

# Coming Home

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- [ 0 : 00 ] As the boys and girls head off, we can join together in a word of prayer. Let's all pray. Lord, we thank you for our time together today, Lord. We ask you to bless us as you spend this time around your word.
- Encourage us, Lord. We come to this place with so many burdens. We come to this place today with so many things distracting us. We come to this place today, perhaps not with idols, but so many thoughts and so many worries that crowd our mind and take us away from spending this time with you.
- We come just now taking all these things, all these distractions, all these anxieties, all these worries, and we lay them just now where you tell us to place them. At the throne of grace, that throne where you are seated, where you tell us to cast our anxieties and our burdens onto you.
- You tell us that there we find peace, there we find hope and grace in time of need. Thank you, Lord, for the boys and the girls. We thank you, Lord, for four of them.
- Thank you for a willingness for them to come. Thank you for our mums and dads and parents and grandparents and family members who encourage and who take out the boys and girls to church.
- [ 1 : 17 ] Lord, we would help us to be mindful of them and to understand that the fact they are here is no small thing. We ask, as always, they would know our care for them, our appreciation of them, our love for them.
- But more importantly on that, Lord, we ask that they would know, even in their young days, if you are able to save any and all, regardless of age or stage, we ask that they would come to know what it is to love Jesus, to know him and to be known by him.
- The one who calls little children his precious ones, who tells little children not to keep away but to come to him, who cares for them and who knows them.
- Help us this day to have our minds and our hearts fully focused on your word. We thank you for the privilege we have of worshipping you in this place.
- Thank you for everyone gathered here. Pray just now for brothers and sisters here today, those of us here who know and who love the Lord. We thank you for this time around the word. Help us to be encouraged.
- [ 2 : 20 ] Help us to be built up in the word today. To leave this place not just having grown in our knowledge, but to leave this place having grown in our love for you and our love for one another.
- We pray just now for our friends here today. We thank you for them. Those who have come here for many weeks and many years. Those perhaps who have recently started coming again.
- And those who we are so glad to see coming in recent weeks. Lord, we ask that together they would know and they would hear and understand from your word.
- That you are God. That you have made a way of salvation for all people. Through the finished work of Jesus. We can know peace.

We can know you. We can know what it is to have our sins forgiven. To have the wrath, the heaviness of punishment taken away from us.

[ 3 : 15 ] And to know what it is to come to you with confidence. Knowing we come to a father who calls us his children. We pray now as we read for our brothers and sisters, our friends in the gospel in Sudan, in South Sudan.

Lord, as we hear and as we have heard recently testimony of brothers and sisters there. Who have faced some pretty horrendous situations. We cannot come alongside them in any other way but ever in prayer.

We can't understand what it is to have our churches burnt down. We can't understand what it is to have our homes burnt down for being Christians. But we can come alongside them and say that as brothers and sisters we care for them.

We bring them to you. We give you praise as we hear the good news. That despite opposition in South Sudan. The church is spreading. The gospel is growing.

There are many more believers coming to faith in you. What is so unlikely for us it is taking place. But nothing is impossible for you. So pray Lord for South Sudan and our brothers and sisters there.

[ 4 : 23 ] We pray more locally for our brothers and sisters in Garibas. We thank you for them. Pray for them as a congregation. We pray for Ian Thompson. We pray for Connie his wife. We pray Lord for them as a couple.

In their own private lives. In their own private walk. We pray for them publicly. As they seek to serve you. Pray for Ian. Your servant there. Pray for the elders and deacons.

Pray for them as they have asked us to pray these days. Especially for their building situation. As we come to matters of buildings and material things. We know it is often so sensitive.

And often we must tread so carefully. Lord we ask you to encourage their discussions. And give them wisdom and guidance. We also pray as they have asked us to pray for the increase. We have seen recently in parents and young children.

And they have wisdom on how to minister and serve these young families well. Help us Lord to remember the gospel cause. We pray for the gospel cause in North Tulsa.

[ 5 : 22 ] Give you praise for last Lord's Day. Last Sunday as we saw some new faces come out. We were praying perhaps Lord for one or two.

But in your glory and your power. And in your goodness to your people. We saw ten times what we are perhaps what we are praying for. Lord we thank you for that.

Help us to bring this gospel cause of our village to you. Day after day. We pray for every home.

