

PRAYERS & ENCOURAGEMENT

Those who are sick or need our prayers — Pat Espy, Linda Reagan, Bud Mixon, Richard Branum, Margaret Blake, Phillip Stevens, Joe Turner

Continue to remember in your prayers those who are unable to attend worship services regularly: *Billie Sue Atkins, Freda Dunn, Romona Stokes, and Marjorie Barringer.*

Please pray for those who have forsaken the Lord that they may be reconciled to God.

READING THE OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS IN ONE YEAR

Monday - Jer 11-13; 2 Cor 12

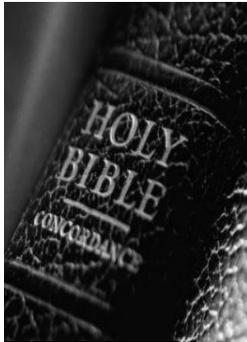
Tuesday - Jer 14-16; Psalm 76; 2 Cor 13

Wednesday - Jer 17-20; James 1

Thursday - Jer 22, 23, 26; Psalm 77; James 2

Friday - Jer 25, 35, 36, 45; Ps 133; James 3

***Week #40
Oct. 1 – Oct. 5***



VISITORS - We would like to get to know you better, and ask that you stay a while after services. We encourage you to visit our website at <http://www.parkhillchurchofchrist.com> where you will find sermons, articles, and daily bible studies to encourage you in your daily walk with God.

QUESTIONS? *We Welcome the opportunity to study God's word with you any time.*

*All sermons are recorded on CD & DVD -
If you would like a copy, please ask one of the men.*

ELDERS

Carl Dolan.....479.414.1972 ~ Ron Roberts479.452.0347 ~ Joe Turner....479.459.6023.

DEACONS

Wayne Carson...479.648.1087 ~ Luke Dolan.....479.357.9547 ~ Joe Dugas479.629.4046 ~ David Meek.....479.459.0820

PREACHER

Bryan Loughmiller.....479.434.3939

September 30, 2018

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Welcome to the Park Hill Church of Christ

3536 GRINNELL AVENUE FORT SMITH, AR 72908 479.782.2415

It is our desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to glorify Him in all we do.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY MORNING
Bible Study.....9:30 am
Worship.....10:15 am

SUNDAY EVENING
Worship..... 5:00pm

WEDNESDAY EVENING
Bible Study.....7:00pm

Compassion, Forgiveness & Grace



Luke 15:13 "And not many days later, the younger son gather everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living."

Our verse today comes from the powerful parable we call the Prodigal Son. This parable isn't about a bad boy who became good, it is about the compassion, forgiveness and grace of the father. Without the father, there is no story here. I love this parable. I have a bunch of sermons on this. I have collected dozens of books just on this one topic. It's our story. Throughout our lives we have stood with the prodigal. There are occasions when we get to stand with the father. Hopefully, through this parable we've learned never to be in the shadows of the older brother, but often we are. The forgiven sometimes have a hard time forgiving others.

We must remember that this is a parable and the central thought is the forgiveness of God. This parable answers the accusation of why Jesus received sinners and eats with them. That's what God does. It is the sick who need the physician. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. The Pharisees, like the older brother in this story, were lost, but they just never realized it. The sinners did.

