

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

6 March

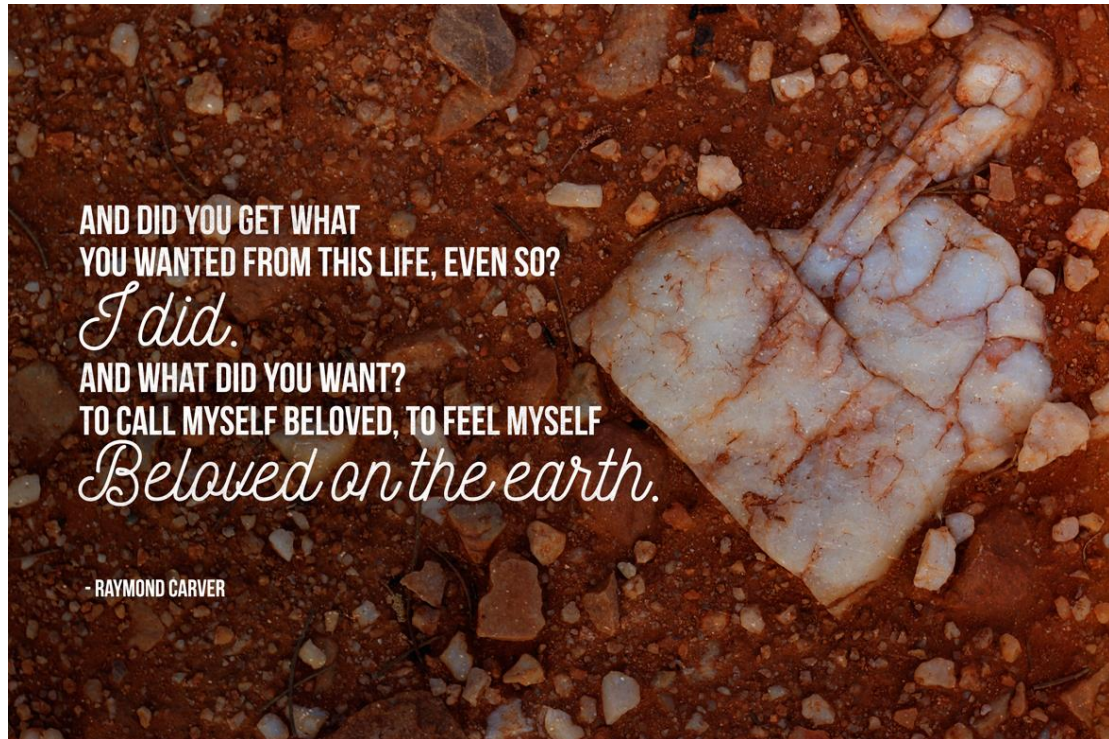


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Luke 15: 11-32

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this

son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

REFLECT

While we are under the illusion that we are in control then we can't see God as God is, and we can't appreciate God's grace for what it is.

It is only when we realize how little it is we actually bring to the table, that we have any chance of experiencing the indescribable immensity of God's love for us.

The younger son has no comprehension of his father's love. Not when he takes the inheritance to find happiness elsewhere. Not when he is crafting his placatory speech to try to weasel his way back in.

Neither does the older son.

It seems it is difficult for us limited humans to have even an edge of a sort of an understanding of the abundance of the love of God.

You could read the whole bible as God's painstaking attempt to tell us how much we are loved.

There is an overwhelming temptation to duck the 'the beams of love' usually by shifting our attention to something ultimately trivial but pleasingly controlled by us.

All human nature vigorously resists grace because grace changes us and the change is painful.

Flannery O'Connor¹

Instead Jesus repeatedly tells his disciples to μέναιτε in his love. (John 15)

¹ The Habit of Being

The Greek root μένω is translated using words like remain, abide, stay, wait and tarry.

This seems more than a little passive.

Moving Forward (destination unspecified) is a serious political slogan in Australia.

We value 'get up and go'.

We are a bit light on the tarrying.

But in this parable both brothers have plenty of drive.

We leave the older brother still working like a slave and feeling hardly done by.

And it is only when the younger brother is forced by imminent starvation to let go of his own attempt to run his life, that he is able to glimpse a little of the love of his dad.

It is no easy thing to let go and receive the uncontrollable love of God.

SAYINGS

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we might learn to bear the beams of love.

William Blake

To be reduced to nothingness in Love is the most desirable thing I know.

Hadewijch

Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu and Paul Kelly

[Amazing Grace](#)

PRAY

Ask God to show you how much you are loved.

Then read with attentiveness today's reading, or Ephesians 3:14-19 or Song of Songs 8:6-7 or the piece of Scripture that says this most strongly to you.

If you feel a glimpse of the love of God don't duck it by turning to the nearest distraction. Stay with it.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

What part of these readings resonates the most? Why?

What part do you least like or most disagree with? Why?

What helps you to know the love of God?

Have you ever ducked the experience of the love of God? Why? What things draw you away?

What does Jesus command to 'abide in God's love' mean to you?