From the Glen to Gary. Every family represented. Every person represented. Lord that you would receive the glory. We pray for them. Those many homes. Those many families.

Who have no idea of what the gospel is. Who have no idea of what danger they are in. Who have no idea as to the hope and the promise they can find in Jesus. Give us Lord as your people today.

[ 6 : 17 ] Give us the sense. And give us the sense of duty. And the sense of urgency. To be salt and light. To invite them. To engage with them. Help us to be good neighbours.

Help us to be kind neighbours. Help our friends and family and neighbours to see in us just some of the love that we have received from Jesus. Pray Lord for the many homes here.

Many individuals here in North Tolstead. Who have never prayed for themselves. We pray for them just now. We ask you to be with them. We ask you to bring them to yourself. I pray as always for our friends and our brothers and sisters who meet next door.

We ask you to encourage them as they seek to serve you. Pray for them just now in a time of vacancy. As they're without a minister. Or though it might seem to us so impossible.

We ask you to provide for them one who would be a servant to them. A minister over them. Thank you Lord for the privilege we have of serving you in North Tolstead. The privilege we have of living here.

[ 7 : 20 ] Of serving you here. For the many of us here who were born. And the many of us who have moved in in recent years. We are here together. And this is a mission field you have placed us in.

We give you praise for all your goodness towards us. Your love shown towards your people. Pray just now for a wider gospel cause. Pray for our vacant congregations in our own denomination.

Do pray Lord just now for Shawbust. Pray for North Uist and South Uist. Pray Lord for the upcoming vacancy in Stornoway. The upcoming vacancy also in Calanish.

Pray Lord for the vacancy. The new vacancy also in Park and Graver. For we ask you with these vacant congregations. Encourage them in what is always trying days.

And provide for them we ask. Men who would lead and guide. And be servants to your people there. Your gospel cause is spreading. Across the world we see and hear the good news.

[ 8 : 18 ] But in nations there was once no gospel. In nations where once so dark to the gospel. We are hearing the good news of your church spreading. The many millions of believers now in China.

The many millions of believers now meeting in secret in China. The numbers are beyond our understanding. But Lord you know the numbers. I ask you to bless your people there. Those who seek to serve you against a nation and a state.

A government that is actively trying to suppress the gospel. Give you praise Lord. We have brothers and sisters across the world this day. All different colours of this world.

And cultures and experiences. All the differences we might have. We are united in our love for our Saviour. And his love for us. Help us today to understand your word.

To listen to it carefully. As we hear the reminder. That you are the Father who welcomes home. All who come back to you. You are the Father who is holy and perfect.

[ 9 : 21 ] Who is good in everything that you do. But yet you are not distant nor far away. You are close to all who cry out to you. Thank you Lord for the privilege we have of worshipping like this.

Thank you for all that goes on in our congregation. Give you praise for the Sunday school. For the teachers past and present. Thank you for the WFM and the work that they do.

The money that they raise. And the awareness that they raise. Pray just now Lord for all that goes on in our congregation. Behind the scenes. We pray just now for upcoming plans. Pray just now for the Hope Explored course.

We hope to run next month. For new fellowship we hope to start. Lord we know that we make these plans. And have these ideas. And we seek to do them faithfully.

And to the best of our ability. But we know that if you are not in it. They will not prosper. We pray Lord then you will go before us. And make the way for us. You will be in all these plans.

[10:18] And we will see growth in your people. An increase in number. As we pray for increase in number. We are not doing it for our own glory. Not for the glory of my ministry. Not for the glory of this congregation.

Not for the glory of the free church of Scotland. Who cares for these things. We pray Lord for your glory. And that you be magnified. As more people come into your kingdom. Help us then to have a heart.

And a mind focused on your word today. We come just now confessing sin. In our thoughts. In our words. In our actions. This past week. And this past day.

We have said. And done. And thought things. Against you. A holy God. And we come asking. And knowing. That in Jesus we have forgiveness. If we can call him our saviour.

Our king. And our friend. As we come at times clinging on to him. We know that he holds eternally on to us. It's got all these things in his name.

[11:16] And for his sake. Amen. We can turn to read in the Bible. In God's word. Actually the same chapter we had last week. Really.

