



JULY 12, 2020

# LOVE FIRST, FIRST LOVE

WEEK DEVOTIONAL BASED ON SUNDAY'S WORSHIP SERVICE

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP SUNDAYS 9:00AM AT  
WWW.FIRSTLUTHERAN-BARRON.ORG OR ON THE RADIO 97.7FM

## Luke 15:11-32

11 Then Jesus[a] said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with[b] the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'[c] 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. 25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' 31 Then the father[d] said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

## HOLDING IN PRAYER

For health and healing we pray for: Lois Schultz, Gladys Hansen, Valeri Scheps, DeAnn Anderson, Eugene Olson, Ron Kahl, Kathy Weghorn, Betty Misling and Gail Larson

## LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

# REFLECTION

BY PASTOR RON MATHEWS

## COMPASSION AT THE TABLE

We gather daily around a variety of tables: family kitchen table, lunch table at work/school, digital tables for coffee online, and the Lord's table to receive communion to name a few. Gathering around a table, even a virtual one, we look into each other's eyes and hear each other's voices. Listening and seeing others allows us to understand how others are feeling. This is the beginning of compassion. That is why it is so important that we welcome others to our table and sit at these tables regularly.

When we listen to people's stories we can learn so much from their feelings. This is one way we can develop compassion. We see, listen, and recognize what people are feeling, and this helps us to feel their joy and their pain with them. Compassion helps us to see how every human being is important and loved by God.

The story of the Prodigal Son demonstrates the struggle of living a life of compassion can bring as the older son is hesitant to show understanding or forgiveness for his younger brother. He is too caught up in his own selfishness, his own sinfulness, when faced with his Father's outrageous love for his younger sibling.

When we listen with a caring ear we are pulled from our selfishness towards others and we are moved to a place where we can offer forgiveness. This act of compassion is demonstrated by the father who welcomed his younger son. He showed compassion when he saw his son's shame and sadness. After seeing him and listening to his words, the father welcomed him back home. The father's act of compassion was led by forgiving his son.

The father also showed compassion to the older brother by seeing his hurt and frustration. He showed compassion by listening and inviting him to join the celebration, to join his younger brother at the family's table. This father reminded both brothers that they are fully loved no matter what. And they are always welcome in their father's house.

Here this story likens the father to our Heavenly Father. The church, our Heavenly Father's house, is a place for everyone. It is a place to bring our shame, sadness, pain, joy, and celebration. God's table is big enough to receive it all. Our Father is large enough to take it on. The Church can take it, welcome home! Drop your bags at the door and empty them out so that the dirty laundry can be washed and made clean. Our God is the gift of life and presence. That means God is here for you, the church is here for you. All you have does not have the last word, it has made you who you are today. All of your joys and celebrations; all of your sin, shame and pain has made you who you are today. Welcome home. Welcome to God's table.

## REFLECT ON THE TABLE AND THOSE GATHERED AROUND IT.

1. What skill do you use to foster communication and inclusiveness?
2. What needs confession and forgiveness?
3. What division or brokenness is present at the table?
4. Who is there and who is not there?
5. How is the sense of community created or blocked?

