

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 2/23/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

The parables of JESUS usually start where GOD intends things to be:

“There was a man who had two sons...”

“A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho...”

“Suppose a woman had ten silver coins...”

“A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers, and went away for a long time...”

But then they devolve, sometimes by accident:

“...ten silver coins and loses one...”

Though more often because of human sin, usually in the form of selfishness:

“...two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate...’”

“...from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers...A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side...”

“...went away for a long time. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed...”

These movements in the stories away from GOD’s intent serve to convict us of our choices that put our desires and interests ahead of GOD’s plan for our lives and the lives of others. They invite us to repent, to turn around, and go the other way back to GOD’s vision for us and for the world:

“...‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you’...”

Sometimes they reveal the consequences of failing to turn to GOD:

“...What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

Sometimes they give us a vision of our role in GOD’s kingdom:

“...But a Samaritan as he traveled came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds...took him to an inn and took care of him.”

And sometimes they offer us a vision of GOD’s kingdom in its fullness:

“...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...For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

“...when she finds the coin, she calls her neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin’...there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of GOD over one sinner who repents.”

The parables of JESUS begin where GOD intends things to be. And they end where GOD resolves them as much as possible to the way GOD wants them to be. They allow us to think about what GOD desires for us and for the world. They challenge us to look at our lives and consider how well we are doing at helping to fulfill GOD’s vision. And they can comfort us in the promise that, in the end, GOD will bring things into the order of what GOD wishes. The question always for us is where do we want to find ourselves in GOD’s story?

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey