

Luke 15:11-24 – The Prodigal Son (Father's Day, All Age, St Mary's)

Think about that story from Luke 15...

Couple of vols – BALLOON or DINNER – Point = We don't like surprises.

Very surprising story – full of surprises:

First is this – man had 2 sons and younger son approaches his father and says 'dad I wish you were dead!' - not exactly, but that was what he meant. Usually divide inheritance when died (older 2/3 younger 1/3). Wants it now.

Why do you think younger son wanted to get away? Bored, felt inferior to bro, prove himself, maybe just go wild

So he did – diaskorpizo – scattered it.

- Brewster's Millions last week – spend \$30m in a month.
- George Best – 'spent a lot on wine, women and other pleasures. The rest I just squandered.' Outcome not a surprise really – we've all seen people go off rails, especially young people who come into money (Brazil)

But what happens then is our next surprise – so bad he's working with pigs – unclean animals. Anyone ever got so hungry they've eaten dog food? This is worse. (FOOD BIN?)

And the penny drops doesn't it – he thinks 'what am I doing?' Even my dad's servants have plenty of food. So he hatches a plan. Obviously his dad won't want him back as a son, but maybe he can just work for him.

Story familiar to lots of people – maybe loses force. What would you do if you were the dad – he wants you dead, he's blown your inheritance and he's shamed you publicly in a culture where that was a big deal.

Next surprise – dad is waiting. Even bigger surprise – he starts running. Head of family never runs – the dad humiliates himself to welcome his son. Marco Tardelli – old man in a tunic.

Biggest surprise yet – son starts his speech – but dad interrupts him and says: let's celebrate, he's come home. A story of total forgiveness – of grace.

Grace is getting what we don't deserve. World works on you get what you pay for, you earn everything. And if you don't, you get punished.

- What happens if don't do my homework? Does teacher say: that's fine!
- Or if we don't pay our mortgage?...

This is not how the world works. We don't just get forgiven. What is going on here? What is Jesus really teaching?

Biggest surprise of all – not really about prodigal son – about Father. Should be called Lovesick Father, or maybe even the Prodigal God. This is a story to tell us what God is like.

Quote Yancey p53 and then p52.

The Father in the story is a picture of God. And the shocking message is that God loves everyone the same – who do think the Father should love more: the model elder son or the rebel? God loves them both the same and not only that, he offers a second chance to rebels.

Yancey coins a term for the way the world works: ungrace. It's all about what you earn, what you deserve. But it doesn't work with God. God is perfect, how could we earn anything from him? The only hope we've got is if God changes the rules – grace.

Father's Day – celebrate dads. Not all of us – but many of us have dads we can celebrate. But this story points us to the greatest dad of all. A dad who changes the rules, a dad who loves all of us equally – not a distant, harsh disciplinarian but a gentle father, willing to humiliate himself to welcome us home. This is the Father into whose care we committed Nathan and Dani, this is why baptism exists at all – God shows his love, his grace for us in Jesus, who told this story and then lived it out for us. Who wouldn't want a dad like that?