Normally we're doing a series in the gospel of Mark. But for a short time we're looking. Just now in the gospel of Luke. Luke chapter 15. Luke chapter 15 is on page 821.

Page 821. As for today I want us to look at verses 11. Down to the end of the chapter. Last week we saw the parable of the lost sheep.

But today I want to see the parable of the prodigal son. Or the parable of the lost son. Luke chapter 15. Verse 11. Page 821.

Let's hear together God's word. This is Jesus speaking. And he said. There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father. Father.

[12:17] Give me the share of property that is coming to me. And he divided his property between them. Not many days later. The younger son gathered all he had.

And took a journey into a far country. And there he squandered his property and reckless living. When he had spent everything. A severe famine arose in that country.

And he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out. To one of the citizens of that country. Who sent him into the fields. To feed pigs.

And he was longing to be fed the pods that the pigs ate. And no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself. He said. How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread.

But I perish here with hunger. I will arise and go to my father. And I will say to him. Father. I have sinned against heaven and before you.

[13:14] I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off.

His father saw him. And felt compassion. And ran. And embraced him. And kissed him. And the son said to him. Father. I have sinned against heaven and before you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants. Bring quickly the best robe. And put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.

And bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.

And they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house. He heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants.

[14:10] And asked what these things meant. And he said to him. Your brother has come. And your father has killed a fattened calf. Because he received him back. Safe and sound.

But he was angry. And refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him. But he answered his father. Look. These many years I have served you. And I never disobeyed your command.

Yet you never gave me a young goat. But I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came. Who devoted. Devoured your property with prostitutes.

And you killed the fattened calf for him. And he said to him. Son. You are always with me. And all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad.

For this your brother was dead. And is alive. He was lost. And is found. Amen. God praise to God. For his holy. And his perfect word.

[ 15 : 07 ] We can sing. From Sing Psalms. And Psalm 36. Sing Psalms. Psalm 36. That's on page 44.

Of our psalm books. Psalm 36. On page 44. Psalm 36. On page 44.

We can sing verses 5. Down to verse 10. Singing all about the goodness. And the love of God. Psalm 36. Verses 5. Down to verse 10. Your steadfast love is great.

O Lord. It reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful. Extending to the sky. Psalm 36. Verses 5 to 10. To God's praise.

Jesus. For the beautifulness And therefore, there's something to the sky.

[ 16 : 27 ] You, Christ, Jesus, let me give. Thou are mounded by our sea.

You shall still sit like ocean tears.

All my heart be stilled. How precious is your steadfast love.

Will God bless and still grieve. O high and low, high sheltering.

The shadow of your wings. The fish will never stand drink.

[ 17 : 42 ] From streams of you behind. For well, you is a source of light.

And you arrive with sea light. To those who do you ask the cross.

Your steadfast love in heart. Maintain your righteousness next to those.

So give me the right, the bright heart. Let's turn back to the chapter we had just for a short time.

Luke chapter 15. Luke chapter 15. Again, verses 11 down to the end. Just to remind ourselves, just very briefly.

[ 18 : 57 ] We said last week, this is one, of course, of three parables. All parables in this section. We all have one central meaning. It's talking about God finding the lost.

Those who have wandered away from him. Those who have run away from him. That he finds them. When he finds them, there is joy when he finds them. Just to remind ourselves, we said also that parables, we can get so caught up in the details.

The small details of a story. But actually, when Jesus tells a parable, a story, it always has one or two connected main themes. And we see that today. This is a big story he tells.

Lots of details. Jesus is the best preacher. Jesus is the best storyteller. He engages well. He's talking to farmers and crofters and fishermen.

Talking to fathers and mothers. He's telling a story they understand in a way they understand it. That's all we always try to do as ministers. We try and share the gospel.

[ 20 : 01 ] Share the good news in a way that is simple to understand. That is our goal. Do we always achieve that goal? Definitely not. But we try and do that. We've got five points.

And don't panic. We're five short points to help us understand the story that Jesus is telling. The story that the son who is a runaway son.

First of all, our first point is hatred. Hatred. The story begins in verse 11 of this man who has these two sons.

And one of the sons says in verse 11 and verse 12 to the father. Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.

First of all, the name he calls him. The Bible, the New Testament, was written originally in Greek. And in Greek, there's three or four words.

