



REFLECTIONS

May 2, 2021

"For God so loved the world..."

John 3:16

Prodigal Son—Another Lesson

We know Jesus' parable, told by Luke with its many life lessons. A son, probably adolescent, foolishly asks his father for his inheritance—now! The father complies even in the face of the son's rejection. The son leaves home presuming, we guess, that the inheritance in hand will never run dry. He learns differently. When he finds himself wallowing in hog slop, the son makes his way back home seeking no more than regular meals and a place to sleep. Surprisingly though, his father greets him with open arms—no scolding, no punishment, not even an "I told you so"—but with greater love than the son has ever known.

But there is another lesson not often told. This one portrays God's plan for our salvation. The son plays the sinful world, the father, the triune God, creator of all things. **In it...**

[God makes] known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Ephesians 1:9-10)

[Christ] must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. (Acts 3:21) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:17)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:15-20)

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. / We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:16-20, underscore mine)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:2-4)

For God so loved the world...

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