**Coming Home Luke 15:1-2, 11-32**

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| **Slide** | **Sermon** |
| 1 | Coming Home Luke 15:1-2, 11-32 |
| 2 | Intro – Homecoming is a coming home.  Coming home to the familiar  Coming home to the place you have roots  Coming home to the place you feel loved  Coming home to the place where you can be yourself and still be accepted. |
| 3 | EX) I recall when I returned home from college on my first Christmas break – Even though I’d had a great semester – How excited I was.   * Back to the familiar – putting up our cedar Christmas tree * Back with my brothers and sisters, (although my room was taken over by my brother) * Back to my mom’s great cooking and being with dad. * Back to being able to relax and just feel the wide- open welcome of home. |
| 4 | As changed as it is it is still a high and joyous time.  Season for homecomings  Most churches – August – October  Most colleges and High School – sports event with homecoming  But very few if any churches had their homecomings, Schools have not had homecoming games with all the pep rallies, school dances, etc. |
| 5 | Today, a few of you have returned to the church of your roots – Here you got your start . . . You met Jesus.  Here you grew up - physically – spiritually  You’ve come home:   * To Celebrate Center’s importance to your life * To Praise God for the good things He has done * To remember those you’ve loved who have gone on to be with Christ. * To Renew friendships |
| 6 | Today we come to God’s House to do all that and more - to   * Celebrate the Church * Worship * Praise God and Give Thanks For all our blessings! * Grow Spiritually   But it is not the same for many reasons one being no great homecoming spread of food.  But still it is a great day for us! |
| 7 | It is here…through the church that we remember Ephesians 2:22:  “In Him you are also being built together into a dwelling place of God’s Spirit” |
| 8 | Our text tells of a great homecoming of a son returning home from a difficult period of his life.  You know the story – familiar – probably most familiar of all Jesus’ parables.  Parable of the Prodigal Son.  Yet, it is really a story of a loving father that has two sons, both invited to a homecoming party!  We know the story very well. Younger son – cashes in his third of the estate and leaves home to make his own life.  (Reasonable choice – as his older brother would always control the estate and own it) |
| 9 | The younger son parties; wastes his money on extravagant living! [We see a part of ourselves in him, don’t we? There’s a part in each of us that would just like to take a lot of money and do with it whatever we would like without thought of tomorrow] In this Covid time how many of us just wished to get away, to the beach, to the mountains, go on a cruise or to a far away land! But alas we couldn't, no place safe from the virus and most of us have been dealing with our dwindling resources. |
| 10 | But finally, the younger brother's money runs out, hard times hit, and he winds up eating pig food *with* the pigs!  Meanwhile: Older brother works hard running the estate, doing all that a good son should. He’s a good manager. He has taken good care of all that was given to him. There’s a part of us here too! Most of us have stayed in, not ventured out, worn masks and tried not to get nor spread the virus. WE have tried to be diligent, responsible. |
| 11 | Then, the younger son return home.  Sorry for his action and ready just to be a servant. Repentant and ready to turn from his old ways!  Now, Father’s Response: Gives a huge party!!   * Not the response of a diligent older brother! * Not the response of those looking from the outside. Repentance and justice first – Scribes.   But it is the response of a loving Father!  The son he thought was gone and dead is now BACK! |
| 12 | Wade – at 7 years – liked to think up clever things. And he’s always trying to make up jokes! Sometime this is a painful process to listen to them but occasionally he came up with some good jokes.  You’ve heard the “What time is it?” jokes?  Ex: What time is it when a 2000lb gorilla sits in your chair? Time to get a new chair.  One Sunday morning Wade came up with a new joke –  Wade: Daddy, what time is it when momma and daddy go away?  Me: Oh ,let’s see – It must be time for church (because we both left  early on Sunday mornings)  Wade: No! IT’S PARTY TIME! (Many times after that when we had church responsibilities he and his grandfather would party and play and he would get some kind of great gift!)  That was the Father’s feeling when finally, both his sons were under his roof again!!  It’s Party Time!! |
| 13 | But this of course is the ‘Rub” of the story.  The extravagant way the good-for-nothing younger son was treated when he returned – just rubs us wrong!   * He was hugged and kissed, * given a robe (robe symbolizes the guest of honor) * Given a ring – (a sing of him belonging to his family) High School rings signify belonging to the family of graduates. * Given shoes – sign of a free person not a servant   (Negro spiritual that goes “All God’s children got shoes – when I get to hea’ben I’m going to put on my shoes – I’m gon’na walk all over God’s hea’ben”   * Fatted calf was killed – only used for the most special occasions.   All this instead of a handshake reprimand and a small plain place to live. |
| 14 | And this infuriated the older son – Where’s the justice? Where’s my reward?  This ‘rub’ infuriated the Scribes and Pharisees who were listening to Jesus telling the story. Why? Because in this society and in Judeo-Christian heritage we believe: Trying to do good – staying away from trouble –  Separation from the bad is necessary to preserve a community’s sense of right and wrong, provide food of moral instruction.  And we have good support for this attitude.  The Father did not choose between his sons – Both invited  Jesus did not choose between the religious leaders and the sinners – both invited  Can we do any less? |
| 15 | 1974 – Summer – Tommy John ruptured a ligament in his elbow. At the time – he was leading NL Pitcher on way toward the World Series with already 20 games.  Surgeon after the operation said, 1 in 100 chance to ever pitch again.  After operation, Tommy, wife and baby daughter in church. Sermon was Abraham and Sara, who were in their 90s when she became pregnant. Minister looked right at Tommy John and said, “You know with God, noting is impossible!”  That’s what he needed to hear – 16 weeks cast off – started rehab – slow and painful – inch by inch – touch thumb to little finger. Finally – 1 ½ years later – back on mound pitching – Pitched more games after surgery than before and eventually pitched in World Series. |
| 16 | Some of you may feel like you don’t deserve to be here – that God can’t accept you  You may know someone feeling like that  But with God – All Things Are Possible – You have a place, Home – on this first day of at least partially opening up. |
| 17 | Know that it is time to Come home whenever you feel comfortable getting out. It For some you were ready weeks ago, for others you will not be ready to return until there is a vaccine. but whenever you are ready – your Center home will be here for you! |
| 18 | But even more importantly your spiritual home is always ready for you. Luke shares over and over again that you have a place in God's kingdom. and it doesn't matter if you are worshipping in your living room, or this this place there is a place for you in God's kingdom.  Your Party’s planned!  You haven’t earned the right to be here but that is not the issue.  It’s a gift!  You were once lost – dead to God – But now – Well, now God’s Coming Homecoming party is set! |
| 19 | Come and rejoice in the arms of a loving Your FATHER! You have a home, one that no one can take from you! One that exists here on this earth extends for all eternity.  Amen |