Our verse today begins, "And not many days later." The prodigal has received his share of the inheritance. The money was in his hands. He didn't leave as soon as the coins hit his hands. Not many days later. He stuck around, got his things together and worked out his plans in his mind. Not many days later, he was thinking. His heart was already in the far country. He was spending his wealth in his mind. All the fun he was going to have. The more the days came and went, the more excited he became about leaving. This parable doesn't have the feel of a young man going off to war. He looks around his room one last time, pets his dog one last time, and takes a long, long look into the eyes of his parents before he must leave. The soldier leaves knowing that he may not come back, even though thoughts of home will be kept dear in his heart. No, for the prodigal it was different. He couldn't wait to shake home off of his feet. No looking back. No dreading leaving. No, for the prodigal it was get me out of this place as fast as I can and I hope I never see it again. His leaving was his choice. His leaving was rebellion. His leaving was shaking off the rules, lifestyle, faith of dear ole' dad. He was done with that and he wasn't coming back to that. Sadly, for far too many young college students, away from home, this is the same road that they take. Seeing things that they've never seen before, free to do as they please, God is left in a box, along with their Bible, and fun, sin and irresponsibility seems to be what many major in for a semester. They come home from college at Christmas break changed and too often, not for the better. A semester of reckless and loose living has changed them and a semester without worship, prayer and God, was all it took for them to turn their backs on God. Drinking alcohol, partying hard, sleeping in on Sunday morning becomes a regular routine. They soon meet someone that enjoys doing that as well. Friendship turns into love and soon the thoughts of marriage roll around. And, mom and dad, back home, are witnessing the death of all that they stood for and all that mattered to them.

In Jesus' story of the prodigal, the father represents God. Using that image, the prodigal and his big brother, had the best parent. They had God. No one could say that God was dysfunctional. The rules were not too strict. God was not out of touch. God was not neglectful. God did not have a favorite among the boys. That's our homes. Those are things we struggle with. But not God. He is the perfect parent. He is flawless, holy and righteous. When the prodigal returned, the father never apologized. He had done nothing wrong. He didn't promise to change so the prodigal would never leave again. You can't improve upon perfection. God is perfect.

So, in that setting, the prodigal still left. The perfect home had a prodigal. The perfect home had a judgmental, jealous older son who never counted his blessings. The perfect home was a sad home. Can you imagine dinner time with those two brothers? One couldn't stand the other and the prodigal didn't even want to be there. The perfect home didn't look very perfect. The perfect home was troubled. Should God have done more? Did He fail these boys at an earlier age? Was He too busy for them?

Even with God as a father, there was a prodigal. No fingers in this parable are pointed to the father. The father did nothing wrong. The blame falls to the attitudes and choices that those boys made.

Now, our homes will never be perfect. They can't be as long as we are a part of them. We are not perfect. But there are many good, godly homes that suffer with prodigals and judgmental and jealous grown children. Parents have taken their children to worship. They have been amazing examples of faithfulness, service and devotion to God. They have prayed together as a family. They have talked often about the Lord and His word. God has been an active part of these homes, yet still, there is a prodigal. Parents feel guilty. What should we have done differently? They are ashamed. They beat themselves up with guilt. They look at other families and wonder why their home has the prodigal and others do not. Where did we fail, is a constant burden that these parents carry in their hearts.

Sometimes, the blame does fall upon parents who expected the church to raise their child morally. They did very little and that's the exact results that they received, very little. Sometimes the congregation is the problem. The children grow up see dysfunctional Pharisees shoot their own wounded and that has left an ugly impression upon them. They want no part of that. But, then, sometimes the blame rests upon no one but the child. As in our parable, the prodigal chose to leave. His heart wasn't right. The father couldn't have done any more. And, for some of our children, that's their path. There is no blame at home. There is no blame with the congregation. A child is pulled by the far country. He yearns for the taste of sin. First chance he gets, and it is often in college, he breaks free. He's done. He's gone. Life in the far country is what he wants. Broken hearted godly parents cry at home. They pray for their child. They seem to care more for his soul than he does. They talk, but he won't listen. They plead, but he ignores them and changes the subject.

They must now stand in the shadow of the father. They long for the spiritual return of their prodigal. They look. They pray. They must be ready to celebrate. No time for sermons, lectures, or details of wrong doings. The return is a time for rejoicing. Patience and love are the key here.

Others in the congregation often stand with the older brother. They feel the parents of the prodigal didn't do enough. They talk. They whisper. They judge. They assume. They don't know. They only further hurt the broken hearts of these godly parents. What they need is not more guilt, but compassion. What they need is not more fingers pointing to them, but hugs and tears. What they need is not lessons where they failed, but hope, grace and prayers for the prodigal to return.

The perfect home, had two very imperfect sons. Maybe we can learn something from that.

Roger Shouse, JumpStart #2186