2015

Key Verse: Luke 15:11-32

**“What Matters Most”**

Mark 2:16-17 (NASB)

*16When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, “Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?” 17And hearing this, Jesus \*said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Luke 19:10 (NASB)

*10For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

The religious leaders of the day did not care enough for these groups of people to try and reach them and introduce them to God, so Jesus is going to share with them three parables, (the lost sheep, the lost coin, prodigal son) we will only discuss the prodigal son this morning.

Jesus is going to share three truths in these parables that show us why we are to reach out to all people with the Gospel.

If the **CHURCH** is going to grow, we must make sure that we don’t **GET** **STUCK** in a comfort zone to the point that we don’t try and reach people for Jesus.

Jesus preached many times utilizing Parables, according to the dictionary a parable is... a short allegorical story designed to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson.

Most people understand what is being talked about when they hear a parable, it is not just church folk that understand but all kinds of people can associate with its message.

The parable I am going to discuss today is probably one of his most famous ones, the Parable of the **Prodigal Son**.

The parable serves as an analogy of our Heavenly father’s relationship with his children.

Jesus said a certain man had two sons, and the younger of the two said give me my stuff.

It is important to note that youth is (**energy** without **experience**), Ok getting back to it.

The younger man said give me my stuff, I know how to do this better than you do, give me the portion that falls under me.

In short what he was saying is I want **CONTROL**!

**CONTROL**!

And the Bible says, he divided unto them, so even the older one who didn’t say anything got his portion, he divided unto them...

Now when the father gave the younger his portion and the older his portion, as soon as the younger got control of his assets he ran away with it, while the older kept his at home.

This was a willful and conscious effort to leave home, he didn’t just go down the street, but went far away from his father and his **CONTROL**.

This way the Father could not know what he was up to, what he was doing, that’s what we also do today, and think our Father doesn’t see what we are doing.

Remember again that youth is (**Energy** without **Experience**)

The younger didn’t run away as in sneaking out, but left with his stuff, sometimes when we get control it will or can drive you into some stuff.

Because it’s all about **POWER**!

Most people think it was about money, and some think it as rags to riches story, however, the boy was rich either way.

He was rich at home; he was rich when he left, it wasn’t about rags to riches at all it was about **CONTROL** it was about **POWER!**

He didn’t ask for the money so he could get stuff, he had stuff.

He had servants and everything that came with it, what he wanted was **POWER**, what he wanted was **CONTROL!**

**POWER** is very tempting thing, it has been said that Absolute **POWER** corrupts absolutely

So the young one gets **POWER**, he gets **CONTROL**, too fast, so he left and went out there because....

He didn’t know... **What MATTERD MOST**!

He thought that the gift was better than the giver, so he took the gift and left never understanding that the giver is always more important than the gift.

The young man had the (**Energy** without the **Experience**); he didn’t know…

**What MATTERD MOST**!

* So in short he said give me the gift,
* He ran away with the gift,
* He ran out of the gift,
* Then he finally realized that he,

Didn’t know **What MATTERED MOST**!

He got it wrong, have you ever gotten it wrong?

Can I get a show of hands on who has gotten it wrong at least once in the past?

* Got it wrong , made a dumb decision
* Didn’t know how to prioritize the things
* Ran away with the gift
* Walked away from the giver

 Didn’t know **What MATTERED MOST**!

The funny thing is the whole time it was happening, you thought you were doing right.

If you thought you were right when you were doing it, and realized later that you were wrong , so then why are we so Rigid when it comes to having an open mind?

We need to leave that opening that we might be wrong again and at least listen to others or reason before we run away with the gift or walk away from the giver

There just might be a slight possibility that we might not know it all!

So we fast forward to the story and find the young man, (**Energy** without **Experience**) is in the hog pen, and he has spent the entire gift.

Sometimes we have to get to the very bottom before we start to realize

**What MATTERS MOST!**

* Hard Times gives you a chance to think

It seems that tears do something to the brain, it releases pressure, so the blood can flow freely, unrestricted and you can start to think properly.

The young man is thinking, this didn’t turn out too good

This is a huge accomplishment considering the youth (**Energy** without **Experience**) was able to admit to yourself that this did not turn out so good.

Some people never get this point, they are so stubborn, they will never critique themselves or their behavior in order to come to the same realization that “*This did not turn out so good.”*

People who will not critique themselves, and insists they are right even when all Hell breaks loose are the most dangerous people in the world.

