

Luke 15 v 11 – 31

Jesus The Story Teller

Last Sunday, Mike Perrott shared with us on the topic of Jesus.....the teacher from John 3: 1-17

Our Rector, John West, has invited me to preach this week the subject being JESUS....THE STORY TELLER

In fact the role of teacher and story teller are very much intertwined.

Mike reminded us about our school days and school teachers

I have fond memories of many of my teachers at school

Robert Parker, English teacher, recently graduated from Oxford and came to our school

Robert Edyvean, the teacher and story teller.

Who are the Story tellers in your life?????

Have you heard any good stories lately?

Well, we all like to hear a good story.

Jesus told stories called “ parables to the people of his time.

He used parables because many of the things Jesus was teaching were new to the people.

They had heard Rabbis and Pharisees teach them, but they did not teach anything new.

Telling his teachings with stories helped people understand what he was saying to them.

Jesus also used parables to teach people how to treat others and live for God.

Jesus would say things like, “ You’ve heard it said”...Then, He would add, “ But I say....”

He was speaking with great authority when he taught.

He could do this because He was God.

He really knew how to get the people’s attention

Jesus told His disciples that the people who listened to the parables and applied them to their like would see God in heaven.

Others, who did not understand the parables would just be hearing a story.

The parables were a key to understanding the Kingdom of God.

So, what stories have you been reading...what authors and books attract you.

I am certainly reminded of and have been influenced by many stories, authors and books,

C S Lewis Chronicles of Narnia, Screwtape Letters,
Lion Witch & the Wardrobe.

J R R Tolkein The Hobbitt, Lord of the Rings.

Frederick Forsyth Day of the Jackal, Odessa File

J K Rowlings Harry Potter series

Charles Dickens Tale of Two Cities, Great Expectations
Oliver Twist, David Copperfield

Dan Brown Da Vinci Code, Digital Fortress,
Angels and Demons, Lost Symbol

Colleen McCulloch Tim, Thorn Birds
Anthony & Cleopatra,
Caesar's Women

For you, it may have been,

Bryce Courteney, Bronte sisters,

I venture that as I complete my tenth year as Chairperson of St Columba Anglican School these early memories of mine , great stories, great teachers , come back vividly, especially as Year 12 students are presently sitting their HSC examinations

We owe as a nation, a parent, a grandparent and a student an enormous debt of gratitude to the teachers and story tellers in our schools, both public and independent.

I dare say for all of us we have our own memories, some joyous and many hurtful

Failure can be a greater teacher

We live in a society that hesitates to accept failure. The pressure is always on to be a winner.

And yet I have heard , great leader, after great leader say they have learned more from their failures than their successes.

A study of **Abraham Lincoln**...many tries at a seat in Legislature

Edison....Many failures

Shows how many times they failed before embracing ultimate success.

Charlie Lubin made a great cheesecake.

In fact it was so good he decided to open a cheesecake store, which he did in Chicago.

It went so well, that he opened a second store in South Chicago.

That store did not do so well and eventually he lost both stores as a result.

He sat in his room one night and whilst eating his cheesecake, thought “ this is a great cheesecake.”

So he eventually opened his original store again.

After a while he opened another store which did not do so well and he once again lost both stores.

A few months later, while eating his cheesecake he said to himself, “this is a great cheesecake.’

And so he opened his original store again.

But after opening a second store, he failed again.

This happened a fourth time.

Months later, Charlie sat in his house eating his cheesecake and thought to himself again,

“This is a great cheesecake.”

And so he decided to open another store, only this time he would name his cheesecakes after his daughter, SARA LEE.

It became the largest bakery in the world.

We need to learn from our failures.

We need to encourage our children , grandchildren and great grandchildren to strive for success, but if they fail, we need to show them how they can learn from it.

The prodigal son failed.

But his father was waiting with arms open wide.

No matter how many times we fail, God teaches us lessons through it, helps us back up, and continues to love us.

Our Nation is facing a crisis with its young people.

It has always been tough to be a young person growing up.

And it has always been tough to be a parent and raise children into adults.

Plato records in Republic Book 4

Socrates wrote, “ Youth today love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, no respect for older people, and talk nonsense when they should work. Young people do not stand up any longer when adults enter a room. They contradict their parents, talk too much in company, guzzle their food, lay legs on the table, and tyrannize their elders.”

Peter the Hermit (d.1115) preaching role in the First Crusade , wrote, **“The world is passing through troublesome times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents of old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they know everything, and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness with them. As for the girls, they are forward and immodest and unwomanly in speech, behaviour and dress.”**

And so it is....it has never been easy to be a parent or a young person.

Today, in our Gospel reading, Luke 15 from verses 11 onwards, we look at the life of a young man and his father, the struggles they faced, and the lessons they learnt.

This passage demonstrates so profoundly how great a teacher and story teller Jesus was.

Let me briefly reflect on Rembrandt's painting of the Prodigal Son

Rembrandt was born in 1606 and died in 1669

Created over 300 works of art inspired by stories from the Bible.

