

BACK IN FATHER'S HOUSE

- A. Introduction: All of us struggle with issues related to our personal value and worth. We wonder: Do I matter? Does my life have a purpose? Do I have value to anyone?
1. Inability to answer those questions produces mental and emotional anguish that can dramatically affect the way we deal with life. The answers to these questions are found in God's written Word, the Bible.
 - a. When you understand why God created you and what He has done, is doing, and will do to insure that you fulfill your destiny, it gives you peace of mind and enables you to face life's hardships with the confidence that God will help you.
 - b. The Bible revealed that you have a purpose that began before you existed, before the world was created. This purpose will not only uphold you in this life, it will find its fullest expression in the life to come.
 1. You were created to become God's son or daughter through faith in Christ and then live forever in loving relationship with Him. You were created in or as His image to image Him. Gen 1:26
 2. An image is a reproduction or pattern that resembles a person or thing. We are created copies of God's likeness, meant to image or display and reflect His glory. Ps 8:3-5
 2. Talk like this can seem like esoteric mumbo-jumbo that has no relevance for real life. But when you see your worth and value before God, this understanding is life altering. We have more to say tonight.
- B. You may recall that Jesus came into this world through the Jewish people group (Israel). We begin this lesson with a parable Jesus told when some of the religious leaders of His day (men known as Pharisees and scribes) criticized Him for associating with sinners and publicans. Luke 15:1-32
1. Publicans were Jewish tax collectors who worked for Rome. Jews considered them traitors because they took taxes from their own countrymen. Many overcharged what Rome required and kept the rest.
 - a. Jews didn't associate with publicans or allow them in the Temple or synagogues. Tradition tells us even gifts they brought to the Temple were rejected. They were classed with sinners and harlots.
 - b. But Jesus received them. The Greek word used means to admit or receive favorably to oneself. Jesus ate with these publicans and sinners, a practice that shocked the religious leadership since, at that time in that culture, to eat with someone symbolized entering into relationship with that person.
 2. Jesus told three parables in response to their criticisms. A parable is a short story aimed at communicating a specific point, a spiritual truth related to God's plan for a family.
 - a. Luke 15: 4-10—First Jesus talked about a lost sheep and then a lost coin, and related how the owners searched diligently until they found their lost items. Then they rejoiced. Jesus likened the owner's responses to the way that Heaven responds to a sinner who repents.
 - b. Everyone in Jesus' audience could relate to Jesus' point, since lost sheep and lost coins don't lose their value to the owner when they are lost. Their value is lost to the owner because the sheep and the coin cannot realize (fulfill) the purpose for which they were created.
 3. Luke 15:11-32—Lastly, Jesus talked about a lost son, a son who left his father's house after demanding his inheritance from his father (v12). At that time and in that culture it was a custom for sons to demand and receive 1/3 of the movable property that would be his when the father died (what we call personal property: flocks, herds, clothes, precious metals, jewelry). A father could not legally refuse to give it.
 - a. The son took his inheritance, traveled far from home, and spent his substance (possessions) on riotous (sinful) living. When a famine hit the land, the son ended up in a pig pen eating pig food.
 - b. Eventually, he came to himself and decided to return home (v17-18). Based on Jesus' parable up to this point, it is clear our Lord had repentance in mind (v7, v10). Jesus' message throughout His ministry to that point was: Repent and believe the gospel or good news (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:14-15).
 1. The Greek word for repent means to think differently, change in one's mind or purpose: Luke

15:17—And having come to his senses (NLT, Moffat); this brought the man to himself (Rieu).

