

## **GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES** (December 4, 2022)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

“Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.” One event in all of human history caused a radical shift in how we understand our value, and the value of others. One event. One life. One Divine life. When He appeared our value was reaffirmed, our place in the world and in eternity reconfirmed, our relationship with God re-established. We are drawn, literally drawn by God, into this time of Advent. Advent is the word used inside the Christian Church to set apart the four weeks prior to Christmas as a time of waiting, of declaring, of reflecting, of preparing, of expectation. Each week, as we move closer to the miracle in Bethlehem, we find the miracle Himself moving closer to us. Despite all attempts to minimize, marginalize, commercialize, the larger purpose, meaning, and presence of Christmas keeps intruding into our world, and our lives. Even the hardest hearts warm a few degrees ... think the Grinch or Ebenezer. This morning as we enter the second week of Advent we reflect on the gift of Peace. When Jesus first appeared, born at the end of a long journey ... a journey much farther than traveling from Nazareth to Bethlehem, peace was in short supply. The Roman army enforced what they called the Pax Romana (the Peace of Rome). But a forced peace is no peace. Real peace can only come from God. He takes root deep in our soul and grows. God provides the confidence that when He appeared, our soul found, and felt, its true worth. Do you know that? Do you feel that? Two sons, struggling to find their place, their worth, their father. And then He appeared ...

### **Lost and Found** (Luke 15:11-32)

<sup>11</sup>And He (Jesus) said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. <sup>14</sup>And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup>‘But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup>I am no

longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’” <sup>20</sup>And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’” <sup>22</sup>But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup>And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup>For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate. <sup>25</sup>‘Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup>And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’” <sup>28</sup>But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup>but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’” <sup>31</sup>And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup>It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

### **What DOES IT SAY?**

1. What does this parable tell us about: the younger son? The father? The older son?

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

2. What does “he came to himself” (verse 17) mean?
3. What does “these many years I have served you” mean?
4. What does “your brother was dead, and is alive” mean?

### **WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

5. Which character in this parable do you most identify with?
6. Have you experienced grace? How much are you worth?
7. How would you describe God's relationship with you?

As you spend time praying remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural, easy, and empowering, part of your day. Prayer is talking to God, and God talking to you. Ask God to help you understand the depth of His love and grace. Ask God for greater compassion for others. God will help you because He loves you.