

Move Daddy!

Luke 15:11-24

February 4, 2024

Our scripture is the familiar story of the son who was not happy with life at home so he asked his father to give him his inheritance so he could leave home. **I'm not going to recap the story**, but I will say that when the son returned home, he was surprised to find that his father was watching and waiting for him. **When his father saw him he ran to his son** and embraced him, kissed and blessed him with gifts, and had a feast in his honor. Here are a few things I got from this story.

1. God can't move until we let God move.

There was nothing that the father could do to talk the son out of leaving home. Can you imagine the conversation when the son brought up the subject? Sure you can. **The father probably told him how hard and unforgiving** the world would be, that it would not be easy to live on your own. But the son was unconvinced and had already made up his mind that he wanted what he had coming to him and he was leaving. **It has been said, that by the time a person asks for advice**, they have generally made up their mind what they are going to do, and is looking for confirmation rather than counseling. Many of you, like I, **have had to have this very conversation with a child** and it breaks our heart when they go on and do what they are going to do. There were no words the father could say that would change the boy's mind.

Does anyone still use directory assistance? Apparently it is still available. Before the internet, if we didn't know the phone number of a person or business we could dial 411, and ask for a phone number and an operator (an actual person) would give us and even dial it for us.

A subscriber to the magazine Theatre Arts wanted to contact the magazine offices so he called directory assistance. "Sorry", the operator said, "there is nobody listed by the name Theodore Arts." The subscriber insisted, **"It's not a person it is a publication, a business."** The operator's voice rose in volume, "I told you sir, we have no listing for Theodore Arts." **Nearly screaming into the phone the subscriber said**, "The word is theatre: T-H-E-A-T-R-E!" With tone of finality in her voice the operator said, "Sir that is not the way to spell Theodore."

I have to imagine that the conversation the father had with his son was equally as frustrating. The boy was downright hardheaded. But honestly, can't we be hardheaded and stubborn too?

One of the things we can be stubborn about is our comfort. Have you ever considered how much effort we put into our comfort?

- This morning we have multiple thousands of dollars of equipment working just to keep this room a certain temperature for our comfort.
- We pick out most of the things in our life with comfort in mind. (Mattresses, shoes, clothes, towels, vehicles, our homes and how we decorate them, doctors/dentists, jobs and people with whom we choose to spend time. The community of faith where we worship and serve.)
- These are but a few. We spend a lot of our resources just to be comfortable and avoid being uncomfortable.

We can be this way with our relationship with God. Many people have decided what they think a real, meaningful and close relationship with God is and they are comfortable with the spiritual bubble they have created.

I once heard an author talk about the danger of communities of faith existing in the “cult of the comfortable” with its comfortable pastor, comfortable sanctuary, and comfortable circle of friends. Pretending **that what they do week from week represents a vital growing relationship with God**; yet doing very little to be the presence of Christ in their world. The greatest thing a Jesus follower and a community of faith can do is to have a deep desire to seek the very heart of God, even if the heart of God takes them outside their comfort zone, their spiritual bubble.

The Psalmist that wrote, **“You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.”** Being thirsty isn’t comfortable and seeking water usually takes us places we have never gone before. Seeking God should always push us beyond our spiritual bubble.

It wasn’t until the son got uncomfortable feeding pigs and considering eating what he fed those pigs that his thoughts turned back to his father. The father’s hands were tied to help until the son sought out his father. That was when God moved, when God ran.

The second thing we see in this passage is:

God is ready and waiting to move.

The whole time the son was gone the father waited and watched for the son to return. He patiently waited until the son was ready to come home. **The greatest desire of that father was to see his son come walking down the road.** The father probably talked about his wayward son all the time. There were sleepless nights worrying if his son was dead or alive.

I had an uncle that when he was 20 years old did something very dumb and was arrested. He got out of jail on bond, and then jumped bail. He ran away and it broke my grandmother’s heart. As the years passed by **my grandmother worried and worried**, she didn’t know if her son was dead or alive. She wasn’t quite the same until about 15 years later, on Thanksgiving Day, my uncle showed up on her porch. **After 15 years of not a word, her baby boy finally came home.** When I think of that day I remember my grandma’s reaction, the hugs, the kisses, the tears, and the not wanting to let go.

When the son finally did come walking down the road did the father wait for the son to shuffle up to him with his head down in shame? Did he say I told you so? Did the father even give his son a chance to give his rehearsed speech? **No! As soon as the father saw his son on the road** he was out of his chair like he was shot out of a cannon, running to greet his son. **Now the son probably started to give that speech** but his father never heard it; he was too busy hugging and kissing and loving all over his son.

God waits patiently on us and is ready to move in our lives when we give our permission. All of us, at one time or another think our way is better than God’s way. **We push God away and head off to far off land.** We can do this without packing a bag and leaving town or without leaving

our community of faith. **We find ourselves in a far off land without going anywhere** or making any changes in our life. We just push God away.

Do you know the difference between liberation and salvation?

- Salvation secures our future and gives us the eternal hope of heaven.
- Liberation is when we welcome and fully embrace God in the here and now in such a way that God has the freedom to do amazing and incredible things in our lives.
- Living in liberation every day allows God to move in our lives and we become agents of the Divine. In doing this we and those whose lives we touch begin to experience heaven here on earth.

The last thing we see in this passage is:

Allowing God to move leads to our greatest blessing.

All those years that my uncle was gone was hard on our family. Every Christmas when all the presents were passed out there would always be one left under the tree. **It was for my uncle, my grandparents always** planned for him to come home and they wanted to make sure when he did there would be something there for him.

When the son came home, when he finally returned to his father's arms, his father blessed him with great love and affection and also gifts. **A robe, ring, sandals, and a feast in his honor**; it was so much more than the boy ever imagined. He received grace, he received gifts and blessings that he didn't deserve.

Are our lives so full of God's blessing that we couldn't stand anymore? Let's say God's blessings are like a loaf of bread. God tells us, "Here take this entire hot, fresh delicious loaf of bread, you're going to love it." **So often we respond by pinching a little off here and there** and say, "Thank you Lord that's enough for me." But God says, "Oh no, go ahead have all you want I have a whole bakery full of bread; and I'm making more."

Sometimes it seems that us Jesus followers are satisfied with the crumbs from the Lord's banquet table when we have been invited to enjoy the bounty of the entire feast. **Psalm 31:19 says, "How abundant** are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you...."

Walt Disney was ruthless in the editing room, cutting anything that got in the way of a story line. Ward Kimball, one of the animators for Snow White, **recalls working 240 days on a 4 1/2 minute sequence** in which the dwarfs made soup for Snow White and almost destroyed the kitchen in the process. Walt thought it was very good and incredibly funny, **but he decided the scene stopped the flow of the picture**, so out it went.

When the film of our lives is shown, will it be as great as it might be? A lot will depend on the multitude of "good" things or opportunities we choose over the great things or opportunities. **One thing is for sure** God only wants great things for us and offers us great opportunities.

What are the boundaries and obstacles that stop the flow of God's movement in our life?

What are the good things in our lives that should be replaced with the best things God has for us?

Are we satisfied with spiritual crumbs or **would we like to sit down to God's banquet table and experience God's presence** and purposes for our life in ways we never thought possible?

Amen