[ 21 : 00 ] Like in English, three or four words for father. You've got dad. You've got father. You've got other terms. And the word used here for father, it's the most formal, cold word to use.

He addresses his dad in the coldest, most formal terms. My father, quite literally we could say. My father, give me what?

Give me the share of property that is coming to me. In other words, father, give me my inheritance. Give me what I'll get one day. Give me my inheritance now.

What's he really saying there? He's saying, father, dad, I'd rather you were dead.

I'd rather you were gone and I had your money. I'd rather what you have to give me more than yourself. An inheritance comes when we know the party dies. When our parents and grandparents pass away, we receive perhaps an inheritance from them.

[ 22 : 04 ] And by saying this, he's saying, I'd rather you were dead and I had what you had to give me. I'd rather you were gone out of my life. Just give me my money. Give me what's mine and let me go.

This boy is showing, of course, hatred for a father who we see as a good father. We see as a good father because he gives it to him. He divvies up his money and he gives the money of inheritance to his son.

But not just hating his father. We can see that by the son saying to the father, just give me what you can give me and forget about yourself. I don't want anything to do with you. He's also showing hatred for himself.

Hatred for who he really is. He is here as a son to a good father who's been promised an inheritance. Who can live and spend time in a happy family.

In a good family. And instead he says, no. I want no more of your time. I want nothing to do with you. Give me my money and let me go.

[ 23 : 14 ] He has so much given to him. So much available to him. But he goes his own way instead. And we see something quite surprising.

And for the listeners in Jesus' day, also quite surprising. The father doesn't say, no. It's not yours. It's mine. The father says, what does the father say?

Nothing at all. He just gives him his share. The son says, father, give me the share of property that is coming to me. And he, the father, divided his property between them.

He listens to the son. The son says, I want to walk away from you. I want to leave you. And the father lets him do it. Of course, this is a story.

And the father in the story we know is God. And when Jesus tells the story, the sons, the two sons, are us who are listening to the story. So the father in this story is God.

[ 24 : 21 ] And we are the two sons, those of us who are listening. We often perhaps think that when God punishes, that the punishment of God, it's lightning and thunder and heaviness and wrath.

And it's there in his bigness and his holiness. Actually, the more terrifying and the more common way we see God's wrath, his righteous wrath, his good wrath, is letting us do what we want.

Letting us do what we want. The much more scary way we see God being in charge is not saying to us, stop, or there will be lightning and thunder.

He says, okay. You want to go away from me? Okay. You want to spend no time with me? Okay. You'd rather do your own thing and ignore me and keep one thing away from me?

Okay. Like the father in this story, God doesn't stop. He doesn't stop the son. You want your own way, to do your own thing.

[ 25 : 39 ] Ignore me. Even though you know I'm there. Even though you know with me you have a good reality. Even though you know that I made you, I know you, I love you.

And you say, I want nothing to do with you. I'd rather you are gone and dead out of my life. The father here and God says, okay.

Okay. Now, there's some big questions to ask today from these verses. And again, only you can answer them. Only you can answer them.

The first big question is, friends, have you perhaps walked away from the father? Perhaps you've turned your back on God.

Perhaps there's a point, some point, you used to have some interest in him. You're thinking, maybe, yes. You know he's there. You know he exists. And you think, nah. Not just now.

[ 26 : 39 ] Not just now. I'm too young. Or life's going too well. I'll come back to God when I'm older. When life is harder. But for now, for now, I want to do my own thing.

I've got no time for you just now, God. I want to do my own thing. You've turned your back on him. And gone your own way.

And in leaving him and turning your back, you've taken instead what the world has to offer you. The small things of this world. Perhaps money.

Perhaps power. Happiness. Whatever form you have it. And we're not bad things. You know. A job. And earning money. And having a family.

And having a good time. We're not bad things in and of themselves. But replacing God with anything else. We said to the boys and the girls.

[ 27 : 36 ] Is a dangerous place to be. Saying, God. I want everything you've given me. So for us, it's this world. The Bible says, all good things are a gift from God.

Our health. Our life. Our family. Our support networks. This country we live in. Our clothes. Everything we have. All the good things in life are a gift from God.

But we say like this boy here to his dad. We say, thank you for everything you've given me. Now get lost. I'll take what you've given me. But I don't want you. I want nothing to do at all with you.

