

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

Theme: The Story of the Prodigal Son

Object: "Lost Dog" Flyer. You can create one on your computer or use the one on the last page

Scripture: 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. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. Luke 15:22-24 (NRSV)

Paree Looy!

As I walk through our neighborhood, I often see signs like this one. (Hold up the flyer advertising a lost dog.) "Lost Dog. Our little dog, Rascal, has been missing since March 1st. We love Rascal very much and we want him back. If you find Rascal, please call us at 772-5512. \$25 Reward."

When I see signs like this, I feel a touch of sadness. I can just imagine a family watching and hoping that their dog will come home. I can imagine the excitement they must feel every time the phone rings -- hoping that the call will be from someone who has found their lost dog. I think of how they must worry and hope that their little dog is safe.

Have you ever lost something that was very precious to you? How did you feel? Have you ever found something that you had lost? If so, how did you feel when you found it?

In our Bible lesson today, Jesus told a story about a man who lost something that was very precious to him. The story also told of the man's joy when that which he had lost was found. This is the story that Jesus told.

A man had two sons. The younger son asked his father to give him his share of the inheritance that he had coming to him. The father gave it to him, and the boy left home to go out and see the world and have some fun. The father was broken-hearted. He had lost one of his sons.

It wasn't long before the boy had wasted all of his money on wild living. He had no money to buy anything to eat, so he got a job feeding pigs. Can you imagine sloshing around in the mud with a bunch of smelly pigs? It was the worst job you can imagine, but he was so hungry that even the food that he was feeding the pigs looked good to him.

The boy looked around at the situation he had gotten himself into and said to himself, "My father's servants live better than this! I will return home and beg for the forgiveness of my father and ask him to take me back as a hired servant." As the boy approached his father's house, his loving father, who had been watching and hoping for his son's return, saw him coming and ran to meet him. He threw his arms around him and hugged him and kissed him.

The father was so happy that his son had returned, that he gave him a robe and placed a ring on his finger. He ordered his servants to prepare a feast. "My son was dead and now he is alive. He was lost, but now he is found."

Jesus told this story to show the kind of love God has for his children. When one of God's children strays away, He always welcomes him with open arms when he returns home. Aren't you glad that you have a heavenly Father who loves you, even when you may not deserve it? I am!

Dear Father, we thank you for your unfailing love. We are thankful that even when we stray, you welcome us home with open arms. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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