

IX TRINITY 2014
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
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I COR. 10.1 ST. LUKE 15.1

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Dad's letter arrived yesterday. I was prepared for the worst. I've made such a mess out of my life. I figured Dad would just tell me I was on my own and have a nice life. Was I wrong!

Things really weren't so bad at home...in fact they were pretty good...even though my older brother liked to torment me. I wonder if he's changed. He's always been a bit wild. He's probably not too happy now that I'm coming home.

This all started one day when I got the bright idea it would be fun to move to a foreign country. I asked Dad to give me the money he planned on leaving for me when he died. He told me I would be better off staying home...but I didn't listen to him.

The funny thing about Dad is he wasn't angry with me when I told him about my plans to leave home. He seemed sad and disappointed...but not angry. Then he told me to call if I ever needed anything. I told him I would do just fine on my own. Sometimes I just don't understand Dad.

Well my bright idea quickly turned into a nightmare. The money was gone in no time and this country is now in the middle of the drought of the century. I have a few friends here but even they can't help me...so that's how I ended up in this mess.

Now here I am working for minimum wage for this pig farmer...a pig farmer. Maybe this is God's way of saying "I told you so!" Here I am sitting on this fence watching these pigs feast on their pig food...wishing I had some for myself. To pass the time I started giving all the pigs names. Now how bad is that!

My pride keeps getting in my way and kept me from seeing there is a way out of this mess I've gotten myself into. It's that pride thing...it's something I struggle with all the time. When I first wrote to Dad I told him I was certain God hated me and I was just as certain he hated me as well.

Imagine my surprise when I opened Dad's letter and he said he and Mom have been worrying about me and missed me every minute I was away. He wanted me to come

home as soon as possible and he didn't want to hear any talk about God hating me and he wanted me to know he certainly didn't hate me.

We always went to church as a family. I remember the priest said in his sermon one day that Jesus promised we would never be tested beyond our ability to withstand the test...and there would always be a way out. He said the way out was to admit you had done something really stupid and ask God to forgive you. That's the same thing Dad said to me when I was just a little boy.

I even told Dad I had no right to be called his son and I would be perfectly happy working with all of his other employees. At least they had plenty to eat...Dad always treated the help well. And here I am watching over these snorting pigs...content with feeding themselves with leftovers from last night's dinner.

But Dad had another surprise for me. He said I will always be his son even when I get myself into trouble. He said no sin is too great that it puts us out of reach of God's love and compassion and forgiveness. He said how could he treat me...his own son...any other way than God treats each of us...his own children...who come to him for help. We just have to take the first step...say we are sorry...and then start doing things differently.

Forgiveness...I never gave it much thought. Here I am in a foreign country...barely able to speak their language...with not enough to eat...and wallowing in self-pity. I think I've wasted all of these many months not wanting to face up to my own sinful pride. I've been making the mess I created messier.

My shift is almost over. I need to go tell the foreman this is my last day on the job. I'm sure he will find someone to replace me...there are still a lot of people out of work.

Well it's time for me to pack my bags...that won't take long. But first I need to write a short note to Dad and get in in today's mail...how should I begin?

Dear Dad...I'm coming home!

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