

Sermon 2010 Lent 4
3-14-10
Text: Luke 15:11-32
Theme: "IT'S NOT FAIR!"

The younger son was not a very nice boy. By asking for his inheritance early, he basically wished for his father's death so that he could have his share of the money. His father gave him a sum of money that we might assume was commensurate with whatever he might have inherited and the boy left, probably feeling pretty ashamed of himself, but off to revel in his new found fortune nevertheless.

The older son was a good boy. He stayed in his father's house, enjoyed all the comforts his father offered and worked to increase the size of his own inheritance. One wonders, if he was such a good boy, if his motives were so pure, why did he care what his brother got? Maybe he wasn't such a good boy after all. Maybe he was just doing his time and waiting for the old man to die so that he could have it all and he was angry when he had suffered living with the old geezer and his younger brother was still going to benefit when he hadn't put in the time!

We spend a lot of time griping about our younger brothers. We get jealous of those people who are out sailing on the lake instead of being in church on Sundays. We feel slighted because some people have money to burn and we give whatever extra we have to the general fund or the windows or plumbing for the new coffee bar. Those younger brothers seem to be having so much fun and here we sit doing "the right thing."

I think part of our problem is that we have too much time on our hands. In a society in which every moment is consumed with survival, one does not have time to worry about what someone else has. In a society in which one has time to watch "The People's Court" and "Oprah," well, there's time to covet too.

The bigger problem; however, is that we covet sin. We always have. Adam saw Eve eating that delicious apple and just had to have some. Why should she get all the fun? The idea that someone might be getting away with something while we have our noses to the grindstone bugs us. Why should they get to do this or that while I have to do the right thing?

Life is not a contest. Armored cars do not follow hearses to the cemetery. I have buried hundreds of people. Not one of them left this world with one material thing and the only thing that mattered in the end was the love they had shown to others. Their possessions and money were divvied up between the remaining relatives and the state. The memory of their philanthropy began to fade almost immediately until soon they were just a name on a building or a gold plaque on a wall. Time had begun stripping their achievements of any value while they were still alive and sped up at their death. Life is not a contest and those who live as though it is believe that life is patently unfair. But, we know that our God is always fair. So if life seems unfair for us, maybe it is because we do not understand what life is.

Life is not a contest. Life is a journey. The moment God created faith in you; he placed you on a path. That path contains everything you need; what God wants you to accomplish, the lessons you need to learn. And your path is completely unlike my path. See, I don't need to learn your lessons. I am busy enough

trying to learn my own lessons, so coveting another person's path is not only sin, but like all sin, it is also completely useless.

Now from time to time, we all depart from the path God has us on. That's called sin. The younger brother departed from the father's path and in time, when the new path became too painful, he discovered that he would rather be on the father's path – even if that meant taking a lower station. He decided to repent – that is turn around – and head for home where he would confess his sin and hopefully become a farmhand for his father. It is a little funny the way the sinner decided on his own terms for forgiveness. Instead of just throwing himself at his father's feet, he decided to offer his father a deal whereby he could feel better about his sin by paying a price. The father would have none of that. The son was restored immediately to the path he was on before he had sinned.

He was back to walking the path that was best for him – the father's path - where he would learn important lessons and experience needed growth. Likewise, you and I are restored to God's path each time we repent. Life is a series of detours and

turn-arounds but at the end of the journey is the prize – eternal life with our father.

So, no need to whine and complain about what we don't have or what we don't get to do. We have only to keep walking the path that God has laid out before us, backing up and turning around when we stumble off and always being welcomed back where we can rejoice and celebrate what God has given us and where he has placed us. And then..., then maybe we can find joy in our journey with our Father. Amen.