



Full to The Brim ~ An Expansive Lent

Tuesday Small Group Session

Fourth Week of Lent – *Prodigal Grace*

Gathering /Welcome -

What's something that just happened to you this past week that gave you a glimpse of God's presence and grace?

Introduction/Background for *Full to the Brim* from Sanctified Art:

Full to the Brim reminds us to live fully—as we pursue justice and hope, or express grief and gratitude. And so, this Lent, let us trust—fully—that we belong to God. Let us increase our capacity to receive and give grace. Let us discover the expansive life God dreams for us.

Sharing the Scripture

Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

15 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.

¹¹ Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² 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. ¹³ A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

¹⁴ When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ 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! ¹⁸ I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’

²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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.’²² 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.’²³ And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷ He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ ³¹ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² 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.’”

Commentary | Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt

Everyone has something that challenges them, pushes them in a way that is ultimately good for them but perhaps they weren’t quite ready for.... For a very long time, my challenge was the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

I don’t think I’m the only person who has ever struggled with this parable. No matter where we see ourselves in this story—as the younger son, the older son, or even as the father—it can be challenging to sympathize with everyone. Why would the younger son take so much—half of the estate—from his father, only to waste it? Why wouldn’t the older son celebrate the fact that his brother is back? Why wouldn’t the father (or anyone, for that matter) bother to tell the older son what’s going on?

Trying to make sense of these characters was hard for me, but what I eventually came to realize is that every single one of them, regardless of what they’ve done, receives grace. Both sons, one wasteful and one frustrated, receive the grace of their father, and even the father (who could, but isn’t explicitly said to, represent God) experiences grace in his interactions with his sons. No one earns it, but rather it is something they experience together. Once I understood this, I began to feel the grace this parable extends in my own life. There’s no limit to the grace we can experience with God because God puts no limits on grace. Our lives can be big, full, messy, complicated, imperfect, a wreck, and God’s grace will still be there.

Go forth and experience God’s grace in the people in your life, without limits.

Here is a modern digital art image for this week's Expansive Lent curriculum:



New in Christ | Lauren Wright Pittman
Digital painting

Here is the Rembrandt painting of the Prodigal Son parable that Peter referenced in his sermon:



Discussion Questions -

Returning to a question from the Sunday sermon, with which of the characters in the prodigal son parable do you identify and why – the father, the prodigal son, the son who stayed?

Rev. Birt invites: “Go forth and experience God’s grace in the people in your life, without limits”? Who has extended that kind of grace in your life?

Returning to some of the questions that were on the back page of the Wellness Wheel exercise we did last week -- As we explore what it means to have an Expansive Lent leading to Easter Joy, what needs to change in how we live? What’s one thing you could take on? What’s one thing you could let go?