

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon March 15, 2020
Luke 15: 11 - 32 "Parable of the Prodigal Son – Part 3 – A Famine in the Land"

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. 14 **But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.** 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." ' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. 25 Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' 28 But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "

I. Introduction

- a. Our longsuffering heavenly Father does at times reveal His Divine anger. He brings a great shaking to societal stability. The earth of life's stability cracks open before them. Death yawns widely and its foul shadow rattles hearts.
 - i. During this quaking, those who do not know His love and the inexpressible joy of eternal life with Him will be brought nearer to their constant mortal danger which they are able to deny when life marches on according to their fantasies. God uses societal shakings to cast fear into the hearts of those who do not know Him. Such widespread fear of death may be used of God unto widespread repentance to bring in the lost.
 - ii. In addition, often throughout the history of God's people, a great slumbering comes upon His Bride. Those of His people who have forgotten His glory, kindness and righteousness will be brought by God's

shaking nearer to the emptiness and meaningless of being attached to the world, closer to the vanity of placing their affections, their hopes and their happiness in anything other than Christ. At such monumental moments, the Father is disciplining His Bride. Such widespread shaking may be used of God unto widespread repentance of His Bride.

- iii. Calvin “when manifestations of the divine anger appear, as pestilence, war, and famine, the sacred and salutary custom of all ages has been for pastors to exhort the people to public fasting and extraordinary prayer.”
 - b. The coronavirus outbreak currently spreading through our world, killing many and threatening all, is a great shaking of God for our generation. We, indeed, the United States of America, are a nation of people who have earned God’s Divine Anger upon us. We have turned away from Him as our God, not loving Him and adoring Him and honoring Him in our lives. We spurn His worship. We dishonor His Holy Name. We have hearts full of impotent idols. Ours is a rebellious nation. We dishonor God-ordained authorities. We murder the innocent and commend the murderers. We commit adultery and joke about it. We covet and steal and call it righteous and necessary. We slander one another all day long and call it politics and life as usual. The real wonder of God is His mercy that this shaking by the coronavirus is not more terrible, destroying our nation altogether. And, who knows what the economic impact of this situation may be. None of us know the full outcome of all of this at this time. God is shaking us. What are we the people of God to think and do?
 - c. Today’s Sermon: A Famine in the Land – Prodigal Son Part 3
 - i. Learning from the parable of the Prodigal son
 - ii. Learning from Psalm 91
 - iii. Questions/application to know, love and obey God
- II. Learning from the parable of the prodigal son
- a. A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. 14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."
 - b. God uses societal quakings to bring repentance:
 - i. The younger son has selfishly rejected His father and forsaken His father’s presence while insisting upon His father’s possessions.
 - ii. The younger son is alone in a far-away place.

- iii. The younger son has used his father's material blessings to pay for a life of wickedness.
- iv. The younger son has spent it all, and then GOD SHAKES. Even in his poverty, the riotous son had yet to repent.
- v. In this parable, God brings societal quaking that contributes to the eventual repentance of the rebel son.
- c. For the people of God, the Lord shows us how His love for us is behind all such societal quakings.
 - i. Note the generosity of God. The father gives possessions to his rebel son.
 - ii. Note the longsuffering love of God. The father is waiting and watching daily for his rebel son to return in repentance.
 - iii. Note the work of God to shake his son home. The famine.
 - iv. Note how God brings His kindness into our minds unto repentance. The rebel son recalled his father's kindness and believed he would be forgiven.
 - v. Note how God our Father loves us with such deep compassion and affection. The father ran to his son, hugged his son, and kissed his son. The father gave, and gave and gave. The best robe. The ring. The sandals. The father restored and celebrated. The best meal, a large party, dancing, singing, rejoicing.
 - vi. Our Lord calls us to remember Him today, dear brothers and sisters. Now, we will go on to do this. Let's go to the secret place together.

III. Learning from Psalm 91

- a. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." 3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence. 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. 8 Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked. 9 Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place, 10 No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; 11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. 12 In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone. 13 You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. 14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. 15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation."
- b. This is a psalm about dealing with the dangers of this world.

