

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Wandering Son" 2/21/24

*The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (Ps 145:8)*

This is the first week of our Lenten Journey. A time of reflection and self-inspection, and remembrance. Bringing our lives before God, a time of humility, remembering we came from dust and to dust we shall return. Yet we are more than dirt, we are God's beloved children, created in His image and sent to do His work in our world; to love others, to feed the hungry and care for those in need, to lift up and encourage those who are down hearted. Humble, but important work. Work Christ did as He walked among us, as He showed us how to love.

But wouldn't it be more fun to have everything and not have to work at all? Makes me think of the story of the prodigal son. The younger son, expected to work, but he wanted to party. Somedays he must have felt, in his mind, like a servant to the farm, to his dad, and worst of all to his brother.

He'll show them, he thinks, I'll take my share of the inheritance and run off to the big city. I'll join the circus and have fun. I'll go to New York and make it big on Broadway. I'll stow away on a ship and save it from pirates and become a hero. I'll, I'll – we know the dreams, the plans for greatness, we each have the starring role in our own play.

But reality hits. Bills are due and the money we make in our daydreams will not be accepted as payment. Our dreams turn out just fine in our head, but real life is different. Our car won't start when it's 20 below, the ball gown doesn't fit, the Wells Fargo wagon runs late, our spouse dies unexpectedly, our home burns down. But this unruly turn of events does not have to turn our life into a tragedy. We can carry on. We can return to God. Confess to having wandered away. Like the father in the story, God will welcome us back, will forgive and wash away the mistakes. He'll dress us in finery and feed us a scrumptious meal of bread and wine.

We are all prone to wander. The grass is always greener on the other side. Life does often seem unfair, but God always opens His arms to us when we realize we are not as right as we thought we were. His love never fails, even when we fear we don't deserve it. His goodness is forever, even when we don't feel worthy. Christ knows how we think and told this story so all generations would be able to see God's forgiving nature. His generosity to His children. His love which goes beyond our expectations.

A Lenten journey isn't easy, it isn't meant to be. Jesus knew what awaited Him in Jerusalem. He continued, step by step, walking toward rejection and death, knowing the pain which awaited and the glory which was His on the other side. It doesn't always seem like the story will have a happy ending, but with hope we know the journey ends with God welcoming us back with a big hug, what could be finer?

Please pray with me:

God of love and forgiveness, thank You. Thank You for welcoming us back when we wander away. Thank You for Your open arms, Your loving heart, Your words of comfort when we are so unsure and rebellious. Thank You for claiming us as Your beloved children when we don't feel worthy. Thank You for feeding us the body and blood of Your Son, to strengthen us on our journey. Help us to focus on You and not on the sparkly things which appear on the horizon.

Amen.