

The editors of the NIV translation title the story in Luke 15, "The Parable of the Lost Son." In one sense of course that fits. Luke 15 contains three parables about what was once lost now being found. But in another sense that title doesn't fit because it tends to place the emphasis of the third parable on the lost son. In fact, because of this, many see the heart of the story in v. 17, when the younger son, "comes to his senses." And so the message is we too must repent, "come to our senses," and return home.

But other translations have a different title for this story. In the NET translation, the title is "The Parable of the Compassionate Father." That shifts our attention doesn't it?

In cultures that pay more attention to honour and shame than our own, people are dumbfounded by the outrageous compassion of the Father. And that shifts our attention from the son "coming to his senses" to the Father who "was filled with compassion." This, the very same Father who in His justice, gave up His Son for punishment, so that the guilty, the wicked, the rebellious, of Exodus 34, could be forgiven.

**PRAY:** Pray or sing the words of "Amazing Grace". Allow God's Spirit to fill you with the love and compassion of your heavenly Father. Thank Him for His grace!

## FRIDAY MARCH 18

Read: Acts 27: 23-44

With information gathered from various websites Ted De Hass writes this: "Search and rescue personnel risk their lives in tumultuous seas, deep forests, remote mountains, and desert wastelands. Wherever they're needed they go. When called, they respond, because lives are in danger.

"A Search and Rescue Team in Colorado puts it this way: "Millions of people visit the mountains of Larimer County, Colorado, each year. A few will become lost, stranded, or injured...some will die. Our objective is to find and rescue these lost or injured people before it is too late.... We are dedicated to saving lives."

"Nevada's Washoe County Search and Rescue Team went out on 74 searches in 2003, bringing 95 persons to safety and recovering the bodies of 9 others.

"In 2002, the U.S. Coast Guard made 54,609 rescue trips by boat or aircraft, saving 3,661 lives.

"The Search and Rescue Team motto: "This we do so others may live." .... Doesn't that sound like a good motto for the church?

**PRAY:** That the Lord gives us a deeper passion for seeking the lost.

## SATURDAY MARCH 19

Read: Luke 17: 11-19 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

Consider coming to morning prayer today in the sanctuary at 6:00AM.

# WEEKLY DEVOTIONS GUIDE

MARCH 13-19, 2011

BY: PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

NEW WEST CRC

**SERIES: A 'TANGIBLE DISPLAY' PEOPLE: JOURNEYING WITH JESUS IN LUKE**

SERMON: "MARK OF A DISCIPLE: SEEKING THE LOST"

LUKE 15

PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

SUNDAY MARCH 13

Jesus and His questionable table company.

Two parables intermingled: Luke 15: 11-32 and a modern parable.

1. The "death wish"

...Father's reaction?

2. Squandered living

3. "Wake up and smell the coffee!"

4. The ending no one could expect.

...followed by a second, even more unexpected ending!

**KEY THEME OR TAKE-AWAY:**

## MONDAY MARCH 14

Read: Genesis 3:8-9; Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Psalm 139:7-12

In a book by Roger Steer, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott*, we read this extended quote:

"In his love for us Jesus acts like a hound-dog, intense and focused as he pursues the hunt. That image comes from Francis Thompson, a 19th century British poet who wrote "The Hound of Heaven." Although Thompson was a follower of Christ, he struggled with poverty, poor health, and an addiction to opium (which in those days was sold as an "over-the-counter" medication).

"In the depths of his despair, Thompson described his flight from God: "I fled him, down the nights and down the days. I hid from him, and under running laughter. I sped ... from those strong feet that followed, followed after [me]."

"But Thompson also knew the unrelenting love of Jesus, the hound of heaven. In the poem Jesus pursues Thompson with "unhurrying chase, and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, and majestic instancy [or urgency]." He hears the feet of Jesus beating after him as Jesus calls, "All things betray those who betray me."

"In a recent biography of John Stott, Stott refers to Thompson's poem. According to Stott, he owes his faith in Christ not to his parents or teachers or even his own decision, but to Jesus, "the hound of heaven." Stott writes:

[My faith is] due to Jesus Christ himself, who pursued me relentlessly even when I was running away from him in order to go my own way. And if it were not for the gracious pursuit of the hound of heaven I would today be on the scrap-heap of wasted and discarded lives.

Lent reminds us of the extreme nature of this unrelenting love of Christ.

**PRAY:** Reflect on times in your life when you experienced the unrelenting love of God pursuing you. Thank the Lord. Submit all to Him.

Pray also for the earthquake and tsunami victims of Japan and the Pacific coastal regions.

## TUESDAY MARCH 15

Read: Luke 15: 1-10; Luke 19:10

Most parents will remember a time when they lost their son or daughter even if it was just for a few minutes. Maybe it was at the PNE, or in a grocery store, or at a shopping mall, all of a sudden they're gone! As the few seconds become a minute, and the minute becomes five, or ten, or more, a pit develops in your stomach. What if they're really lost? What will I do next? Will I ever see my son or daughter again? As a parent it would be

hard for me to imagine the deep sadness that would come with an extended loss.

When I was about seven, a cousin of mine in the Netherlands, probably 18 at the time, went missing. For years my uncle and aunt longed for his return. They never gave up praying. He was never found.

Do you think the Father feels that pain for his children who are lost; wandering far from home? I believe Luke is saying He does.

Now the more difficult question: do we? Do we feel sadness and urgency for those who are far from God? Perhaps a child? A neighbour? A co-worker? Most of the time I know I don't. Thank God...Someone does.

**PRAY:** Pray that God's sadness, and pain, and urgency to seek and find the lost will touch you, and change you.

## WEDNESDAY MARCH 16

Read: Exodus 3: 7-10; Hosea 11: 1-4; Luke 15:20

These passages describe what some have called a "fragile God." Not fragile in the sense of destructible, but more in the sense of vulnerable and susceptible. God allows Himself to feel deep sorrow and anguish. God extended Himself to us knowing that we could reject Him. And the pages of Scripture's story describes a God who grieves the pain and separation of His people.

In a book edited by Nancy Guthrie, *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*, Tim Keller shares this about God: "There is no way to have a real relationship without becoming vulnerable to hurt. Christmas tells us that God became breakable and fragile. God became someone we could hurt. Why? To get us back ... . No other religion—whether secularism, Greco-Roman paganism, Eastern religion, Judaism, or Islam—believes God became breakable or suffered or had a body."

The "fragile" God is one who "hears the cries of his children," who "loves us like a son," and who is "filled with compassion" while we were still a long way off. His fragility took the form of sweat, tears, spilled blood, even death. His broken life, became healing and wholeness for us.

**PRAY:** Sing: "O sacred head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down, now scornfully surrounded with thorns your only crown. O sacred head, what glory and blessing you have known! Yet, though despised and gory, I claim you as my own."

## THURSDAY MARCH 17

Read: Exodus 34: 6-7

When the glory of the LORD passed in front of Moses the compassion and justice of God was revealed. God reveals Himself as compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness. This is the heart of Luke's message in Luke 15:11-32.