

# Pastor's Corner

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Nov/Dec 2010

In the Gospel of Luke (15:11-32), Jesus shares a parable with us about a prodigal son who returns home. His father throws a party in celebration of his sons' return.

As the older son comes in from the field after laboring hard all day, he hears the music and asks one of the slaves what is happening. The slave tells him that his brother has come home and his father has thrown a party to celebrate his safe return.

Well, you know the rest of the story. The older son becomes angry and refuses to be a part of the celebration. So what do we gain from the story?

First, God is concerned with bringing people from death to life. In fact, His heart rejoices over each and every person who returns to Him from a time of rebellion. Clearly, Jesus reminds us that those who are well are not in need of a physician. And if our heart is like God's, we too will rejoice when a sinner returns to the Father.

However, too often we are like the older brother. Year after year the older son labored for his father. In his own words, he said that he had worked like a "slave," waiting for his future reward. He had witnessed the brokenness his brother's rebellion had caused his father. However, he could not feel or share his father's joy upon his brother's return, because his concern was for himself. In fact, he may have to share his father. He felt like a martyr, and totally missed the blessing and joy of celebrating with his father.

It is possible to serve God year after year and not have the heart of God. You could be the hardest worker in the church, you might be on many committees, and yet be filled with bitterness because others do not share the burden you carry. It is at times easy to become so preoccupied with activities, that when God works a miracle in the lives of those around you, you cannot rejoice with God.

Honestly ask yourself, "Why do I serve?" Is my service simply to gain a future inheritance? Do I "slave" for God, or do I serve Him with a true servant's heart? Do I give, hoping that, through my gifts, the prodigal son will return, and my gifts will be used for the celebration? When I pray, do I truly hope that the lost will be found? Am I truly burdened by those who are lost, who do not know God, who need a home to worship in; or do I feel that they will only become a burden and that I may have to share my blessings with them?

God's concern is for the lost, as the father told the older son, "all that is mine is yours." God's heart is for those who are not His. If you serve God out of duty or habit, and not out of joy and gratitude, you will soon feel like a martyr. You will become envious of those who are experiencing joy in the Lord while you will feel weighed down by the work you are doing. Don't miss out on the celebration. Come to the celebration. Spend time with the Father. And share in His joy! Rejoice and give thanks for your brother or sister who was dead, but is alive; the one that was lost, but is found.

God forgive me for I have sinned!

Blessings

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