

DISCUSSION:

Discuss the question cluster below

(As much or as little as works for your group and in any order you like)

Feel free to break off into smaller groups if it helps you share more personally

We just finished our sermon series called, "Belonging." In it we focused on the parable of the prodigal sons in Luke 15. The parable is a story meant to change our lives. It shows us *who* belongs to God, *how* we belong to him (and each other), and what's truly valuable to God. The hope is that through increasingly knowing that we truly belong to God and to each other, we will increasingly thrive.

As a special final week bonus, here is an image of Rembrandt's painting that Henri Nouwen reflects on his book I've quoted many times, "Return of the Prodigal Son":



I. This week, our passage (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32, esp. vv.25-32) looked at the character of the Father. The sermon focused our time in the text on: 1) The way the Father loves selflessly (v.20, 28, 31); 2) The way the Father loves joyfully (v.23-24,32); and 3) Becoming the Father (v.22-23). Through that we learned that the Father shows us what God is like with us: he's here to give to us, not to take from us. And he's joyful in doing that. Though it's difficult we're actually called to grow up to be like the Father; to love like he loves. We're enabled to do that the same way the Younger Son does in this parable, by receiving a resurrecting welcome from the Father. God is the one who makes us able to welcome like he does. And he does that through his own gracious welcome of us. Let's discuss how these things impact our lives.

- A. What connected with you from the sermon or from the passage?
- B. Which feels like it would be more difficult for you to do: go out in love and forgiveness to the younger son (v.20) or the older son (v.28)?
 - 1. *What would it have meant to you if someone showed you the kind of love the Father does here in a moment when you were most like the younger son (rebellious, making big mistakes) or the older son (angry, resentful, demanding)?*
 - 2. *How might compassion (having the eyes of the Father to see someone in need of grace) help us start to engage with others more like the Father of this parable?*
- C. Where do you struggle to believe that God is not just willing, but joyful and eager to welcome you home (even when you've been the rebellious younger son type or the resentful older son type)?
 - 1. *Is there are particular part of your life where you struggle to feel like God could ever accept or love you?*
 - 2. *What's one way you could start dwelling more on God's welcome for you simply by grace (not by anything do or don't do) in that area of your life?*