

Once Jesus told of parable of two sons, One ~~whax~~ stayed home and worked hard every day, The other ~~whx~~ demanded his inheritance, ~~and~~ went off and threw it all away on wine women and song. When the money was gone, and all the friends too, when he had sunk lower than low, then he returned home ready to say Father, I have sinned against you and against heaven, I am no longer worthy to be your son. Just let me be a hired man for you. But before he could speak a word, his father's arms were around him and the celebrating had begun.

In the story the Son had no name. But ever since the story was first told he has had so many names. Peter was his name once, one who wept bitterly when he realized he had denied his Lord. And Saul his name another time realizing how he had made himself an enemy of his heavenly Father. In fact, everyone who has experienced the truth about themselves and God has ~~xxx~~ been that Son, a beggar who is received with open arms as a child.

But the story is of two sons. For the hard working son, the faithful all these years son would not join the celebration. Look Dad, I've done all the work, saved while he has wasted, where's my party? Son, the Father said, You've been with me. Is it not right that I should rejoice over your brother who was lost, but is found?

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So the story ends, with no ending at all. Until today. I'm going to tell you an ending.

Father, I want my inheritance, I'm leaving, If that's the way things are here I'm not staying. Of f he went. Until one day he came back, on his knees ready to beg forgiveness. This time it was his brother who heard the party, would he come in and make his Father's joy complete?

By the way, I've some names for the sons too. The prodigal is named Gentiles, the older son, ^{Saul} Jews.

For a long time God's people Israel, the Jews, stayed at home. Though not always obedient they prided themselves on the keeping of God's law. They ~~xxx~~

knew theirs was a special place in God's heart and his plans. Had he not told them so?

But one day God appeared ~~with him~~ in his Son, Jesus Christ, and began to celebrate the sinners return. and by in larger his people would not join the celebration.

So it has remained to this day. In the meantime all sorts of heathens and pagans and worshippers of every sort of God that is no God has been brought to Christ. Heathens, pagans, these are our ancestors according to physical descent. People who were godless, the ungodly have been made right with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

But what of the Jews? In ^{Romans 9-11} our second lesson the apostle Paul addresses that question. Will they be lost of God's purposes and God's plan? Has God failed to accomplish what he has intended in them? In one way not at all. For Israel is the root into which we have been grafted. Abraham and Moses and David are our true ancestors in Christ. We've become the Son who is at home.

And in that there is great privilege and great danger for us.

Paul writes: ~~They~~ They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe.

How many times Christians have done exactly what Paul warns against. Forgetting that everything we have is ours through grace, we have persecuted and maligned the Jews. Some have even thought themselves justified in hating and killing God's chosen people in the name of Christ. In that they have acted as that older brother who has not understood his Father's love at all. Two Sons at home reconciled to God their Father in Christ, and reconciled to one another, that is God's plan and goal. Nothing less than that will satisfy God.

And so Paul writes: For the gift and call of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they may also receive mercy. For God has consigned all men to disobedience that he may have mercy upon all."

As to the hows and the whens of Israel's being brought to faith in Christ we do not know. After nearly two thousand years we might well give up hope

did we not worship the God who creates ~~something~~ out of nothing and who can give life to the dead and faith to the ungodly. God's plans are for all people Jew and Gentile, black and white, male and female, his Kingdom will be the ~~the~~ celebration ~~of~~ over the return of every ^{son} ~~prodigal~~, the feast welcoming every lost one.

In a photograph things are fixed. Everyone is in the same place from the moment the shutter is snapped until the picture is lost or faded. But in a parable we always are in motion, first taking the part of the younger son, on our knees receiving everything by grace, then proud, arrogant walking away from our brother and our God. ^{all of us} Some of you have said and done things that have hurt others. All of you, all of us in fact. And all of us have heard the return, the celebration for those whom we do not think are nearly ~~xxxx~~ sorry enough, nor sorry at all, and we want to hang back. But in the parable one thing remains constant, the Father's love for all. He wants his family together in love and at peace.

Whether we talk of Israel and the church, or blacks and whites, the rich and the poor or members of this congregation, God has one intention, to gather the whole family around his table. In his words to Abraham, I will bless all nations through you. to his words of promise through Isaiah that his house would be a house of prayer for all peoples, to his deed of reconciliation in Christ, breaking down the dividing wall between Jew and Greek, even down to this day and this meal, God wants his children all to be one.

His kingdom will be the forever celebration of just that. Amen..