But thank you for all the stuff you've given me. We spend our time like this young man does. Being happy with all the stuff and things of the world.

But having no time for the very God. The Father. Who has given the good things to us. Now I'm aware. For some here.

[ 28 : 37 ] And by aware. I mean I don't know your stories. But I know the chances are. Perhaps you did not have. Or do not have. A good father. Perhaps you grew up with a father. That was not loving.

That was not caring. But that's what we see here. Here we see God. Who is the best father. Who is loving and caring in every possible way.

Question is just now. Are you running away from him? Are you like this boy? You know he's there. But you're running away from him.

Trying to escape him. What happens then? He runs away from his dad. He leaves his dad behind. And what happens to him? Verse 13.

Not many days later. The young son. He gathers all he has. Takes a journey. Where? Into a far country. He goes as far away from God. As possible. And there he squandered his property.

[ 29 : 37 ] In reckless living. He spent everything. And he is starving. So he goes away. He leaves in joy.

I can do my own thing now. I'm no longer shackled to you. No longer held by you. I'm going to live a good life. A free life. Do what I want to do. And he has a good life.

He enjoys himself. He spends all his money. He's received a big inheritance. And he has a good time of it. He loves his time. He spends his days enjoying himself quite clearly.

A good life. An enjoyable life. But we see ultimately. He leads. For a short time. A completely empty life.

He ends up. With nothing. Ends up. With nothing. He thinks.

[ 30 : 39 ] That he. He leaves his father. And leaves his home. And leaves. What he's been made. To do. And to serve. And to live with. And go out into the world. And do his own thing. And he thinks. He's going out into the world. To be free.

And have freedom. And he ends up. Where? In a much worse place. Than he started. A much worse place. Than he started. This poor man.

He ends up. Where? Well. In this far away country. Working with pigs. Why pigs? Well. Think. Who Jesus is telling the story. He's telling the story.

To Jewish people. And for a Jewish audience. The worst thing possible. Of course. Is to be. Working with. An animal. But for them. In this day.

Was unclean. Untouchable. He's left. Luxury. And peace. To be a starving. Servant. A starving. Peasant. A starving.

[ 31 : 35 ] Poor soul. Working with the one animal. He's not supposed to even touch. The example here is. He's gone from goodness. And glory. And happiness. To the very pits.

Really. His good life. Has amounted. To emptiness. To nothing. He's hungry.

He's hungry. He's starving. He's hungry. The next obvious question is. Friends. Are you hungry today? We asked a question last week.

I'll ask it again just now. Do you feel perhaps like. You're just. Looking for something in life. And you're happy at times.

You're happy most of the time perhaps. But you know behind the scenes. There's something wrong. Behind the scenes. There's something missing. And you know. You were made for more than this. And you know.

[ 32 : 36 ] That you're not quite there. Well the truth is. If you feel that. It's because it's true. You were made to know God. To love God.

To be in communion. With God. And every day you're not there. You're far. Far away. Living a life.

That leads to nothing. Yes. Happiness. And joy at times. But ultimately. What's the point? What's the point? Like this poor man.

You end up. At the end of your days. With not much to show. For it all. And in this. Story of this poor man.

We hear in the back of our minds. The words of Jesus. Where Jesus says to us. Come to me. So last. Last Sunday morning. Come to me what?

