

GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS. THANK GOD.

Following Christ Jesus. Makes Christianity the most difficult of all religions on earth.

Look at what Christ did

Born in the humblest of circumstances. Lived in obscurity for many years.

At thirty he bursts into public ministry—cures the sick, casts out evil spirits, performs mighty works, calms storms, feeds thousands of people, walks on water, and teaches the path of God, his Way, in ways never done before or since.

Love God fully, first. Love neighbor fully, second. Love self, fully, third.

Love your enemies. Turn the other cheek. Go the extra mile. Do not respond in kind to any mistreatment.

Empty yourself out so as to allow the Lord to fill you with his Spirit.

Welcome God's forgiveness of your sins. All of them. Forgive those who injured or wounded you.

Speaking of sins. Pause for a moment: What is the worst sin you have ever committed? Or the worst thing you did not do but should have done? What is the worst sin ever committed against you?

Do you believe that God has forgiven you? Sometimes? All the time? Seven times seven times? What about others? Have you extended the hand of forgiveness? Does God always offer forgiveness? Should God always offer forgiveness?

The gospel for today. Gnarly. Difficult to understand. Easy to draw the wrong message. Why does Jesus tell this parable? What is his point?

Who is it addressed to? How can Jesus commend to his disciples the workings of those who use their "dishonest wealth" to curry favor with people? How can Jesus commend the dishonest steward for acting more shrewdly?

Jesus notices how people act. "You really have to hand it to that guy—he was pretty shrewd in the way he cut his losses and secured a soft landing rather than a hard fall." Humanly speaking we talk like this.

There are a good portion of dishonest people in the world always looking out for themselves first. How does that work out? Well, Jesus says "when it fails..." All of that fails. All that effort poured into the wrong things will fail. Jesus has come to establish the one way which is the true way to live, the way that is of God. And it is a difficult way to live by earthly standards. Difficult and trying. That is one of the real reasons why people stop coming to worship. When he revealed that he was the Bread of Life and that those who believed in Him would have to eat of him, what happened?

Many people have walked away from their Catholic faith. Many reasons are given. Many reasons can be given. All those who no longer gather with us can give many reasons why. But at the heart of each person, it really is not that Jesus somehow got the message wrong, or taught a way which is not of God. No. It is that there are elements of the teaching that we do not accept, or disagree with, or we experience others not living them as they claim, or are too difficult to embrace and live.

Today's parable is for those people. Last week the three stories about loss—a sheep, some money, a son. Today's parable: For those who have lost their way. Is there any hope for them? God found the lost sheep. God assisted in the finding of the money. God the Father went

looking for the return of the son. Forgiveness and restoration. These are the ways of God brought to us by Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus counsels that all the bad things we try will fail. But even though that happens we are not without hope. He says that “when it fails YOU WILL BE WELCOMED INTO ETERNAL DWELLINGS. How can that be? Because God never gives up on us. God wants to welcome us. We are never too far gone. We are never beyond the reach of the God who loves. There is no length to which God will not go to rescue us, to save us, to restore us to our original innocence, to forgive us even our many sins, our worst sins. Even those. Even people who have given up trying can be saved. Just be sorry. Just repent. Just accept the pardon that is offered. In other words, despite everything—just believe in the goodness and love of God. For you. That is why you have come here today. That is the message you are sent to bring to those who are not yet here.

May He bless us today and give us his peace.