**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**Sunday 27th March 2022**

**Luke 15: 11-32**

**Gathering**

Unless the lord build the house

A place called home

A place of grace and welcome

A place where the lost know they are found

They that build it labour in vain

Unless the Lord build the house

Of water and wine

Of bread and peace

Of return and renewal

They that build it labour in vain

Unless the Lord build the house

This community

This place of belonging

This gate of heaven

They that build it labour in vain

May we know this time together

As that God-built place

Where all vanity is lost

And a messy welcome awaits us all

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick parish… and, as always thank you for your invitation to join you through lent. Stories of grace and welcome and return are ours today.

That speaks into our world readily, challenges us and calls us. We retell the story of the prodigal. But it isn’t the son who is the prodigal one. It is the father who is over-generous, wasteful, lavish. It is him this story should be named after.

**Scripture**

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout 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 to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then 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 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. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

**Prayer**

Loving God

In this moment and time

May we find a space

In between all other spaces

That is welcoming

Generous

Loving

Where we can be who we are

With the baggage we have

The experiences we have had

The paths we have followed

The regrets we have known

A generous space

Where love welcomes us

And forgiveness is never mentioned

It is a given

A generous given

Loving God

When arms are opened to us

And our names are called

And we realise

Finally

We are loved

So completely

You cannot lose us

And you will wait for us

As long as the length of time

And beyond

May we know

And enjoy

This moment of new life

Of resurrection

And finding our place

Here

And in our return

May we hear the party

Grace sets for us

The feast

Hope organises for us

And in the name of love

Allow ourselves

To

Be

Here

Hear us

As we say the lords prayer together

**A letter to the Boy Who Ran:**

I want to write to you because you are the one I least understand. I think you are least like me. You are impetuous. You take risky decisions. You always seem to imagine the grass is greener on the other side. And that is so unlike me.

I’d never run away. I never raised my voice to my parents. I never set a foot wrong. I was scared of making mistakes and my life has been a constant balance between keeping everyone happy and being happy myself. But you seem so selfish. In fact you take my breath away.

You have felt a fathers arms around you having run away from him, spent your inheritance, yet been welcomed back. I think I am jealous of that feeling you must have had even though you broke your parents hearts. I dislike you because you have shown me a love that I have never experienced: a messy, generous, unconditional love. I always think it is measured and fair. I always want to show I deserve such love, to prove I’m worthy. And I am annoyed with you, jealous that you discovered love is unfair.

But do you understand what happened? I don’t think you actually understand. I wish you’d pull yourself together and act like you learned something from all of this. Or show some awareness of what it must have been like living in a house empty of you.

Did you ever apologise to your brother? Did you wake up the next morning and feel humble, guilt-sick that your brother wasn’t there at the party? Did you give him any thought as you partied dressed in your robe and gold ring?

To be honest, I just don’t like you! You are everything I don’t want to be. But what made you do it? What pulled you away from home? What glossy worldview do you have that imagines you can manage the adventure?  
  
But of course, you didn’t, did you? You came back broken. Cowed. I almost feel sorry for you. I wonder if your father knew you better than you knew yourself. There was some deep wisdom that knew you had to leave in order to return. You had to lose everything in order to recognise what you had. You had to die, in order to find resurrection.

To be honest, I recognise that. I can see that truth in myself, but I try to fix things, try and manage what is painful and try and reshape it into something we can live with rather than know when to let go, so that new life can be found.

Maybe both you and I share something after all, a deep truth that we need to die to ourselves, the foolishness, the arrogance, the conceit, before we find what is really important, before we find resurrection.

**A letter to the one who stayed:**

In truth, I think I understand you more. My sympathies are with you, the one who has hung in there, without a hug, a robe or a ring. I do wonder what was going through your head, however, as you watched your little brother return and your father embrace him, and the party get underway. I don’t know how you were feeling but I was seething.

I mean you deserved so much, so many legitimate things, should have been yours, the one who stayed, but now they all feel cheep and tarnished by that brother of yours arriving back.

I don’t know how others see you. Some talk of you as self-righteous, arrogant even, but, you know, I just see hurt. I said in a letter to your brother that I don’t do confrontation. I bet you are like that too. We just nurse the hurt. Remember the unfairness. Let it fester a while, weeks, sometimes years. And that just makes me disappointed in myself.

Did you ever ask yourself why you didn’t leave? Maybe that’s what you needed but you and me don’t do that adventure. We lack the courage. We just lie in our beds at night, making up speeches we will never give to those we are seething with. It’s not healthy.

What would you have liked to say to your father? That you are unfulfilled here? That everything you have here isn’t enough? For some reason the familiarity and certainty that can all be taken for granted, isn’t enough?

That’s a hard thing to admit. That there is something broken in you and me. We can’t enjoy what is already there. How difficult it is to say: I am full of bitterness, there’s a coldness about me. I’m lost in it all. Teach me how to love.

And that is the challenge of your story. You have right on your side, but you have to let go something to know the kind of love your father shows.

Do you see it as scandalous? Non-conforming to the rules of justice and fairness? I think you are right. It is scandalous. You haven’t put a foot wrong. But maybe that’s just where you did put a foot wrong, having never experienced the depth and unconditionality of love. It’s messiness, its generosity, its abandonment of all that is proper.

It is a hard lesson, to realise love doesn’t play by the rules especially by those who do play by them. Love does’t have a system, rather it has a party.

But you know, you hold the power in this story. It is all yours. Your brother is inside. The party is in full swing. Your father is waiting for you. You decide what happens next.

What will you do, as the party grows louder. What will we choose, you and I?

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

May our world know peace

And fairness

And justice

May we speak truth

Live gently

Love completely

And as we gather the conflicts of the world

And of Ukraine and Syria and Yemen and Afghanistan

And too many other places not in headlines

May we live towards a more peaceful world

May we act towards those in conflict

With generosity and hope

Towards all, even those not like us

For there is the beginning of genuine peace

May our prayers be generous

And our living more so

And we pray for those hungry

In famine now in the horn of Africa

Those hungry because of food prices

In our own neighbourhood

For the shifting tectonic plates of our world

Where we are moving through difficult times

May we still find a generous way of living

Towards each other

That will reshape our communities and world

And we pray for those still worried by pandemics

Those whose lives have been so affected

Where stability has moved to worry

And things are less certain

May we yet be generous in our hope

In our vision

As institutions change

and we struggle with how we are all being reshaped

In church, in society, in the world

And for those closest to us

Those we live through and for

Those who are ill mentally and physically

Those grieving and hurting

Those generations growing up

Needing to tackle a world we don’t understand

Hear us

Generously hear us

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**