

Reflection for Sunday, March 27, 2022

Homecoming

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, seeker of the lost: draw your children back to your loving embrace, restore us to our inheritance as daughters and sons, and reconcile our hearts to you, that we may become ambassadors of your reconciling love to all the world. Through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

“In Rembrandt’s *Prodigal Son*, there is not only the light-filled reconciliation between the father and the younger son, but also the dark, resentful distance of the elder son. There is repentance, but also anger. There is communion, but also alienation. There is the warm glow of healing, but also the coolness of the critical eye; there is the offer of mercy, but also the enormous resistance against receiving it” (Henri J. M. Nouwen).

There is a missing act in this parable. The conflict between the brothers is left unresolved. So what happens next? Perhaps we are asked to imagine a final act. Soon the father will die. Then what? If the sons continue on with their established scripts, they are headed for a collision. One will kill the other. Or they can follow the father’s script

and surrender their male honor and keep on welcoming, accepting, and being with the other. They have a choice between being lost or found, dead or alive.

No parable can cover all the bases, and this does not, but there are deep truths in it for the life of the family and household of God. There are all kinds of people in this family. Some of us are just learning to walk. Some of us are learning to walk spiritually and some of us learning to walk about justice and righteousness and reconciliation. Some of us have been to a far country, and some of us have only been to the field next door. But both of the brothers belonged in that family, and all of us belong in this family. None of us must stay outside because others have come to the party.

The entity that is absent from the story of the father and his two sons is the news of how it has been put right. How are we delivered from the terrible degradation of the far country and from the isolation of the backyard field? The central event is the cross. The centre of all our efforts, and our failures, and our successes; the centre of all our devotion and all our praise; the centre of our salvation is the cross. It is there that we see the price of our rebellion. It is there that we see the face of God saying, "All I have is yours." This is where it begins and ends. This is where our rebellion leads, and where it is forgiven. This is where we lose our right to say "Let me be a servant" because we have seen how costly is our right to be the sons and daughters of the household. This is where we lose our right to sulk about the presence of others, for the same price is paid for us all. This is where death ends death, where the possibility of life becomes firm, where we meet the one whose promises can be trusted.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Bill Cantelon