

TFTD 25.21 Friday March 28th
THE LOST SON: Luke 15.11-32



The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So he got up and went to his father.

20 “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

31 “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”



Sometimes we need to get lost to be found. Sometimes we need to be broken to be mended.

You're probably familiar with the art of kintsugi. You may have heard one of us preach on it as it's a wonderful illustration of how God puts us back together, not so we can be as we were before, but so that we can be better people marked by our experiences and able to trace the journey of our change. Kintsugi is the art of mending things, usually pottery, with pure gold; something that really should have been thrown in the bin, broken beyond repair, becomes something even more beautiful and precious than the original.

God is a bit like that with us.

Our reading today is all about a rather selfish and self-obsessed son thinking of nothing else other than his own pleasure and enjoyment, what he could get out of life and specifically what he could get out of his father. After demanding his inheritance, an odd thing to do in the first place, he goes off and lives the life. He spend, spend spends with no thought to the future, no thought to the past, it's all about the now. I guess a modern equivalent would be a young lad going off and buying a new Rolex, a flash sports car, and a designer flat. He has a great time flashing the cash, probably surrounded by folk who are really just there for the party, not caring for him as a person, out for what they can get. Of course, as with all parties, it eventually ends and he is left with nothing. As he reaches rock bottom (and he really does!) the reality of what he's done starts to dawn.

Can he go back? Does he dare try to ask his father for help? Surely he's on the scrap heap now?

For me, this feeling of being useless, worthless, broken and separated is something that I heard so many times from the pulpit as a child. There we would sit for what seemed like an eternity, on hard pews, being told how awful we were. I grew up thinking that God was always rather cross with me and that I'd never be enough. So much religion is based upon this need for us to feel like dirt, on the bottom of the pile. So much time is spent in many churches by clergy telling you how sinful, worthless and unclean you are. You won't hear that from the pulpit of any of our churches! Just as this son, wretched and alone was welcomed back, not grudgingly, or with strict conditions but with open arms as he RAN towards his son, so God welcomes us when we mess up not just once, but each and every time we turn to him. No lecturing or hectoring, no telling off and consequence, just pure love and reconciliation.

We've all gone astray. We've all done things we regret and wish we could put right. We can!

As we travel together through these Lenten days towards Easter, we think of that open-armed welcome at the end of our journey and the ways in which we can RUN towards God. We think of our brokenness, but within the context of being mended, made whole again with all of our flaws, cracks and faults seen and embraced by God. These are the people God wants us to be, whole, mended, not ashamed but grateful for our new life, the life given back to us in Jesus. Amen.

Many thanks to Nathan Jarvis, Rector of St Mary's Alderley, for today's Thought for the Day.