They are **DANGEROUS** because they are more concerned about **EGO** than they are overcoming.

They insist in holding up the **EGO**, even while down deep inside they know they are wrong.

* They will never humble themselves
* They will never change
* Because **IMAGE** is more important to them than **REALITY**

However, this young man, when push came to shove, he re-evaluated himself and he did the math

The key is found in verse 17.

*17But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!*

Which leads us to the first step toward a restored relationship.

**1. The First Step is to a restored relationship with God is ADMIT that you are wrong.**

Before a person can be restored to a joyous relationship with God, they have to come to their senses and admit the life they are living or the situation they are in is not what it should be.

The young man said I need to go back to the beginning and start over, try it again, because it did not turn out too well, did not turn out as planned.

I have to get back on track again; I am **LOST** and need to be **FOUND**!

We can experience this again and again, **OVER** and **OVER** in our lives, where you do right and then at times you do wrong.

At times we have to sit and re-evaluate where we are and how we got here and realize...

**What MATTERS MOST...**

So here he is this young man, who is **LOST** and is trying to get **FOUND** again

How many have been **FOUND AGAIN**?

Let me see a show of hands if you have ever been **FOUND AGAIN?**

How many have found yourselves in...

* In a Financial mess
* In a Physical mess
* In an Emotional mess
* In a Maturity mess
* In a professional mess
* In a Hog Pen?

And you had to say wait a minute, this is not going the way I wanted it to

I need to go back and **FIX** IT.

We need to also thank God for allowing us do-over’s, by allowing us to start over and go back and **FIX IT!**

* In our Health
* In our Body
* In our Relationships
* In our home
* In our mind
* In our finances
* In our walk!

We are on a journey, all trying to find **What MATTERS MOST!**

Why would you build a house in a Pig Pen?

When something in your gut tells you, that they may belong there, however, **I DO NOT!**

I am out of my element, I am going home!

So this young man, now with not as much **Energy** but with some **Experience** heads home.

This leads to the second step in restoring the relationship is...

**2. The second step to a restored relationship with God is to Return to God with the repentant, humble attitude.**

The problem is some people admit the mess their life is in but never do anything about it.

Now I want you to notice the attitude this man had in returning to his father, because it illustrates the attitude we need to have, when returning to God.

He did not minimize his behavior as if it were no big deal. He said in verse 21... *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”*

He took full responsibility for his decisions and actions, no blame was shifted to anyone or anything else.

He was humble and unassuming in his return to his father, as we must be in our return to God.

We must say just as the young man did... I blew it, I am not worthy to be called you son...

Not only did this young man plan to get right with his father, he actually took the steps to do so.

The Father, like most fathers could have developed an attitude, could have been justified to have an attitude.

You could almost hear the father saying...

* You brought this on yourself
* You’ve been acting like a fool
* You should have listened to me
* I tried to tell you
* I told you not to leave here
* You didn’t have a plan
* You will never make it
* You have run around with all them people and spent all your money
* Now you are going to come crawling home, smelling like a PIG
* What happened to the money I gave you before?

It would have been the perfect time to say that

It would have been the perfect time to make your point

If proving you are right is more important than the one you are proving it to, then go ahead and get your points in

* Have a **shouting** match,
* have a **screaming** contest ,
* Show them who’s the **boss**
* Get it all out of your **system**

The father didn’t say I told you so, or how did it turn out, he simply ran out to meet him, notice **RAN** out to meet him

So to recap...

* The first step toward restoration is to admit that you were wrong,
* The second step is to return to God with a repentant humble attitude,

And the third step is...

**3. The third step to a restored relationship with God is to recognize that God will lovingly welcome you home.**

Saints, when you see someone who is trying to crawl back to you, don’t make it hard for them

Don’t make it hard even if you were right! Meet them half way

He saw him trying to come to him, smelling like he had been in a pig pen, you could imagine he had just taken a shower and changed his clothes and yet he still **RAN** to meet him.

How many times have you had the opportunity to meet someone that was trying to get back to you?

The Bible says that the Father said, *“This is my son who was dead, he is now alive again. He was lost and now he is found.”*

That’s **What MATTERS MOST**

What happened to the Money? It doesn’t matter

Why were you in the Hog Pen with them Gentiles? It doesn’t matter

The only things that Matters is are you OK?

I remember one time Shirley called me and said she had an accident, I know the first question I asked her was **NOT** how is the car, I never asked about the car.