- [ 33 : 29 ] All who are hungry. All who are thirsty. All who are weary. All who are heavy laden. All who are burdened. Come to me. And I will give you rest.
- Everyone who's hungry and thirsty. Come to me. And eat and drink. This. Son's. Hunger. It's image. What life is like.
- Without God. We're often so hungry. Looking. For some meaning in the world. And when you stop. And ask yourself. The big questions.
- Of why are we here. And what does it all mean. And what's the point of it all. It's a scary. Set of questions to ask. Because the world.
- God says to us. There is no meaning. Not really. There is no point. Take outside. What we know to be true. From God. If you follow on.
- [ 34 : 22 ] The journey of this young man. What's the point in life. To live. And have fun. And exist. And then what. Why.
- What's the point. You live. You die. On a planet. Hurtling through space. Cold and uncaring.
- All for nothing. What's the point. To any of it. The Bible. The Bible. Paints. A much more beautiful. Picture for us.
- A much more incredible. Picture. If you feel that hunger. In you today. Of surely. There's more to life. In this. Bible says. There is. God says.
- There is. Come back. To me. So this man. He hates his father. He runs away. From his father. He ends up. Hungry. But then in verse 17.
- [ 35 : 17 ] Onwards. We see. There is. Hope for him. Yes. He's gone the wrong way. And yes. He's now in a place. Where he's far away. From his father. He's far away. From God. But there's hope for him.
- Look what happens. In verse 17. He comes to his senses. But when he came to himself. He said. How many of my father's. Hired servants. Have more than enough bread.
- But I perish here. With hunger. I will rise. And go to my father. And say to him. Father. I've sinned against heaven. And before you. And so on. He remembers.
- He has a home. He remembers. There's a place. For him. See the gospel. That word we use. So often. The gospel.
- It means good news. And the good news is. If you feel. Far away. From God today. If you feel. As if. Well yes. What is a point in life. Why are we here.
- [ 36 : 14 ] If you feel the weight. Of all these awful questions. The gospel is. The good news is. In Jesus. There is an answer. Because the good news tells us.
- We have hope. And we have a home. With the God who made us. The God who knows us. The God who knows everything about us. Who watches us go away.
- Who lets us go away. And do our own thing. But he says to us. I am still here. We'll see that more in a second. But this young man realises. He realises.
- He's got a home. He realises. He can go home. He realises. Even though he's. Wandered away. He can go back. To home again. Friends.
- Do you worry. You've gone too far away. To go back to God again. Do you worry. That you're perhaps. Just a bit too far away.
- [ 37 : 16 ] You've gone too far. Into this far country. You've gone too far away. From God. You think. Well God won't have me back again. If I turn around. And go back to him. He won't have me.
- He doesn't want me. Perhaps you're like. This young man here. And see what he does. He starts trying to put. A wee story together. Of himself. He tries to.

To get together. What he's going to say. To his father. I will rise. Verse 18. And go to my father. I'll say to him. Father. I've sinned against heaven. Against you. I'm no longer worthy. To call a son.

Treat me as one of your higher servants. He's trying to think. How do I do this? How do I go back to him again? What do I say to him? Will they take me back? You can see the anxiety. You can see the panic.

In this young man. As he tries to think. How do I go back to him? My father again. How do I go back to him? What do I do? What do I do? He doesn't take me back. What happens?

[ 38 : 14 ] And we see here. In verse 20. He heads on home. And for me. This is one of the most beautiful verses. Personally. In all of the Bible.

Verse 20. This is the son. This is the son. And he arose. And he came to his father. But while he was still a long way off.

His father saw him. And felt compassion. And ran. And embraced him. And kissed him. As this boy runs home.

Scared. And worried. Scared. And worried. What will I say to dad? What will I say to God? What will I say to my father? How do I convince him to take me back?

What do we see in this story? The father sees the son coming. A long. Long way off. And this is a story. But in real life.

[ 39 : 14 ] The same truth is there for us. Friends. You are saying to yourself. I don't know. Is it that easy? Perhaps you've been taught.

Perhaps you've heard. You have to do this first. Or this first. Or do this first. Or do this thing. Or be this way first. Before you come to God. You have to live a good life first.

And try to be hard first. And try and make your life look good first. Before you come back to God. Perhaps you've heard. That God will take you. Only when you try really hard.

Yourself first. If you try really hard first. Then make your life look better. Then come back to God. Then he'll take you. Where's that anyway here?

The good news of Jesus. Is quite the opposite. The good news of the gospel. Is come as what? Come as you are. Come as you are.

[ 40 : 13 ] Because God knows you in a way. God sees you in a way. You can't brush yourself up enough. To look good. Or to sound good. Before him. He knows you. He sees you. He understands you.

He made you. And the beautiful image here is. That long before you start going back to him. He knows you. And he sees you.

And look at the welcome the son receives. As he goes towards the father. The father does what? He runs towards the son.

He runs towards the son. There's a few points here to note. First of all. In this day. And in this culture. Older men didn't run.

You wouldn't run. And to run. Bear in mind. He's wearing a tunic of sorts. A long garment. To run. It's quite undignified. You have to gather up all your bits and pieces.

