

South Bay Community Church
Sermon Reflection
Two Men and a Lady
June 26, 2022
Minister Philip Thompson

Scripture Texts: Luke 15:11-32, Luke 1:39-45

Sermon Preamble

On Pentecost Sunday, Pastor Tammy Long reminded us that the coming of the Holy Spirit meant that God's kingdom plan for a community of believers had begun, and the challenge we have is to "live into Pentecost." On Baccalaureate Sunday, Minister Ashley Watson built on the theme of living into God's kingdom plan, and we looked at what Success means in God's eyes, based on the life of Jeremiah; success is having a character of obedience and faithfulness, by doing what God has told us to do, no matter the outcome or cost. As we commemorated Juneteenth and Father's Day, Rev. Murphy's message reminded us that we are here because those who came before us persevered, held fast to God, and received God's reward in blessing. God's purpose for our lives can easily become disconnected from the things we do in the normal course of living. Living into God's purpose for our life is not something that is separate from our role as a husband or wife, a son or daughter, a brother or sister, an uncle or aunt, a neighbor, an employee, or a member of a church. In each of these roles, the challenge of living into Pentecost confronts us. It is in the everyday ordinary roles and places of our lives that the gifts, power, and passion from God are manifest. There, we experience God's success because God is at work. We are looking at biblical examples from the lives of "Two Men and a Lady." Let's explore how the Holy Spirit ignited and transformed everyday people in everyday situations and challenges, but experienced extraordinary outcomes to achieve God's Kingdom purposes.

Parable about a Father (Spirit Controlled) and Two Sons (Natural Man) – Luke 15:11-32

The Bible tells us about ordinary people like us. It tells us about the highs and the lows, the decision moments the people encountered, and the mistakes they made. It doesn't just give us the triumphs. The way we are to live is extraordinary because: "it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13). In all those things, God is at work to fulfill God's good purpose.

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 with prostitutes 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.'"

The younger son could not wait, so he takes the property coming to him and liquidates it.

The younger son takes his cash and moves as far away from home as possible. He squandered his wealth in wild living. In modern day terms, his cash app and even his bitcoin value was no longer available to him. In the distant country, he is only able to find a job feeding pigs. Times are hard for the younger son, but he has a good father. The younger son asks forgiveness from the father, and acknowledges his sin against the father. As he rehearsed his line to say to his father, he declares that he is no longer worthy to be his son, but instead deserves to be treated as one of the hired servants. The father restores the father-son relationship. The father held a feast and celebrated that this son who was dead and lost is now alive and found. The older son got angry, declaring that he has slaved for his father, and never disobeyed orders; the older son did not spend property to party with his friends. Yet the younger son, who squandered property, is celebrated when he returns home from wild living. The father pleaded with the older son to come into the home with the younger son to celebrate.

The Natural Man of the Younger Brother and the Older Brother

Let's compare and contrast the younger and the older son. The two brothers are living the life known as the natural man, living according to human nature. The younger son/brother is open and outgoing (v. 13); the older son/brother is reserved and rules based (v. 26, 29a). The younger son is not afraid to ask for what he wants; the older son waits and wants to be given and offered (v. 29b). The younger son enjoys the high partying life (v. 13); the older son is duty oriented and responsible (v. 29). The younger son is willing to take low status work (v. 15); the older son is hard working (v. 29). The younger son lives according to a personal code (v. 21); the older son also lives according to his personal code (v. 28). The younger son is self-reflective and self-aware (v. 17); the older son holds resentment and grudges (v. 30). Both sons process internally and alone.

The brothers are more similar than they realized, because they are living in the natural. "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). These two brothers describe to us how we live, because it is normal and natural

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Father: Spirit's Action in Healing Relationships

Let's look at the father and the Holy Spirit's action in healing relationships. The father demonstrates to us the work of the Spirit in and through an individual. Somebody who brings Pentecost into everyday living does not mean that every situation is going to be a praise party, or every circumstance is going to be cookies and cream. Pentecost means my ability to endure the rocky road and my capacity to handle the reality of modern living of everyday life at the end will be successful and triumphant. The scripture does not specifically say so, but it appears that the youngest son returned to his father, not simply because he was hungry, but because he knew the good character of his father. Pentecost means that God's Spirit is in control, and my natural responses are replaced by spiritual responses.

Holy Spirit enables us to receive without rebutting (v. 12, 21)

Imagine your son telling you that he loves you, but he wishes you were dead. Essentially, that is what the younger son is saying when he declares he wants his share of your estate now. The only time one inherited was when the owner died. As long as the owner of the estate is alive, you have no claim on the estate property. In essence, he is telling his father I love you, but hurry up and die.

Our natural response is that when we are attacked or wrongly evaluated, we have to report it and defend ourselves. The older son says that he has been slaving all these years for the father, but the father has never given him anything. Our natural responses excuse us. However, when the Holy Spirit infuses and overtakes our lives, we can receive the good, the bad, and the ugly, without rebutting. We don't have to defend ourselves because God is our shield and our defense. The father, because he is operating with the Spirit, doesn't report a rebuttal.

Holy Spirit enables us to release without regret (v. 12)

Instead, the parent releases without regret. If your son or daughter wants to go off to a university far away, that can be a nice situation. But suppose your son or daughter desires not to have anything to do with you again? Living in Pentecost, by the Spirit of God, is the promise to "train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). When you stand on the Spirit's promise of the Word of God, you can release without regret. The father then gives to the oldest and the youngest son, and the father leaves himself without. The father trusts that God will make a way, and he releases them.