2. Jesus' audience would have understood repentance to mean a change of mind or purpose that expresses itself in a change of conduct (Matt 3:5-8).
 - c. In the first two parables Jesus described the response of owners when lost items are found. It is the same with the third parable. Jesus described the father's response to his returning wayward son.
 1. Luke 15:20—The father saw his son coming when he was a long way off and ran to greet him. He had compassion on the boy. Compassion literally means to have the bowels yearn. The man had great sympathy for his son. The idea in the Greek is that the father kissed him and kissed him.
 2. Luke 15:21—The son told his father: I've sinned against Heaven and against you. The son wanted to talk about his sin. Note, the father never mentioned his sin and blew right past it.
 - A. The Pharisees and scribes who heard Jesus speak that day would have been horrified at the father's silence. They didn't forgive until there was revenge and restitution.
 - B. The son told his father: I'm not worthy (deserving, suitable) to be called your son. Make me a hired servant. But the father had other plans.
 3. Luke 15:22—The father had a party and rejoiced over the son's return—this dirty, stinky son, fresh from the pigpen, who wasted his father's riches on prostitutes and riotous living. The son was the kind of dining companion that led the Pharisees and scribes to criticize Jesus that day.
 - d. Luke 15:22—The father commanded the servants to give his son a robe, ring, and shoes. Through this illustration, Jesus pictured a process of cleaning by which a sinful son was fully restored to his sonship position because of his father's love.
 1. Jesus' listeners would have been familiar with the writings of Zechariah, a prophet of Israel who recorded a vision God gave him where a change of clothes mean removal of sin. Zech 3:4
 2. Jesus' audience knew that rings were given to men as a mark of dignity and honor. They usually had the owners name on it and the impression made with it carried the same weight as signature does for us. Gen 41:42; Dan 6:17; etc.
 3. To be shoeless was a symbol of humiliation and distress. Shoes were a symbol of freedom. When prisoners of war were released their shoes, which had been removed during captivity, were returned. II Sam 15:30; Isa 20:2-4
 4. The son (like the sheep and the coin) never lost his value to his father, even when he was in the pigpen of sin. The father's plan was to cleanse and restore his son—if and when he came back to father's house. This parable pictures what God wants to do for those who come to Him through faith in Christ.
- C. Men and women who are trapped in the pigpen of sin, corruption and death have not lost their value to God, but they are lost to their created purpose as sons and daughters of God. Jesus came to earth to make possible the transformation of sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters by the power of God and thereby fulfill God's plan for a family. Luke 19:10
1. Jesus is both the pattern for and the procurer of God's family. While on earth, Jesus (in His humanity) showed us what sons and daughters of God look like. Through the Cross Jesus opened the way for all who put faith in Him to be transformed into sons and daughters who are like Him in character and power.
 - a. Eph 1:4-5—Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure (NLT).
 - b. II Tim 1:9-10—It is God who saved us and chose us to live a holy life. He did this not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan long before the world began—to show his love and kindness to us through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the coming of Christ Jesus (NLT).

- c. Rom 8:29—For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his son, so that his Son would be the firstborn (first to come out of death) with many brothers and sisters (NLT); He ...destined (them) from the beginning...to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly] His likeness (Amp).
- 2. Rom 8:30—God restores us to our created purpose through Jesus by justifying us, and glorifying us.
 - a. The Greek word translated justified means to render just or innocent. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, God can declare men and women not guilty of sin —just or justified—when they believe on Jesus.
 - b. The blood of Christ so thoroughly cleanses us from the guilt of sin that God can now indwell us by His life and Spirit and glorify us. To be glorified means to means to be made alive the uncreated life of God in our entire being.
 - c. When we believe on Jesus as Savior and Lord, His life comes into us and our inward being (our nature) is dramatically changed. We are born of God. I John 5:1; John 3:3-5
 - 1. Through the new birth God puts something of Himself into us. We become partakers of God's nature. II Pet 1:3-4—It is through (God's) generosity that God's greatest and most precious promises have become available to us men, making it possible for you to escape the inevitable disintegration that lust produces in the world and to share God's essential nature (J. B. Phillips).
 - 2. We have union with Christ through shared life (Col 1:27). I Cor 1:30-31—But you, by your union with Christ Jesus, are God's offspring; and Christ, by God's will, became not only our Wisdom, but also our Righteousness, our Holiness, our Deliverance, so that—in the words of Scripture—'Let those who boast, boast about the Lord!'(20th Cent).
- 3. This transformation is both instant and progressive. When we believe on Jesus our nature is instantly changed. However our mind, emotions, and body are not directly affected by this inward change.
 - a. As we live our lives in this world, we are supposed to take on outwardly the effects of these inward changes. We put off the old man's behaviors and put on the new man's behaviors. Eph 4:22-24
 - b. As this progressive process of putting off the old man and putting on the new man takes place, the condition of our spirit is the basis of our identity (John 3:6). We were sinners; now we are sons and daughters of God. We were unrighteous; now we are righteous (John 1:12; Rom 5:19; etc.).
 - 1. I John 3:2—Right now, we are finished works in progress—fully God's sons and daughters but not yet fully conformed to the image of Jesus in every part of our being.
 - 2. Heb 10:14—For by one offering Jesus has perfected forever them who are (being) sanctified. The original Greek language can read: those who are sanctified or who are being sanctified. Both are consistent with the rest of the New Testament.
 - A. Perfected means to complete or make perfect by reaching the intended goal. It has the idea of bringing to a state of completion or fulfillment. Sanctified means to make holy, clean or render pure.
 - B. Through His sacrifice Jesus opened the way for us to be purified and restored to holiness in every part of our being—in our spirit through new birth and in our thoughts, words, and actions by His power in us as we cooperate with Him by putting on the new man.
 - 3. Phil 1:6—And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again (NLT).
- 4. If you are born again (meaning that you have come back to Father's house through repentance and faith in Christ), you must learn to live with the awareness that God is in you by His life and Spirit. Consider statements Paul made to believers. Remember, he was commissioned to preach union with Christ.
 - a. He asked Christians in the Greek city of Corinth: Are you not conscious that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit that is in you (I Cor 6:19, Williams). He told believers in the city of Ephesus (modern day Turkey) that he prayed for them (that they would) [know and understand] what is the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His power in and for us who believe (the

