

OVERFLOWING

Further Reflections on Luke 15

When last seen, the prodigal of Luke 15 was gallivanting in some exotic foreign land, spending a good part of the family fortune on wine, women and song. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, there sat the patient Parent, waiting, hoping, trusting in a final reconciliation. Quite a drama. Quite a story.

It is of great comfort for us all, I would imagine, to make the appropriate analogy and to rest assured that in spite of all our own ramblings and gallivanting, God, the patient Parent, is likewise awaiting our return, waiting to welcome us with open arms and to throw a wild toga party. As the old hymn goes, *“Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling, calling, O sinner, come home.”*

The reality, however, is that this story of waiting, this story of patience is not really a Christian story at all. In spite of all the analogies, all the meaning, there is something about the parable of the Prodigal that misses the very heart of Christianity, for the good news of the Easter gospel is this: God did not sit at home by the mailbox waiting for us to come back. God did not patiently sit at home with our “No, period.” ringing in God’s ears as we shelled peas and began to wonder what exactly we had gotten ourselves into. God did not simply say, “Come home.” Home came to us.

In the fullness of time, after years of “No, period,” of rambling and mumbling, of waiting for reconciliation, at last God

Dear God, I am gay 9

said, “I shall arise and go to my children.” And so God in Jesus came, preaching the great commonwealth, calling “come home,” which really, as we know, was a homecoming to us. God’s heart was, God’s heart is, so full of love, of tenderness, of passion, of justice, that it spilled over into the world in the form of Jesus. If we could not come to our senses,

our senses would come to us.

But still we said, “No.” “No.” to God in Jesus. “No.” to forgiving seventy times seven. “No.” to eating with “those people.” “No.” to such easy love. It was bad enough to have le home in the rst place, please do not embarrass us by giving it back to us free. No. No. No. If it’s free everybody will be there. Even them. Even me. No. And so, we said “No, period” again, and killed Jesus.

But not even death will keep God from us. at is the truth of Easter. e love that over ows from God’s heart into the world as Jesus, the blood and agony of the cross, the love that over owed from the tomb that rst Easter morning, that love is ever and always “Yes, period.” at love, and I say this by faith and not by fact, is the mightiest thing in all creation and nothing will keep it from us. It wells forth from God. It soaks into the cross. It oods from the tomb. It will nd us. It will not rest, or be patient or idle or sit at home until “Yes” nds us.

I sometimes wonder what it is that keeps Lesbian and Gay Christians going. Why is it that a er years of oppression, of hatred, of violence, of “No, period” at the hand of the Church, we still honor the Prodigal with our concern, our caring, our tire- less e orts? Why do Gay & Lesbian Christians keep at it? Why a er all we have been through, individually and communally, do we continue to expect something better, to continue to give the best of ourselves? Why do we continue to educate and instigate, to act as if “the Church” mattered? (And I deliberately point to Parent Church.) Why do we even waste time “bashing” it?

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We do it, I suppose, because the Love that has over owed from God’s own heart continues to nd a home in us, too. Easter is a love that cannot rest while the Prodigal wanders, hurts, suf- fers, hungers. We want one thing for the Church: that it know in its heart and preach with its voice and live in its life the over- owing love of God. And nothing, not “No, period,” not even death, will keep us, keep Easter, keep sense, keep

home from the Church.

Christ has risen. "*I will arise ...*"