

Praying the Parables 3: Exercises for reflection and prayer

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he told them this parable... [Luke 15.1-2]

In your imagination gaze at this scene. To help you begin, use your senses. See the place where Jesus is sitting – perhaps he is sitting outdoors in the shade of a large tree; or is he in someone's home with the door open and a crowd of people spilling into the street? What about the Pharisees and scribes: where are they? Are they standing or sitting? What do you see in their faces? Listen to the sounds you can hear: a murmur of conversation, somewhere more distant the excited voices of children playing in the street, or the creak of a door in the wind. You might feel the heat of the sun or the cool of a breeze.

Now place yourself in the scene somewhere. Are you an onlooker? Perhaps you are among those close to Jesus. Maybe you are the one offering him the hospitality of your house. Where do you want to be? Perhaps you might move there.

How is Jesus for you in this scene? What is he doing or saying? What is happening between you and him? Is there any sense of invitation coming from Jesus to you?

When you are ready, come out of the scene and reflect on what took place. What did you feel? What did you see in a new way? Share with God any thoughts, feelings, desires or fears that arose for you. In quietness, allow God to also share with you.

What woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. [Luke 15.8-10]



Rejoice with me

Ask for the grace to respond to the invitation to share in God's rejoicing as you move through your day...in awareness of the beauty of being in Creation and in those you spend time with...in your own struggle to be more large-hearted...in those who generate hope and well-being.

The God who seeks

This advice is very necessary, not only for all those who advance so prosperously but also for all others who seek their Beloved, I want to speak of it.

In the first place it should be known that if anyone is seeking God, the Beloved is seeking that person much more.

John of the Cross: Living Flame of Love 3.27-28

What is it you seek? Let the question settle down and rest with you.

When you are ready, voice what it is you seek to God.

What is it God seeks for you and your good?

Open yourself to receive understanding of what it is God desires for you

What movement of trust is invited of you?

Perhaps, to open you hands to receive from God...perhaps to step out, despite your fears, in response to God's invitation to you.

Significance

He wants us to know that he takes heed not only of things which are noble and great, but also of those which are little and small, of humble people and simple, of this one and that one. [Julian of Norwich: Long Text 32]

Each day this week spend 5 minutes giving your attention to a 'little thing' – the movement of a tree outside your window, the sound of rain, the colours, shape, smell or taste of an apple or a pear, the knots and contours of a piece of wood – whatever little thing you choose to focus on.

The grumblers

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he told them this parable...

The grumblers cut across the good that is present. They work against life and against the possibility of growth. Sometimes the most potent grumblers lie within us: those self-critical voices that separate us from moving into faith in God and trust in our own good, or deny us the hope that God is at work with us in our imperfect present.



Move from the company of the grumblers into the presence of Jesus. Sit and eat with him; listen to his word to you.

Some Bible passages for reading and prayer:

Isaiah 25.4-9 / Mark 2.13-17 / Psalm 32 / Isaiah 58.4-12