



THIS IS YOUR SPACE TO GROW

REFLECTION POINTS 7 MARCH 2021

BIBLE READING: 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.’”

INTRODUCTION

Sunday, 16th January 1983. My first Sunday in Melbourne.

I was looking for a church to attend and landed in Swanton Church of Christ. Now the church is called CrossCulture Church of Christ.

The church was and still is very multicultural. Many Asian students attend that church.

That Sunday morning the preacher was a white man. In all honesty I can’t remember his whole sermon or what biblical passage he used.

All I remember is his last few sentences before he ended the sermon. ***“I am preaching from the Bible. And if you anyone of you disagree with me, you are disagreeing with the Bible.”***



Wow.

I couldn't believe what I heard. I was flabbergasted. How arrogant of him to make such statements?

"If you disagree with me you are disagreeing with the Bible."

If I did disagree with him, I was disagreeing with his interpretation of the text.

What world was he living in?

You and I know how to interpret the Bible is one of the most divisive issues among Christians.

There is no reading without interpreting, because there is no reading without thinking and comprehending meaning, or at least trying to understand.

And we all understand that reading is affected by our own point of view (our own subjectivity).

Our own personal and religious cultural history always affects the way that we as individuals understand the biblical text.

Because it is impossible to take the interpreter out of the interpretation there is no such thing as a "plain reading of the text" (Brueggemann).

The reality is that no one comes to the Bible in neutral and no knowledge is ever value-free. We need to be aware of our biases and the lens we use to interpret the Bible.

The text for today is Luke 15:1-32.

It contains three parables but this morning I am concentrating on what is commonly known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Next to the Parable of the Good Samaritan which we had two Sundays ago this is my other favorite parable.

Have you ever asked yourself why is this parable referred to as the Parable of the Prodigal Son?

There is clearly more than one character in the parable.

We have the father.

We have the elder brother.

We have slaves.

By the way most interpreters see the father in the parable as referring to God the father.

Is God a slave owner or does God sanction slavery?

One reason why this parable is referred to as the Parable of the Prodigal Son is because the parable is mostly interpreted through a western individualistic lens.

Clearly the parable is about a family.

Clearly the cultural context of Jesus was collective, not individualistic.

By the way where is the mother or sister? Why do you think women are not mentioned in the parable?

This morning I would like to look at the parable through three different interpretive lenses:

- Family Dynamic/Systems,
- Honour and Shame,
- and Post-Colonial.

Let's reflect together...