



## McCabe United Methodist Church

November 17, 2018

*“Seek Different”*

Luke 15:14-32

Pastor Mark Ehrmantraut

Good Morning Church!

We gather in the name and spirit of Jesus. Jesus humbled himself. Jesus emptied himself. He became obedient even unto death on the cross. Then Jesus committed his Spirit fully and completely into God's hands.

This same Spirit is alive and active and moving among us this morning.

Last week Pastor Jenny offered the invitation, “Friends, come as you are.” She also hinted that you should come as you are, but don't expect to stay as you are.

This morning let's begin to wrestle with this idea - come as you are - now what?

Let's pray:

*“Holy and Mighty God may the words of my mouth and the meditations on each of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. You are our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.”*

Have you heard of Blaise Pascal? He was the inventor, the physicist, the mathematician, the theologian. Blaise Pascal said we are created to worship. He said that we each have a God-sized vacuum in our hearts and this God-sized vacuum won't be satisfied by any created thing.

Only the God of Creation, made known through Jesus Christ. Only Jesus filling the void. Only Jesus can satisfy this vacuum - this hole in our hearts.

Please, come as you are, but when you come don't just expect to stay as you are. Come as you are, come seeking and getting filled so we might leave a little different, so we might leave a little more like Christ.

Hear what it sounds like in this morning's Scripture. It's a reading from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15. It's often referred to as the Parable of the Prodigal Son or the Lost Son. The Prodigal is seeking . . .

<sup>11</sup>Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So, his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.”

Think about what his son is after. Consider what he’s seeking as he demands his inheritance. His father gives him what he wants, and the son runs off. Hear how it unfolds.

<sup>13</sup>“A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living.”

Again, can you picture it? The life the prodigal is living. What the son is seeking?

<sup>14</sup>“About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. <sup>15</sup>He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs.”

This prideful, wealthy son, at this point, was just seeking to stay alive.

<sup>16</sup>“The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, <sup>19</sup>and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.’”

Coming to his senses, humbled and hungry, his desires had changed.

<sup>20</sup>“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.”

His Father, filled with love and compassion for his lost son, threw open his arms crying, “Son, come as you are. His father was seeking too, wasn’t he?”

Seeking a different outcome, longing for the return of his lost son – please, son, come as you are. <sup>21</sup>His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.

The son, coming home as he was, was seeking to grow and be different. The son, now seeking mercy and forgiveness, is confessing and repenting.

Come as you are. It’s easy to say, but can you picture it? Can you smell it?

The prodigal coming home was probably filthy. He probably smelled like the pigs. He was embarrassed. He was consumed with guilt. He was broken, wasn’t he?

Think about the person in church for the first time or someone who’s returned - maybe they’re hesitant - maybe they’re nervous or scared.

<sup>22</sup> “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. <sup>23</sup> And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’” So, the party began.

The father, his arms wide open, was overflowing with grace and mercy. Tears running down his cheeks, offering to his son, come as you are.

Yet, for someone who’s been here all along, this can be a confrontational message, can’t it? By our worldly standards, it’s just not fair!

Come as you are. But, what about the prostitutes? What about the wild living and the waste? What about how hard the older brother worked? What about everything I’ve done?

<sup>25</sup> “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, <sup>26</sup> and he asked one of the servants what was going on. <sup>27</sup> ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’”

<sup>28</sup> “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, (Son, come as you are and celebrate with us.) <sup>29</sup> but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. <sup>30</sup> Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf?’”

(Come as you are. I don’t think so. Why don’t you go back to where you came from?)

<sup>31</sup> “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

Faithful Son, I love you. I appreciate you. All that I have is yours. Prodigal Son, come as you are. Come seeking different so you can truly live.

Micah Tyler writes, “There are times I find myself going to the Lord begging, ‘God, change the things around me. I’m trying to do my best and I feel like I’m doing good, but things can get so messed up. Things can be hard. God make things around me different.’”

And, sometimes God answers these prayers. Sometimes God calms the storms. Sometimes God fixes the things around me.

But, sometimes God answers these prayers by putting ME in situations to help make ME different. Sometimes God answers these prayers, so I can be changed, so I’m more likely to be the change I need to be in the world.

We come as we are, but we don't expect to stay as we are.

Will Willimon writes that only when the Church lives out the reckless, the scandalous, the overwhelming grace of Jesus Christ, will we as the church be relevant and life-changing to people who come seeking something different.

Friends, I know I'm far from perfect yet through our Mighty God made known in Jesus Christ the cross says **YOU ARE** good enough and even I'm good enough.

So, this morning, whether you feel like the prodigal or whether you feel like the older brother we have a good, good Father. We reach out for God saying, "God let us seek you so you can continue what you've started, so that when the world sees us the world can see you.

Come as you are but don't expect to stay as you are.

Come as you are. Seek Jesus so we can seek to grow and be different than when we came.

Let's pray:

*"Holy God, we come as we are offering ourselves. We come as we are thankful that you receive us as we are. Even so, God, we also realize your desire for us not just to stay as we are. So, give us the vision and the wisdom to receive one another as we are while continually seeking to grow and to be different. We pray in the name of the only one who can fill that God-sized vacuum in our hearts. We pray in Jesus name. Amen."*