

Home Group notes for the week following Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2016

## **LENT FOUR - EXTRAVAGANT LOVE - SALVATION**

### **As we Gather**

The readings for this week all affirm God's offer of salvation; the joy and release that individuals experience when reconciled to God, and the changed values and standards of their new life with Him in a relationship of love and peace.

**Reading Scripture**    **Joshua 5:9-12**    **Psalms 32**    **2 Corinthians 5:16-21**    **Luke 15:1-3 + 11b-32**

### **Thinking Together**

A man's message is always heard in the context of his character, and Jesus came to reveal God's love and offer salvation (reconciliation with God) for all people, even those who do not think they need what He has to offer.

In Luke's account of the parable of the loving father and his two sons, the three main characters are not only symbolic of what Jesus dealt with throughout His ministry, but this story is still relevant for us today.

**In reading the story, with which character did you instinctively identify? Discuss**

- The younger son – symbolic of all of us

In initiating the division of the estate this young man showed an arrogant disregard for his father's authority as head of the family (v 12). He chafed/ rebelled against parental authority, wanting to make his own decisions and live life the way he wished (v 13).

**Can you remember chafing against parental authority, and what you did about it?  
Discuss**

**Have you ever been in a spiritual far country when trying to live life your own way?  
Discuss (vv 13-15 Joshua 5:9-12)**

It was only when he hit rock bottom as a consequence of his decisions that the young man "came to his senses" (vv 15-17).

**What do you understand this phrase to mean? Discuss**

**Have you ever experienced this, and what brought you to your senses? Discuss**

It was the memory of his father's goodness that brought him to repentance (vv 18-19 Romans 2:4)

- The loving father - symbolic of God

Like the father who watched for and ran to greet and forgive his son (vv 20-21), God welcomes and forgives all repentant sinners. God loves the whole world but we are saved by grace (John 6:40 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

**How did the father receive his repentant son? Discuss (vv 22-24)**

**How do God / Christ react toward repentant sinners? Discuss**  
(Exodus 34:6-7a Psalm 32 John 3:16 Romans 8:1-4)

**What is the extent / expression of your gratitude for God's forgiveness? Discuss**  
(Psalm 32 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 Colossians 2:6-7)

- The elder son – symbolic of the Pharisees and of the self-righteous  
The son who stayed home and obediently continued with the hard work of running the estate was furious at his father's reaction to his brother's return (vv 25-28).  
Even when his father showed his great love for him (vv 28-31), his response revealed a loveless attitude, founded on self-righteousness, pride, anger and envy. This son did not even know how to live according to the first two commandments (Matthew 23:25-28 Luke 15:1-3 Romans 8:5-8).

**What are the first two commandments, and how do they affect your life? Discuss**

**How do you react when someone has hurt your? Discuss**

**How should the church / we react when someone who has lived a notoriously sinful life, repents? Discuss**

### **In Closing**

An unforgiving spirit leads to a joyless life as relationships remain troubled / broken and the world in which we reside appears threatening and burdensome.

Our relationship with Christ affects every part / aspect of life, and our identification by faith with the risen Christ makes it possible for us to become new creations.

Jesus said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"

**Have you come home yet?**

### **PRAYER**

God of extravagant love you reveal the new creation;  
expose our self-satisfaction that we may embrace the  
wayward and be reconciled to you and to each other,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives with you and  
the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen