

From our Co-Spiritual Director

So many of us have heard the story of The Prodigal Son that we take its title for granted without giving it much thought. But I want us to take a fresh look at it from the viewpoint of Our Prodigal God.

What does prodigal mean? “spending resources freely; wastefully extravagant.”

That defines the actions of the son in the far country - but God? God spends his grace lavishly, the scribes and Pharisees might say, recklessly.

Think of the story of the Sower and the seed. In Matthew 13 the farmer extravagantly throws the seed over all types of ground in the hopes that some will find a place to take root and grow. Jesus told us this story to show us that God liberally gives His grace to everyone, broadcast prodigally, extravagantly.

There were two groups of people listening to Jesus.

The first were men and women of questionable reputation. They correspond to the younger brother. Like that young man they had at some point left the teachings of their family and followed their own course of self-discovery. Then there was the second group – the Pharisees and religion scholars represented by the elder brother. They studied and obeyed Scripture, worshiped faithfully and prayed constantly. They were offended by Jesus’ fellowship with the sinners.

However, their self-righteousness was destroying not only their lives but those around them who needed to know God’s grace. Both the religious and irreligious are spiritually lost.

Jesus’ answer is to appeal to both brothers, the wayward and the moralist with the freely given, forgiving grace of God. He offers the same appeal today.

We are familiar with the younger son. Let’s spend some time on the older brother.

God’s loving forgiveness can pardon and restore any and all sin!

The old hymn “There is a Fountain Filled with Blood” says: “The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day. And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.” NOTHING, not even the most abject repentance can merit God’s grace. We can never do enough to earn it. We can never deserve it.

That means we can never own it or control it.

It is God’s alone to prodigally give to whomever will receive it. The Pharisees and teachers of the Law are challenged with the truth that our Prodigal God CAN FORGIVE and WANTS TO FORGIVE every sin and restore every person.

The elder brother hears a party going on and is at once suspicious – asks a servant what is going on. When the servant tells him that his wayward younger brother has returned and the father is throwing a party for the whole village, the elder son refuses to go in. This is a very public vote of NO CONFIDENCE in the Father’s judgement.

In front of all the guests, this prodigal Father leaves the feast to go out to his older son.

He pleads, but his son still refuses to come in. Not only does his son refuse but he is openly rude and insulting. He doesn’t address his loving Father as “daddy” or even “father”. Instead, he says “LOOK YOU! – how many years,” etc. In a society where reverence and respect for elders was the rule such treatment was outrageous. But to a loving father?

Why is the elder brother so angry?

The cost. The Father tells the elder son, “all that is mine is yours.” That is literally true. Remember that the estate has been divided when the younger son left. That means the fatted calf, and everything spent on the feast was by strict rule the elder son’s birthright. And now it’s being spent on this wayward son! WHERE IS THE JUSTICE?!

The control. Both sons resented their father's authority and wanted to get out from under it. Neither son at one point loved their Father for who he was. The younger son took his property and left the house, seeking his own way in a far country. On the other hand, the older son, rather than loving and serving his Father for the prodigally loving man he was, built a wall of morality around his heart.

Are we like he was?

You can try to avoid Jesus as Savior by keeping all the moral laws. You believe God "owes you" answered prayers, a fruitful life and a golden ticket to heaven when you die. Morality becomes a means of maintaining your position in the Father's house where you can have what you want.

Jesus may be your helper, your example, your inspiration but he is not your Savior. You are your own Savior.

Now that the Father has prodigally forgiven his younger wayward son, the emptiness, manipulation and gracelessness of the elder son stands revealed.

What the Gospel tells us is that everyone is wrong, everyone is loved, and everyone is called to receive the freely given grace of our Prodigal God; to repent and to change.

Today elder brothers split the world in two – "The good people like us are in and the bad people who cause all the trouble are out." Younger brothers do the same. "" We open-minded people are the answer to the world and those narrow-minded people are the real problem." As they speak you can hear Lennon in the background singing "Imagine".

Jesus says – "The humble and repentant are in and the proud and unforgiving are out."

The only prerequisite for receiving the grace of God we ALL so desperately need is to admit we need it, that YOU need it.

WILL YOU RESPOND AND RECEIVE IT? AND THEN OFFER THAT GRACE TO OTHERS?

A newspaper posed the question "What is wrong with the world?" The great Catholic thinker G.K. Chesterton wrote a brief response; "Dear Sirs. I am. Sincerely yours, G. K. Chesterton."

Do you want to be part of the answer to the world's problems instead of the cause?

Then repent of your own sin and then freely offer grace to others as a true son or daughter so we can all rejoice together in the house of our Prodigal God.

Yours in Christ

Bill Kelley

Co-Spiritual Director

FROM OUR COMMUNITY LAY DIRECTOR

Dear Emmaus Family~

We had a good number of people at our June 13th gathering! There were approximately 33 people who came back to our first gathering of 2021! We are still meeting on the second Sunday of every month at 7:00pm in the High Street UMC. Our next gathering will be on July 11th.

We will have food to offer at 6:30pm also. Please use the handicap entrance on the east side of the church.

CLD cont.

We have several board positions open. They are: Agape, Finance/Treasurer, Newsletter, Sponsorship & Logistics. Please be praying and asking God if you are to join the Emmaus Board in one of these positions.

This past June, I finally made the trip out to Cape Cod to visit my twin sister Deb and her family! Of course, I had to wear a mask while traveling there by airplane, but it was so worth it to see them all and to meet her new grandson who is 10 months old now.

COVID-19 was hard; in that we were apart from those we love for longer than usual. My sister and I saw each other through zoom meetings while studying the book, "Celebration of Discipline" together.

Her daughter would bring Amani (that's her grandson's name) in to visit

with me. He was so cute, but even more so when I got to see him in person! Peace, Joy & Love filled my heart to see him and play with him!

I hope you are able to visit your loved ones now in person. God wants us to be together, not separated or isolated from each other.

In that spirit, I hope to see many more of you at our July gathering!

DeColores,

Libby

PS Please be praying for Verna Reed as WW#75 Lay Director. She is still forming her team for our November 4-7 walk.

2 Corinthians 3:17

- Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.



John 8:36

So if the **Son** sets you **free**, you will be **free** indeed.

Springfield Area Emmaus Willing Servant Sheet

Please Print:

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Home Ph: _____ Cell Ph: _____ Regularly Attend Share Group? Y / N

Church Attending: _____ Walk # _____ Walk Location _____

Email: _____

Information is current as of: (Date) _____

===== I Am Willing to Serve in These Areas: =====

Please Check All That Apply

- Help serving meals Be a Meal Coordinator Help with Agape for weekend
- Help Registrar (contact pilgrims before walk) Help Set up/Tear Down for weekend
- Help with Sponsorship (help get info to Sponsors) Help get word out about Emmaus
- Help on purchasing team for weekend Be on a Live-In Team Lead Music
- Play an instrument: _____ Offer special music for Gatherings or walks
- Help with the newsletter Help with social after Gatherings Help set up Worship
- Provide secretarial help at Board Meetings Help inventory and organize supplies
- Help with cleaning bathrooms during a walk Help get people connected to Share Groups
- To learn more about Emmaus by attending the Leadership Development Event (LDE)

Help in other ways: _____

Please Mail to Springfield Area Emmaus, 230 East High Street, Springfield OH 45505, or drop off at the back table at any Gathering.

SPRINGFIELD AREA WALK TO EMMAUS (Please PRINT and fill in ALL blanks)

Name _____ (as preferred on name tag) Age _____

Sex M _____ F _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ - _____

Church now attending: _____ Pastor: _____

Church Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Married _____ Single _____ Divorced _____ Widowed _____ Separated _____

Spouse's name _____ Walk spouse attended _____

Sponsor's name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Walk attended _____

Dietary concerns, Medical concerns, Disability concerns

Occupation: _____ Company Name: _____

Name of a close friend: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City/State _____ Zip: _____

Briefly state why you want to attend a Walk to Emmaus and what you expect.

Would you be able to attend on short notice? Yes _____ No _____ Perhaps _____

I understand that this application does not reserve a position on a particular Walk but does place me on a list for future Walks to Emmaus in Springfield.

Signature _____ Date _____

Enclose a NON-REFUNDABLE, NON-TRANSFERRABLE deposit of \$25.00, which applies to your \$75.00 donation to offset expenses. Make checks payable to Springfield Area Emmaus. Remit to: Registrar, Springfield Area Emmaus, High Street United Methodist Church, 230 E. High St., Springfield, OH 45505.

REGISTRATION ONLY Date received _____ Card sent to: Sponsor _____ Pilgrim _____

Deposit rec'd _____ Cash _____ Check # _____ Rec'd from _____ 1st

Invite _____ 2nd Invite _____ 3rd Invite _____ Inactive _____ Revised Sept. 2013