[ 41 : 09 ] And fold it all together. And hoik up your clothes. And run. It's not a thing that old or dignified men do. This man doesn't care. He doesn't care.

He grabs up his tunic. And he runs towards his son. We think God will act one way towards us. And we're quite surprised when he acts a whole different way.

We think he doesn't want us. He is distant and cold away from us. The Bible says what? The Bible says that he is close to all who cry out to him.

He is not distant and cold. But to all who come to him. He is right there. And like the image of the father here. He is there in his love. He is there in his care.

And the son starts his speech to the father. The father runs to the son. And embraces him. Gives him a hug. Gives him a kiss. Shows his love to the son who was gone.

[ 42 : 16 ] The son, verse 21, says to him. Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. And so on and so on. He doesn't get a chance to finish his spiel.

Verse 22. But the father said to his servants. Bring the best robe. Put it on him. A ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it.

And let us eat and celebrate. What happens when any one of us comes back to God? When we say to God, I have wandered away from you.

I've wandered perhaps all my life. I've wandered many years. And you say, if you're there or I believe you're there, will you take me back? I don't understand much.

I don't understand perhaps any of it. But I know, I've heard that Jesus has paid the price for me. I believe it to be true. I don't understand it, but I believe it.

[ 43 : 19 ] Can I come back home to you? What response do we get from God? What response does this young man get? He is given a robe.

He's there in tatters. He's there. Imagine, he's been working in a field of pigs for who knows how long. His clothes are in bits. He's given a brand new clean robe.

And the image there, the Bible tells us that we come to Jesus to believe in Jesus and to put our faith in Jesus. The image given to us in the Bible is like Jesus puts a brand new covering over us.

A brand new cloak over us. We have this thing that's stained of all the bad things and dark things that we think and do and say and are. And Jesus gives us his perfection.

He covers us in his robe, his cloak, his covering of beauty. Also we see the son is given a ring. What's a ring signify?

[ 44 : 19 ] Well, a ring is given in this context in these days and even nowadays if you're of a certain class of family. Some families, I wouldn't know, but some families apparently have rings that are passed down from father to son to show you're part of the family.

If you're of a family crest on it. The ring signifies that you're home. You're part of the family.

You're ours. You're here now. If father says son or daughter, welcome home. Shoes on his feet.

Place of comfort. And the fattened calf. The fattened calf, it's not a term perhaps we know, but think of it in our terms of it's the best animal. It's the best animal you keep through the best times.

It's the cow, the sheep, the goat. You feed up the best. In other words, he throws the most expensive, lavish feast possible to welcome home his son.

[ 45 : 27 ] We haven't got time to do the last section. We'll keep that for a different sermon one day. There's a whole sermon there in verse 25 onwards. Let's close with the glorious words of verse 24.

For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. And we began to celebrate. The Bible is honest.

We know and we believe the Bible is God's word. And God is honest. At times the Bible feels quite blunt. It feels quite blunt. It really does.

The Bible tells us something which sounds pretty hurtful. But if you think for a second, you know it's true for yourself. The Bible says that before you come to Jesus, you're dead.

That's pretty blunt. It's not very popular to say that. It's not very fun to say that, I assure you. The Bible says before you come to Jesus, you're dead. What's that mean?

[ 46 : 32 ] I'm not dead. I live a life, a happy life, a good life at times. The Bible says that spiritually you're dead. Yes, you live in this world and God is good and he gives you good gifts. But spiritually you're dead.

You're dead. When you come to Jesus, he gives you what? He gives you life. He gives you life.

The one difference here. I'll say it a few times. I'll say it again. The one difference here in this room just now. Between Christians and non-Christians. Those who know Jesus is those who love Jesus. Those who as of yet don't know love Jesus.

What separates us? Our social status. Money in the bank. Our family situations, I assure you, doesn't. Every one of us, we all know. Money problems, family worries, health worries, the whole thing.

We all suffer from the same problems and worries in this life. What separates us? One thing. Some here today are still spiritually dead.

[ 47 : 30 ] Some here today are spiritually alive in Jesus. And the Father here says, The Son that's come home, come back to me. Because he's come back to me and trusts in me, he is now alive.

He was away there somewhere dead. But now he's home and alive. He was once lost, but he's now found. And then there's great celebration. I said it last week.

