

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

In the parable of the lost son, Jesus said that while “he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). I praise you today as the God who first loved me. When I was still a sinner, you gave your only Son as a sacrifice for my sin, and when I reached out to you in repentance, you ran to meet me and welcomed me back home. Hallelujah!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me about Jesus’ ministry in Perea, the region of Israel to the east of the Jordan River. As he was passing through the towns and villages, teaching and making his way back toward Jerusalem, someone asked him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” Jesus’ answer teaches me that: 1) I must be actively *striving* to enter the Kingdom. Saving faith is the attitude of a lifetime, not the act of a moment. Eternal life in Christ is the present possession of *those who have a present, living faith*; 2) the many who “will seek to enter and will not be able” refers to those who witnessed Jesus’ earthly ministry and yet did not believe (Luke 13:26). It also refers to the Jews throughout history who trusted in their ancestry and law-keeping to be right with you. The Jews were indeed “first” in the sense that they had been chosen from among the nations to be your special people. Yet they would find themselves “last” and the Gentiles first if they did not repent and put their faith in your Son. Not long afterward, Jesus was invited to eat at the house of a Pharisee on the Sabbath. While he was there, Jesus taught the Pharisees and scribes several lessons. First, Jesus showed them that healing was a fulfillment of the command to love your neighbor. It did not violate the Sabbath, for acts of mercy were all the more appropriate on a day which was set apart to you (Luke 14:5). Second, he rebuked their desire to be exalted and urged them to humble themselves. He also encouraged the host to invite those who could not repay, for if he did, he would be repaid by you. Last, Jesus told them a parable which showed that the Jews (the invited guests) would fail to enter the Kingdom if they showed contempt for the One who invited them. Gentiles would take their place if they rejected his gracious invitation. When they later grumbled that Jesus ate with sinners, Jesus told them the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. These stories are a window into your heart, for they reveal your love for the lost. Your magnificent obsession is to rescue the perishing and restore them to your fold. I want to share in this love, for when I work to save the lost, I take delight in what you hold most dear.

Reflection

Jesus’ speech to the large crowds who followed him is both challenging and convicting. He spoke first of the *commitment* of discipleship. If the crowds didn’t love him more than anything, including their own families, they could not be his disciples. Am I willing to love you more than anyone? He spoke next of the *cross* of discipleship. The cross was an instrument of humiliation and death, and if the crowds wanted to follow him, they must die to themselves (renounce the right to have their own way). Am I willing to die to myself and submit to your will? He spoke last of the *cost* of discipleship. If the crowds didn’t think seriously about what it meant to follow him, they would soon find themselves unwilling or unable to be his disciples. Have I counted the cost and made the sacrifices necessary to be Jesus’ disciple?

Request

Father, give me a love for the lost and a desire to labor in your harvest fields. I know the world is headed for an eternity in a devil’s hell, and I want to win souls for you. Here I am, Lord, use me!

Thanksgiving

Thank you for finding me when I was lost in the darkness of sin. How grateful I am to serve a God who is filled with joy when even one sinner repents!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[Coming Home](#)” – Daniel O. Teasley.

Meditation Verse: Luke 15:20.