Most of these works are drawings & etchings.

In addition, there are some 60 paintings on Biblical themes. Patriarchs, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Isaac, Heroes....Joseph, Samson, Ruth, Saul, David
Esther, Daniel, etc

AND Jesus' birth and childhood, preaching, passion, death and resurrection.

They are all available on the internet.....type in Rembrandt's paintings...

Rembrandt did a series of works on the Prodigal Son. Most famous is "Return of the Prodigal Son, painted in 1668, just before his death)
It's in the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

One critic has stated, " complex emotions are expressed in the figure of the bent old father, and his suffering kneeling son; repentance and charity, boundless love and regret at the belated spiritual awakening. These images represent the summit of Rembrandt's psychological mastery."

In the painting the main group of the father and the Prodigal son stands out in the light against an enormous dark surface.

Particularly vivid are the ragged garment of the son, and the old man's sleeves, which are ochre tinged with golden olive; the ochre colour combined with an intense scarlet red in the father's cloak, forms an unforgettable colouristic harmony.

The observer is roused to a feeling of some extraordinary event.

The son, ruined and repellant, with his bald head and the appearance of an outcast, returns to his father's house after long wanderings and many vicissitudes.

Unforgettable is the image of the repentant sinner leaning against his father's breast and the old father bending over his son.

The whole represents a symbol of all homecoming, of the darkness of human existence, illuminated by tenderness, of weary and sinful mankind taking refuge in the shelter of God's mercy.

Rembrandt's painting shows the merciful father of the parable pardoning the Prodigal son, **while the elder brother is represented with a knife, conspiring to murder.**

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the narrative of the Gospel did not mention a murderous desire of the elder son towards his brother.

It only mentioned his complaint on the preferred treatment his brother had enjoyed without any merit.

However, Rembrandt painted the knife and the murderous glance

Through his art, Rembrandt told us what we did not know but may have harboured some thoughts of.

LESSONS FROM PARABLE

We must learn the value of unconditional love

In this Gospel story today, the father loved the son unconditionally, so he let him go with his share of the inheritance

He loved him unconditionally, so he let him come back after squandering his inheritance.

Unconditional love is something we find very difficult to understand.

We live in a society that says, love me and then I will love you.

Do for me and then I will do for you.

We haven't been taught to love someone simply because they are God's creation.

John 3:16 tells how God loves us unconditionally. He loves us so much He gave His Son.

The truth is, that no matter what kind of car we drive in, no matter what kind of house we have, no matter what colour we are, no matter how many times we have failed him, He still loves us with an everlasting love.

LESSON 2

There are no Lone Rangers

We cannot make it on our own.

Why did the son in this story decide to leave home?

He wanted to set off on his own and prove that he could make it alone.

All of us have felt that desire before.

He perhaps wanted to prove to his older brother, his father, his friends that he could succeed on his own.

The truth is that it is a hard world and we cannot make it out there alone.

We need each other, that is why it says so many times in the scriptures “one another”

Love one another

Forgive one another

Build one another up.

Bear one another’s burdens.

Too many people, and Christians for that matter, are trying to get through life without the help and support of others. When the prodigal son got into the world he realized he could not make it on his own.

LESSON 3

It is never too late to go home.

It has been said, “You can never go home”.

I believe that a lesson we need to learn is that “It is never too late to go home.”

How hard must it have been for the son to go home.

He had to swallow his pride.

He had to face his father and tell him he had lost it all.

He had to face his brother, his friends, how difficult it had to be.

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There is a story told about a father and his teenage son.

They had a strained relationship, so much so that the young man finally ran away from home.

Immediately the father began a journey across Spain in search of his rebellious young son.

Finally, after months and months of searching, he arrived in Madrid.

In a last desperate effort to find his son, the father went down to the newspaper office and put an ad. In the newspaper.

**It simply said,
 “Dear Paco, meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father.**

The next day at noon in front of the newspaper office, 800 Pacos showed up seeking forgiveness.

It’s never too late to go home.

The story of the prodigal son is one with a happy ending.

The son is greeted with open arms, a great celebration. Joy and Love.

That is what God wants for our lives.

We need to apply these lessons to our lives as we allow God to work in us making the children he wants us to be.

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Three Who Gave Everything

Rut 3:1-5, 4:13-17 Heb 9:19-28 Mar 12:38-44

The time of Judges. Often unsettled. A time of turning away from God. It is during this time that the story of Ruth is set.

Elimelech m. **Naomi**. They had two sons - **Mahlon** and **Kilion**
Famine drove them from **Bethlehem** to **Moab**

Naomi's husband Elimelech died

Mahlon and Kilion married Orpah and Ruth - Moabite women.

Ten years later Mahlon and Kilion died

Without husband or sons, Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem, where things have picked up.

Ruth and Orpah want to accompany her.

She dissuades them saying that she won't have any more sons, and if she did, would they wait?