We develop attachments to emotional hurts. One of the most difficult things we experience in life is to release someone from the emotional hurt they have inflicted on us. But God calls us to living in the Spirit to release without regret.

Holy Spirit helps us to restore with respect and dignity (v. 20, 22, 28)

The father runs to his younger son and throws arms around him; he kisses him, calls for the best coat, and directs to put sandals on his son's feet. With his older son, he pleads with him even in the face of disrespect. In the natural, that will not happen because naturally, there is a line you do not cross. It is normal and natural to avoid pain, hurt, and circumstances that make us feel belittled. In the natural, we avoid the person who created them. In spite of all that hurt and pain, the Spirit's work living in Pentecost provides the power to forgive and the power to restore. The father restores his son with respect.

Holy Spirit teaches us how to remind without reproach (v. 24, 30, 32).

The eldest son calls the young son, "that son of yours." The eldest son attacks the father declaring that he slaved for the father, but not even a goat was given to him to celebrate with his friends. The father does not attack in return, but reminds his eldest son: "all that I have is yours!"

This father's reminder is not with reproach, but out of love. The father wants his son to experience and see the fullness in the Spirit and be able to no longer operate in the natural.

There are good people, but they are natural people. The persons who are natural do not experience Pentecost nor understand the fullness that God gives and offers in every area of life. God is at work for God's good purpose in every area of life including on your job, in the family, in community relationships, and in every area of life. God has plans for us that are good, not evil. It gives us a future and a hope.

The Spirit Controlled Life of Mary in relationship with Elizabeth – Luke 1:39-45

38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her. **39** At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, **40** where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. **41** When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. **42** In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! **43** But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? **44** As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. **45** Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!” **46** And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord. **47** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” (Luke 1:38-47).

Mary makes a life altering decision and that choice creates a need in her life. She goes looking for someone who can help her, someone who the Holy Spirit is working in and working on. The Holy Spirit not only equips us to fulfill God's purpose and call on our lives, but God is the one who draws those who are in need of the gifting that God has given to us.

Mary shows us what Spirit controlled living is about:

- A dynamic relationship with God (v38a)
- Willingly takes action based on God's Word (v38b)
- Actively seeks fellowship for growth (v40)
- Worship is the natural response to life situations (v46;47)

Elizabeth living the Spirit controlled life:

Elizabeth widens for us our understanding of spirit controlled living. In the face of her own circumstances, she ministers. She has the capacity to attend to the needs of another even in the face of her own neediness. Like Elizabeth, when we are living a life that is available to, given over to, and empowered by the Holy Spirit:

- She's attuned/sensitive to the spiritual and the natural - empathizes with the other and recognizes the spiritual importance of the moment (v.41).
- She has infectious joy and deep faith (v.44, 45).
- She lifts the other - speaks graciously and wisely into the circumstances (v.43).
- She blesses the other - the Godly personhood of the other; the God ordained purpose of the other; the Godly outcome that will result (v.42, 45).
- She stimulates worship in the other (v.46).

The Promise of Life in the Spirit

“However, as it is written: ‘What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived, the things God has prepared for those who love him’ - these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:9-10a).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Sermon Preamble

- In what situation is God at work in this season of your life?
- What has been your response to God's purpose for you as you live out this life situation?

Parable about a Father (Spirit Controlled) and Two Sons (Natural Man) – Luke 15:11-32

- Which individual(s) in the parable of the lost son can you identify with?
- How does this story reflect your childhood family or the family you are in now?
- Would it help anyone in the family if you responded by Spirit-controlled living into Pentecost similar to the father?
- Controlled by the Spirit, rather than the natural human tendency, how would your actions have been different in a particular situation?

The Natural Man of the Younger Brother and the Older Brother

- Describe characteristics you had that are part of the natural human being of you not controlled by the Holy Spirit?

-Review 1 John 1: 8-10. The younger son determined that he would express confession, and he received forgiveness and restored relationship from his father. How has your Heavenly Father responded to your confessions of sin from the natural human, not controlled by the Holy Spirit?

Father: Spirit's Action in Healing Relationships

What difficult situations in living into Pentecost by the power of the Holy Spirit, have you faced? In handling the reality of modern living of everyday life, why is living into Pentecost not always a praise party or all peaches and cream?

Holy Spirit enables us to receive without rebutting

When we are attacked or wrongly evaluated, how can we receive the statement without making an excuse, defending ourselves or rebutting? When we are operating within the Spirit, with God as our shield and defense, why is rebuttal not healthy in healing the relationship?

Holy Spirit enables us to release without regret

- In what circumstances have you found it important to release those close to you, such as your children, from under your supervision and care?

- Why is it difficult to release without regret, those who have inflicted emotional hurts on you?

Holy Spirit helps us to restore with respect and dignity

-The younger son disrespected the father by demanding immediately the property he would receive upon the father's death. The older son also disrespected the father in his accusations. Despite all the hurt and pain from disrespect, the Holy Spirit guided the father to restore his sons with respect and dignity, as sons, not hired servants. In what circumstances have you found it important to restore a person with respect and dignity?

Holy Spirit teaches us how to remind without reproach

The father, when accused of not sharing property with the eldest son, reminded the son out of love, not reproach, that all that the father has belongs to the son. The father also had to remind the older son of the brotherly relationship. When have you had to remind others in a dispute of their close relationship?

The Spirit Controlled Life of Mary in relationship with Elizabeth

As Mary and Elizabeth lived the Spirit-controlled life, what actions and attitudes resonated as especially meaningful for your life journey?