The first question is always?

Are you OK?

It is if you know **What MATTERS MOST!**

This is my son who was dead and now is alive; he was lost and now is found!

And the Bible says they began to “Make Merry”

Remember prior to this...

* The Father was not happy
* The older son was not happy
* The younger son in the Hog Pen was not happy

So they began to “Make Merry”

Now comes the elder brother, and he said, “I have not heard Happy sounds around this house for a long time

* When happiness sounds foreign in the house you know there an issue
* When laughter leaves you know you have problems!

It doesn’t matter how much money comes in, when laughter leaves, there is not a lot of difference between the Pig Pen and the Palace

When pain has overcome Joy, you will have problems

The older brother heard laughter and said what’s going on? Someone said they are throwing a party up there, it’s a party for your brother, and he has come home!

And then the older brother got mad

Haters hate to see you celebrate while they are suffering

He was thinking, oh no they are not throwing a party for my brother, and the Bible says he refused to go up and “Make Merry”

He refused to be happy,

He refused to go to the party,

He refused to greet his brother

The Father had to go out to him, and he said, “Son what’s wrong with you?”

The Older Son replied, “*All these years I have been with you, and you have never thrown me a party.”*

You have never thrown a party for me and yet you are treating him so good, all the while I have been holding this thing together, while he has been living it up, wasting his inheritance

He ran through your money, and I kept the house together, and you never acknowledged me

* Have you ever felt invisible?
* Have you ever done some good things for people who didn’t appreciate it at all?
* Have you ever been taken advantage of?
* Have you ever watched someone be praised for something you did?
* Or get credit for your work

 The father said to the older brother, “All that I have, is yours, you could have it any time you wanted it

Because our hearts didn’t talk, you didn’t realize that all of this was for you, and you never got it, and I never said it, but it was all yours

Now come on into the party, and help us be happy, don’t keep standing out in the yard

Talk about could of, would of, should have, because life is moving so fast, that by the time you become wise enough to come into the house, the people that were worth coming in for will be gone!

This to me is a Master Piece of Parables! It is the epitome of the human experience

Because at one point or another, everybody within the house was lost and found

Do you think the father wasn’t lost when his boy was lost?

Do you think he could enjoy the palace, when his boy was lost?

Do you think the elder brother who stayed at home wasn’t lost in the house?

Do you think the younger brother who was in the Pig Pen; was any better of than his brother in the palace?

Saints before life is over everyone is going to take their turn at being **LOST** and it is never resolved until...

You realize **What MATTERS MOST!**

Maria and her daughter Christina lived in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of a Brazilian village. Maria’s husband died when she was an infant and Maria never remarried.

Times were tough, but at least Christina, when old enough, got a job to help out.

Christina spoke often about going to the city, she dreamed about trading her dusty neighborhood for the exciting avenues of the big city.

Just the thought of that horrified the mother, as she knew exactly what Christina would have to do for a living in the city.

That’s why her heart broke, and she couldn’t believe it when she awoke one morning to find her daughters bed empty.

Knowing in her heart where her daughter had headed, she quickly threw some clothes in a bag and gathered up all her money and RAN out of the house.

On her way to the bus station she entered the drug store and got one last thing. Photos, she sat in the photo booth and took picture after picture of herself. With her purse full of her black and white pictures of herself, she boarded the bus toward Rio de Janeiro.

Maria knew Christina had no way of earning money, she also knew her daughter was too stubborn to give up. And when Pride meets hunger, a human being will do things that before were unthinkable.

Knowing this, Maria began her search. Bars, hotels, nightclubs, and place with the reputation for street walkers and prostitutes.

She went to them all, and at each place she left her photo, tapped to a bathroom mirror, tacked to a hotel bulletin board, fastened to the corner of a phone booth, and on the back of them she wrote a note.

Finally her money ran out and she went home.

A few weeks later the not so young looking Christina descended the hotel stairs. Her face was tired and worn, and her dreams had become a nightmare.

As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face; there on the lobby mirror was a picture of her mother, Maria.

Christina’s eyes burned and her throat tightened, as she walked across the room and removed the small photo.

Written on the back of the photo in her mother’s handwriting was a compelling invitation that said,

* Whatever you have done,
* Whatever you have become,
* **IT DOESN’T MATTER**,
* Please come **HOME**!

And she did…

She realized What **MATTERED MOST?**

Have you figured out what **MATTERS MOST?**