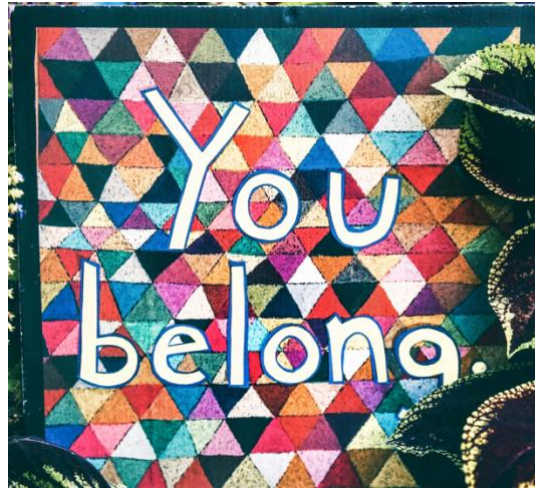


Understanding Our Belonging

Luke 15:11-32

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Background

What does it mean to belong? A question we all can wrestle with in different seasons of life, particularly as we think about belonging to the family of God. This Sunday we'll be talking about this question as we study the parable of the Prodigal Son, in the hopes that we might better understand our part in the family of God.

Sermon Text: Luke 15:11-32 (NIV)

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"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.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property on wild things comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- a. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- b. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?

2. Sunday questions

- a. What was the best thing you heard during the service this week?
- b. Of the three characters in this parable, which one do you most identify with? Explain.
- c. Belonging is a main theme of the parable.
 - Name a current place in your life where you feel you belong. Why?
 - Name a place where you don’t feel you belong. Why?
 - With this understanding, think of a person in your life who may feel lonely or isolated. Can you find time to invite them into community?
- d. How do you understand your belonging in God’s family? How does this affect how you live your life?
- e. One of the main points of the parable is the deep love of the Father for his children, which mirrors God’s love for us.
 - Can you put into words how we should understand His love for us?
 - Have you felt this deep love in your life? How?