same power that raised Jesus' body from the grave) (Eph 1:19, Amp).

- b. He wrote to Christians in the city of Philippi (northern Greece): Phil 2:12-13—Work out—cultivate, carry out to the goal and fully complete—your own salvation with reverence and awe (Amp). For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him (NLT).
 1. Work out means to work fully or accomplish; by implication, to finish. Paul did not mean that we earn our salvation (deliverance from the penalty and power of sin) by our efforts (because we are good enough). We're saved by God's grace through our faith. Eph 2:8-9
 2. Paul was reminding them that, by the power of God working in them, they can expect outward transformation and growth in Christlikeness as they live in active cooperation with Him.
- c. Paul wrote to Jewish believers in Jesus who were facing increasing pressure from their fellow unbelieving countrymen: Now may the God of Peace...strengthen (complete, perfect) and make you what you ought to be, and equip you with everything good that you may carry out His will; [while He Himself] works in you and accomplishes that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ (Heb 13:20-21, Amp).

D. Conclusion: Back to the prodigal son and his father. What if the son refused to put on the robe, ring, and shoes his father offered him? What if he insisted on living with the servants instead of in his father's house? Although he had come back to father's house, he would not have benefited from all that was his as a son.

1. That's the way far too many Christians live. We've come back to Father's house through faith in Christ but we don't live like what we are—holy, righteous sons and daughters of God who can live and walk as Jesus did in His humanity. I John 2:6
 - a. We still act like what we were—dominated by old habits, fearful, guilt-ridden, doubting God's love and care, unaware of our value and purpose or God's plan. The only way to remedy this condition is by regular Bible reading, primarily the New Testament. (Remember everything that we covered in the first few months of this year.)
 - b. The Bible shows us what we were and what we are now that we are born of God. God's Word works in us to identify and change thought processes and behaviors that are unfitting for sons and daughters of God. The Spirit of God, through the Word of God, transforms our minds and emotions which in turn affects our behavior—and we become increasingly Christlike.
 1. II Cor 3:18—And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit (Amp).
 2. Heb 4:12—For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are (NLT).
2. John 8:31-32—Prior to going to the Cross, Jesus told a group of Jews who had come to believe that He was the promised Messiah/Savior that if you continue in My Word, you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. Jesus made this comment in the context of freedom from sin and its effects.
 - a. Truth is a Person (Jesus) Who is revealed to us through a book (the Bible). Through the cleansing power of God's Word—both the Living Word, Jesus, and the written Word, the Bible—we can be freed from every trace of corruption picked up while we were living in the pig pen.
 - b. Through regular reading you'll become convinced of your value to God. You'll come to understand your created purpose as a son or daughter of God. And you'll learn how to cooperate with God as He restores you by His Spirit through His Word—now that you're back in His house. Much more next week!!