- i. We need a refuge and a fortress in this life here.
 - ii. We need deliverance from the traps of schemers who would steal us away from God.
 - iii. We need deliverance from perilous pestilence. Coronavirus = a perilous pestilence. It is a pestilence that walks in darkness.
 - iv. We need His truth to be the shield and buckler for our minds, hearts and lives. His truth protects us in this dangerous world.
 - v. There are terrors by night and attacks by day in this world.
 - vi. There are evils and plagues in this world.
 - vii. There are lions and serpents in this world.
 - viii. In this world, there are troubles, and sometimes they are vast and quaking, bringing the threat of death and famine to us all.
- c. God would have us first to see His great Fatherly tenderness and love for us
- i. “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”
 - ii. Note the tender language of a household and special nearness.
 - 1. He who “dwells” = a resting place, a home. God our Father is our safe and permanent Home. His love shelters us.
 - 2. Secret place = a welcoming, a nearness, a warmth. We come to the hearth of our Father and draw near to His eternal fire for us His people.
 - a. Note how His love actually brings us to Him upon Mount Zion. We, our souls, our eternal beings, are really there in the Father’s throne room, before the Father’s table, at the Father’s hearth, in Christ our Lord. We are safe, secure, clean and healthy, unthreatened there with Him, now and forever. No foes or scourges may pass into our Father’s realm above, dear saints. No death rates are calculated there on high. Only light, joy, peace and bliss with God. We are there with Him, now, as this pestilence stalks in this world.
 - iii. Note the continued tender language
 - 1. My God – the Lord gives Himself to us and makes Himself unto each of us as “My God”
 - 2. We are under His shadow here in this world. We are covered. By His feathers, under His wings. Tenderly, Personally Protected.
- d. God would have us next see His great and mighty power and sovereignty over all things
- i. He is the Almighty, Most High Creator, Sustainer, Planner and Judge of all. He is above all, as Creator, vast beyond measure in His greatness and glory. This God of love created all things, and plans all things from the beginning, sending forth coronaviruses and earthquakes, wars and famines, from His mighty scepter, a touch of love and comfort for us His people, and a touch of doom and destruction for those who oppose Him.

- ii. He delivers, He covers, He protects. None can stay His hand of protection. Each coronavirus particle is obedient to God's designed plan, going where He says and doing what He has ordained.
- e. God would have us see the enduring love of the faithful toward Him.
 - i. We move to dwell in His secret place. We make Him our dwelling place.
 - ii. We trust His love and power and happily shelter under our Father's care.
 - iii. We have set our love upon Him.
 - iv. We know His Name and we call upon Him.
- f. God would have us see the connection between love and prudence.
 - i. "His truth shall be your shield and buckler."
 - ii. The great internal threat is for our flesh to rise up in fear during a time of God's shaking. But, instead, when the infinite and glorious love of God is shed abroad into our souls, then our hearts are calmed. Only when this internal storm settles and the waters still can we learn to seek and heed God's truth during a time of quaking. So, love alone conquers fear and leads to prudence.
 - iii. All truth is God's truth. The fearless may observe reality and react with prudence as danger nears.
 - 1. Prov 13:16 Every prudent man acts with knowledge, But a fool lays open his folly.
 - 2. Prov 27:12 A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; The simple pass on and are punished.
 - iv. The prudent man is careful to act with knowledge
 - 1. The fearful act in one of two ways.
 - a. On the one hand, they can wildly over-react based upon unproven data or speculative extrapolation. Such ones who panic will act very much, but not often according to knowledge. This fool lays open his folly.
 - b. On the other hand, they will deny knowledge, ignore it, refuse it and end up being foolish and getting harmed.
- g. God would have us see that He is destroying His enemies, giving His enemies their reward
 - i. A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. 8 Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked.
- h. God would have us to see that He protects those in His love when He shakes the earth.
 - i. Prudence is the primary way we are involved in His protection.
 - ii. His great Providence guides all aspects of this pandemic.
 - iii. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you.

8 Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked. 9 Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place, 10 No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; 11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. 12 In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone. 13 You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. 14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. 15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation."

IV. About the coronavirus

- a. Contagion
- b. Symptoms
- c. Spread
- d. Outcomes
- e. Current Foothills strategy. Voluntary Self-sequestration. Evolving daily. Fast moving situation.
 - i. Protect the most vulnerable
 - ii. Serve one another and our community without fear, with joy and rejoicing
 1. CS Lewis ""The first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb, when it comes, find us doing sensible and human things -- praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts -- not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs.""
- f. Fasting and prayer
 - i. Solemn assembly after fasting, this Thursday March 19th, during our regularly scheduled regional prayer gathering

V. Questions to know, love and obey God