

May 18- Written Service

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Special Music- Katie Kirby

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship:

Leader: Have you ever experienced conflict or misunderstanding with someone you love?

All: Yes, sometimes life can feel like Jacob's journey, full of fear and uncertainty.

Leader: But look at Esau, who chose forgiveness and reconciliation over resentment and anger.

All: He ran to his brother and embraced him.

Leader: Today, let us also seek reconciliation and forgiveness, both with each other and with God.

All: Let us come before Him with humble hearts, ready to receive His grace and mercy.

Song: Rejoice!

Rejoice in the Lord, now and always; sing it again, we rejoice.

Delight in the love He has shown us,

Gratefully lift up your voice.

His gentleness among us will join our hearts with praise.

We gather in His goodness; a family of grace.

REFRAIN

With each breath He's given, praise the Lord!

In these times we live in, we will praise the Lord.

Throughout every season, I am sure

We have every reason to praise the Lord.

Rejoice and be anxious for nothing,

Praying for all that you need.

Come with a song of thanksgiving;

Lay your requests at His feet.

His peace will fall upon us, to guard our hearts and minds

In Christ, who reigns eternal; the Shepherd of our lives.

REFRAIN

Rejoice in the Lord, now and always;

Tell of the good He has done.

Worship the Lord to remember all of the joy yet to come.

The hope that burns within us the dark cannot destroy.

With praise that's never ending, we say again, "Rejoice!"

With each breath He's given, praise the Lord!

In these times we live in, we will praise the Lord.

Throughout every season I am sure
We have every reason to praise the Lord.
We have every reason to praise the Lord.

Prayer

Song: Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found
We blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

CHORUS

My chains are gone, I've been set free.
My God, my Savior has ransomed me.
And like a flood His mercy reigns,
Unending love, amazing grace.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

My chains are gone, I've been set free.
My God, my Savior has ransomed me.
And like a flood His mercy reigns,
Unending love, amazing grace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine.
But God Who called me here below
Will be forever mine. You are forever mine.

Announcements

Special Music: His Mercy is More.....sung by Katie Kirby

Congregational Prayer

Song: #355- There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (vs. 1,2,4)

There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice which is more than liberty.

There is welcome for the sinner and more graces for the good;

There is mercy with the Savior; there is healing in His blood.

If our love were but more simple, We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be illumined by the presence of our Lord.

Offering/Offertory

Offering Song: Sanctuary

Offering Prayer

Children's Message

Scripture: Genesis 33: 1-10

Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant."

⁶Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. ⁷Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.

⁸Esau asked, "What's the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?"

"To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said.

⁹But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself."

¹⁰"No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably."

Luke 15: 11-24

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer am worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

Message

This week, we're going to be looking at a story from the Bible where a young man absconds with an inheritance to a faraway land

Eventually, he returns home again

Afraid of the reception he deserves and expects

Only to be welcomed home by the very family member he wronged, running to embrace him and welcome him back

For those that have read through the Bible a few times or heard a sermon or two, which story am I talking about?

Sounds an awful lot like the story we usually call the Prodigal Son

Read this from Luke 15:11-24

But, in addition to that parable, there's another place where we see all of this happening in Scripture

Not in a parable (which is a fictional story with a heavenly point) but in the actual lives of actual people

Jacob, who had earlier taken the birthright to his brother's inheritance, tricks his dying and blind father into giving him a final blessing instead of his older brother Esau

Esau is so upset that he threatens to kill Jacob once they are through the mourning period for their father

Jacob runs away to stay with their uncle in a distant land for the next 20 years before returning home again

Read Jacob and Esau from Genesis 33:1-10

Now that we've read both of those stories, let's look for a minute at what they have in common and what differences we can see

Similarities

Someone absconds with inheritance

Both left after taking their inheritance prematurely or under false circumstances

Wind up as servants

Jacob for his uncle Laban

Prodigal for a pig farmer

Apprehension on the part of the returning prodigals

Both are uncertain of reception

Every reason to welcome them back with anger/vengeance

To throw them into servitude

Jacob calls himself Esau's servant and refers to him as Lord

Prodigal returns with the intention of becoming his father's servant

Both feel unworthy of forgiveness

Jacob says this to God in prayer

Son says he is unworthy to be called a son

Other person runs to them, hugs them, welcomes them home

Esau runs to meet Jacob

So does the Father

Both stories connect to reunion with God

Seeing your face again is like seeing the face of God (Genesis 33:10)

Differences

Jacob comes back wealthy and with an enormous family

Prodigal comes back alone and destitute

Prodigal Son is fiction with a point

Jacob and Esau is real (also contains a point)

Prodigal Son illustrates our relationship with God

Jacob and Esau is primarily about a relationship between two people

If both of these remarkably similar stories have a point, what is it and how does it apply to us?

The point is homecoming

And whichever story you pick, that homecoming is rooted in who God is and how God acts

Walter Breuggemann said this about Jacob and Esau:

“In the *holy* God, there is something of the *estranged* brother. And in the *forgiving* brother, there is something of the *blessing* God.”

The image God uses for the forgiveness He has for us, is running toward estranged loved ones and welcoming them back with an embrace

There is always, unquestionably, a welcome when we return to God

His beloved child was dead and is alive again

Seeing you again is like seeing God’s own face

God loves to welcome back His loved ones again

Because we see it so clearly and consistently with God, that should be the pattern and model for our relationships with each other

We should have the same reaction when welcoming back those who have hurt us, wronged us, and left us

**This is not the same as remaining in an abusive situation and should not be used to justify bad behavior on the part of other people

But those are the exception, not the rule

Our default is to follow God’s example of forgiveness and welcoming others back

Here’s the takeaway

YOU can go home again

Some of us are away from home (literally or metaphorically)

We’ve made mistakes, we’ve been cut off from family, friends, church

Or we’ve just gotten lazy and drifted and aren’t sure we can take that first step on a return journey

You can go back home

The prodigal son came to himself and started for home again

Take that step, start that journey

God will welcome you back today

Others are waiting to run toward you and embrace you again

Like God welcoming us, we also are to welcome others home again

How do you welcome OTHERS who have separated?

Not reminding them of the circumstances they left under

Not exacting punishment from them

Not making it about “I was right” or “I was wronged”

Running toward this person, at the first glimpse, and whole heartedly embracing them and celebrating that homecoming

Song: Love for All and Can it Be TUNE: Holy Spirit, Light Divine

Love for all! And can it be?

Can I hope it is for me—

I, who strayed so long ago;

Strayed so far, and fell so low?

I, the disobedient child,
Wayward, passionate and wild;
I, who left my Father's home,
In forbidden ways to roam.

To my Father can I go?
At His feet myself I'll throw;
In his house there yet may be
Place- a servant's place—for me.

See! My Father waiting stands;
See! He reaches out his hands;
God is love: I know, I see,
Love for me—yes, even me.

Benediction

Postlude