Orpah is convinced and returns

(Ruth 1:15 NRSV) So Naomi said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

{16} But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. {17} Where you die, I will die-- there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!"

Naomi and Ruth return, poor widows.

"Can this be Naomi?" ask the people who knew her.

"Don't call me Naomi (pleasant) call me Mara (bitter)"

BOAZ

Ruth goes to glean grain (God's law provided for the poor in that any dropped grain should be left for them to pick up) – It was a risky business for a lone woman.

"As it turned out" she finished up in Boaz's field.

Boaz noticed her and spoke to his Foreman and commented on her hard work...

He called Ruth and told her, "Stay with my field near my servant girls for safety" She replied

"What have I a foreigner done to deserve your attention" (Ruth 2:11-12 NRSV) But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. {12} May the LORD reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!"

To his men he adds, "Drop a few extra stalks for her"

That day Ruth brought home an ephah (about 22litres) of grain (an enormous amount).

So she went back each day during the harvest.

NAOMI THE MATCHMAKER.

Naomi gives instructions to Ruth...

Tonight, after the evening revelries of drinking at the threshing floor, Boaz will remain there with some of the men to protect the grain.

Wash, Perfume, Best clothes.

When he sleeps uncover his feet and lie down there.

(A proposal of marriage)

Boaz is flattered, but there is another kinsman with first claim.
Boaz gives Ruth six measures of barley and sends her home.

THE COURT

Boaz finds the kinsman at the gate - gets ten elders to witness.
“Naomi is selling Elimelech’s land and you have first option on it.”
“OK” says the kinsman.
“If you do then you have an obligation to marry and care for Ruth.”
“I can’t do that - If she has a son my land could revert to Elimelech’s side of the family. BUY IT YOURSELF” and he took off his sandal and gave it to Boaz.

Boaz declared himself owner of all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon,

...and the husband of Ruth.

And the elders said...

(Ruth 4:11-12 NRSV) "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem;..."

Boaz married Ruth and they cared for Naomi.

And the foreigner, Ruth had a son - **Obed**

and Obed had a son, **Jesse**

and Jesse had a son, **David** the great King of Israel

and David had a descendant, **Jesus of Nazareth.**

When Ruth threw in everything with God’s people, God not only blessed her, but blessed the world through her

And in the genealogy of Jesus, recorded in Matthew’s Gospel, there are five mothers mentioned amongst the men. One is Rahab, the prostitute

who lived in Jericho and threw in her lot with the Israelites when the city was destroyed. She, as an outsider, became a part of Israel, married and had a son – and his name was.... Boaz!

Boaz marries another outsider, Ruth, who becomes an ancestor of King David and of Jesus Christ, whose mother, Mary threw in her lot with God’s will, and is also in the genealogy!

THEN THERE IS ANOTHER WIDOW

We would have known nothing of her except this short account in Mark 12 as she puts all she has into the Temple treasury.

The amount she gave was almost insignificant – about half a cent

We don’t know how God blessed that unnamed woman.

We do know that her faithfulness in giving all she had has been an example to us ever since.

+BI It happened one time after a pastor had made an appeal in church for a great and worthy cause, that a certain woman, a member of the church, came to him and handed him a check for \$50, asking at the same time if her gift was satisfactory. The pastor immediately replied, "If it represents you."

There was a moment of soul-searching thought and she asked to have the check returned to her. She left with it and a day or two later she returned handing the pastor a check for \$5,000 and again asked the same question, "Is my gift satisfactory?" The pastor gave the same answer as before, "If it represents you." As before, a truth seemed to be driving deeply. After a few moments of hesitation she took back the check and left.

Later in the week she came again with a check. That time it was for \$50,000. As she placed it in the pastor's hand, she said, "After earnest, prayerful thought, I have come to the conclusion that this gift does represent me and I am happy to give it."

John Allan Lavender

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988)

JESUS

Then there was Jesus..

David Livingstone (1813-1873) who gave up a lot to serve God in Africa, once wrote...

+ BI I never made a sacrifice. We ought not to talk of sacrifice when we remember the great sacrifice that he made who left his Father's throne on high to give himself for us.

Jesus gave up the glory of heaven.

He sacrificed – not bulls and goats, which could be quite costly – but himself.

The results of his sacrifice – salvation for us

When we talk of sacrifice we are not talking just of suffering.

Most people suffer at some stage in their life, for one reason or another.

Sacrifice is a conscious decision. It's costly. It means giving away something we would rather keep. – **and it's done for love of God.**

There are three Lessons for us:

1. To never think that what we have given is too small to be of any use.
2. To never think that we have given enough until we have given all.
3. To never think that we can put God in our debt.

+ You know the game where you have a list of things you have to collect. Each team goes around finding what they can and brings it to the person in charge of the game, who asks, "OK, how many did you get?" The one who gets most wins.

When we stand before God he will not ask us,
"How much did you *get*?"
He will ask, "How much did you *give*."

Ruth gave up her place of birth.
The widow gave all she had to live on.
Jesus gave his life.