

FATHER OF THE LOST CHILD

SERIES: DANIEL: NAMES OF GOD, PT 3

SPEAKER: PASTOR DAN GILL

DATE: JUNE 19, 2022

BIBLICAL TEXT(S) + MESSAGE SUMMARY:

LUKE 15:11-32

This morning will be part 3 of our summer study on “The Names of God.” This teaching fell on Father’s Day, so of course, we studied God’s most well-known name, “Father.” We also used one of the best-known scriptures in the bible, the Parable of the Prodigal Son. A resource for this study was a book written by Henri J. M. Nouwen (1932 - 1996), [Return of the Prodigal Son](#). Nouwen did years of study on Rembrandt’s painting of the return of the Prodigal, painted in the 1660s, just before Rembrandt’s death in 1669. Although the messages from this parable are powerful and many, in this study, our focus is becoming like the Father, because this Father is a reflection of our Heavenly Father, who is who we want to emulate and become more like.

A good idea to enhance our study is to search out the mentioned painting. Make sure you are looking at the one painted in the 1660s.

NOTES + DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BYSTANDERS

In Rembrandt’s painting, he adds characters to the Luke 15 story.

If you were able to locate the painting, you’ll notice there are actually what appear to be two women watching from behind the Father, from different distances. One very close, the other almost lurking in the shadows. This woman at the top left, barely visible, is thought to be, by some, the Mother.

- What are your thoughts on these two subjects? Do they add anything to the story?

One of the men is sitting at the Father’s side, staring off into the distance. His clothes imply wealth, and he may be an advisor to the estate, who may be concerned about the boy’s return and the financial consequences. Or he could be a tax collector.

- What are your thoughts on this person? Why does he seem so disinterested in the beautiful scene unfolding before him? Do we learn anything from him?

The other well-dressed man standing, staring at the Father and his returning son, may well be the older brother; he certainly wasn’t happy with the young man’s return.

- What do we learn about the older brother from the story, and what are your observations about him in the painting?

Summary: the Father invites us into the story, wanting us to experience all there is during this short time of life on earth. (That invitation will be different for each of us, but don’t be a bystander, get in the game if you’re not already involved.)

**NOTES + DISCUSSION QUESTIONS,
CONTINUED:**

HOME

There are three keywords or phrases in this section: “Home,” “Lost,” and “A Distant Country.”

- After reading the parable, how would you define these three?

Traditionally, we think of one brother being lost and away, but Dan believes that both need healing and forgiveness. Both needed to come home, and both needed the embrace of a forgiving father. Your thoughts?

- What does “home” mean in this parable, and what is the biblical definition?

Nouwen said in his book: “‘Coming home’ meant, for me, walking step by step toward the One who awaits me with open arms and wants to hold me in an eternal embrace.”

John 14:23, “Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.’”

- Does this change your definition of “home?”
- Thoughts on Dan’s quote on being “lost?” “We first get lost in our hearts, in our relationship with the Father, then we get lost in the ‘Distant Country?’
- What has been a “distant country” in your experience? What were you looking for, and how did you get there? What caused you to want to go “home?”

CALLED TO BECOME THE FATHER

Here’s the important, central message of the parable for us who are home, whether you identify with the younger son or older son or someone else, you have to realize you’re called to become the Father of this story.

- What does it mean to be called the Father in the story?

“The time has come for all of us to claim your true calling, your true vocation to become “a Father.” Not only to the children that bear our name but a Spiritual Father, or Mother, to those God will bring to us or we go find.” Thoughts?

**NOTES + DISCUSSION QUESTIONS,
CONTINUED:**

HEARTS AND HANDS OF THE FATHER

Verse 20 says, “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” What do we learn about the Father’s heart in this part of the story?

Lastly, as we look at Rembrandt’s painting one last time. Henri Nouwen pointed out that the Father’s hands don’t match and don’t look the same. On closer look, the Father’s left hand is a typical masculine man’s hand; his right hand is more feminine, delicate, and smaller. Rembrandt was too good of a painter to make a mistake like this, even though he was in the last couple of years of his life.

- What was it in this beautiful, revealing story that Rembrandt was trying to tell us?
- Could this be a beautiful reference to the multi-faceted character of God? Maybe he is our strong warrior and protector and yet has a gentle, loving, compassionate touch when it’s appropriate for our situation. Thoughts?