I'll say it again this week. We don't believe and we don't think for a second that we can argue you. We can't convince you to become a Christian.

It's not our job. It doesn't work that way. By preaching for half an hour, no minister can make you believe. Our job for Christians here and my job as a Christian, as a minister, is to say to you, What do you think?

Are you hungry? Have you or are you walking away from God, if you're being honest? Do you want to come home again? And do you understand that you can come home?

[ 48 : 44 ] There's no rigmarole. There's no checkbox, tick list thing to do first. Just come back to him. Our job is to point you to Jesus. That's all we're here for.

And you come to him yourself. I said this last week. You pray to him. You come out louder in your mind and you say in whatever words you can. Whatever words you put together, the Lord doesn't mind.

He knows what you're trying to say anyway. Don't think for a second, just because I can pray for 20 minutes, that sometimes my own prayers. I've been a Christian for 12. No, I have not. I don't know, 29, 28, 27. I've been a Christian for 17 years.

Wow. 17 years I've been a Christian for. And I assure you, you ask Emma, my prayers at home, I get my words mixed up all the time and I muddle things up. And the Lord looks past these things.

In your mind, in your heart, come to the Lord and say, I think I believe all this. And if what is said today is true, then I think I have wandered away from you.

[ 49 : 41 ] And I think I have done things and said things against you. And I think I want this new heart. I think I want to be alive spiritually. I think I want to have in my life the hope I've heard about today.

Can I have that? Is it true? Is it for me? Pray something like that. Whatever words you want to put to it. And see and know yourself that God is a God who answers prayers.

Come home. Come back. Stop wandering away. Come back to a Father, to a God who has made the way for you for the finished work of Jesus.

That's Jesus, your Savior, who covers you in his perfection and his goodness and says to you, you can come home now. I've made you clean. Come home and know the Father's embrace and the Father's welcome.

Again, if you have any questions or thoughts on these things, please make full use of any Christians you know here or Emma and myself. Again, we're home every evening. The phone number is online and if you want it, it's on the sheets out there too.

[ 50 : 47 ] We ask and pray that God would bless his word to us. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord, thank you for the gift of your word. Thank you for the privilege we have. A reminder that of all we are at times feel so lost.

At times, many of us here were wandering so far away like that lost sheep last week, like the lost son today. At times past, we wondered every which way. But you have taken us home to yourself.

Pray Lord, the same will be known and seen by our friends here today. Those who as of yet can't say that they know or love Jesus. Those who as of yet can't say that they've come home. But who are perhaps making their way there.

Perhaps have realised that there is a home for them and a welcome awaiting them. Lord, we ask that as they make their way home, you support them and be with them. Help us to love them and to care for them as best we can.

Help us to leave this place having grown not just in our understanding, but also in our love for our Saviour. Knowing that it's in his finished work, because of all he's done for us on the cross, we can hope and know all this is true.

[ 51 : 54 ] Let's call these things in and through and for his precious name's sake. Amen. Let's bring our time to a conclusion today again in Sing Psalms.

Sing Psalms, Psalm 108. Sing Psalms, Psalm 108. That's on page 146.

Sing Psalms, Psalm 108, page 146. We can sing verses 1 down to verse 5.

Psalm 108, page 146, verses 1 down to verse 5. Sing about the goodness of God. And the love of God for his people. O Lord God, my heart is steadfast. And with all my soul I'll sing.

Harp and lyre I will awaken. And my song the dawn will bring. Lord my God among the nations. I will ever give you praise. In the midst of all the peoples, I will sing of you always.

[ 53 : 09 ] So I'm going to wait for verses 1 to 5 to God's praise. Amen. O Lord God, my heart is steadfast.

And with all my soul I'll sing. How can I ever give you? How can I ever give?

How can I ever give? How can I show the Lord will bring? Lord my God and my religion.

I will ever give you praise. In the midst of all the peoples, I will sing of you always.

For you, O Lord God, my God. For you, O Lord God, my God. For you, O Lord God, my God. Amen. Amen. Wonder, behold, my God. Congratulations.

[ 54 : 15 ] How can I ever give?■, di è jou Be exalted, O my Lord, And through all this earth around us Led to glory, said our God.

Let's go to the next section. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ And the love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Both of you now and forevermore.

Amen.