

4th Sunday of Lent — March 31, 2019

A piece of Wisdom from the Guru I read this week :

“It is absurd to condemn past ignorance from the place of present wisdom.” Now, there’s a charm. Keep that in mind as we journey through this teaching. Wow ! What a great teaching ! What an extraordinary story. Greatly misunderstood, and greatly misrepresented. It begins as a result of the openingThe Pharisees are grumbling, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” How could He possibly do such a thing ? We are the Religious Leaders He is nothing like us ! Don’t you think He yes He, above all others, would know better ?

What a gift this teachings is as we move through our study. Respectable SinsConfronting the Sins we Tolerate. I hope you find this teaching really helpful as it goes hand in handfits like a glove with our Small Group study. Paying attention to the detail is extremely important here, as it is in the whole series of Life itself ! We have heard the Parable so many times we could easily feel ‘We Have This’ ! Yes, we know the story so well, we have heard it so often. We could finish the Parable if I started it and the difficulty is we think we know the solution as well.

On a surface level many people think What a bad Boy ‘What you going to do when they come for you ?’ That prodigal boy what a lack of respect for his father.....his brother..... his family..... his neighbors shame on him what a selfishself-absorbed son, right ? He doesn’t deserve FORGIVENESS He doesn’t deserve to be welcomed back into his family ...Right ? “He made the bed ...he should have to lie on it.” Right ? These were his choiceshe should have to live with them Right ?

Let’s look at the story :

1. While his father is still living he asks for the Will to be probated
Wow ... That is brash !
2. He goes off and squanders the inheritance loose living what ever that is !!!
3. He winds up hungry and starving ...eating the husks in a pigpen, of a city far from home.
4. He comes to his sensesafter a time ... not a glorious contrition...
But, how badly off I am !!

5. I will return to my father...not asking for SONSHIP...but slave status!!!
6. I will ask Forgiveness !

Most people think that father should have 'Kicked his Ass' right ? Or, taken him to the Woodshed. Right ?

Right because that is our Poverty we are exhausted trying to 'fix' himtrying to turn him around!! We feel lost, incapable of responding. We just don't know what else to do !!!! Many people end the parable right there problem solved That father was stupidhe gave him a chancehe failed what more can I do ? What more need I say ?

But the story is much Bigger the story doesn't end there ... It begins there !

Let me put it this way as we expand and capture the full story.

There is an Australian Series a soap-opera that shows on Irish T.V. my sisters watch it and i sometimes catch it when I am home. The title is rather interesting : Home and Away we all sort of understand the terminology we would say it is one or the other Right ? You are either Home or Away you can't be both ? Right ?

What I want you to see is that may not be true ? That is an integral part of this parable. You can be HOME and yet be AWAY at the same time. This is the real story in Jesus' parable. Let's look at the other son

1. He stayed at home he doesn't ask for his share but receives it anywayThe detail The father divided up the property !
2. He is proud of the fact that he never left home !
3. While it would appear that he feasted well at his father's house it still wasn't enoughHe was still HungryStarving So what did he do ?
4. He 'chewed the cud' of Jealousy, Hatred, Envy, Impatience, Anxiety, Frustration, Discontentment, Pride, Judgmentalism, Sins of the Tongue Recognize these ?
5. "This Son of Yours" not my brother
6. There is no experience of 'coming to his senses !
7. No desire for Forgiveness "His father comes out and pleads with him" No desire for Reconciliation !

Do you think his father should have “Kicked his Ass”? Taken him to the Woodshed ?????

The parable is a message that it is possible to be at home (say the right things, do the right things) and still be miles from home ! It is possible that the younger brother was much closer to home than his elder brother ! It is a story that totally undoes our understanding of most everything. Because it is not a story about either son, really and it is not a story about how you are to father your son

It is a story about how Generous His Father is My Father Your Father I am so grateful that my God is not an “Ass-Kicking” God, and believe me I have been told that rather consistently along the way. He is not a God who wants to take me to the woodshed He is a God who wants to take me one place only That is His Kingdom.

He is not a God of Retributive Justicethe only Justice we know in our world ‘You get what you deserve nothing more’ !

Our God is a God of Restorative Justice nothing else.
He has promised to Heal ALL. Forgive All. Restore ALL.
And bring All to Salvation If we let Him !

Yes, He is indeed very different than the Pharisees, and indeed very different to me and to each one of us !

Thank God !!!

— Fr. Gerry