

dJune 13 – “Rock Bottom”



*Image by Kat J*

# The Long Road Home

*fresh eyes on a timeless tale*

## Rock Bottom

*Luke*  
*15:14-16*

Special Music: “I Don’t Care Where You’ve Been Sleeping”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wq6f6uV6t0w>

**Luke 15:14-16**

**14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.**

**15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.**

**16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.**

## **ROCK BOTTOM**

Leaping to conclusions  
I spring  
From my perch of self-delusion  
Into an open well,  
A serpent's mouth of hopelessness.  
That quickly swallows me.  
No bottom is there for me to see.  
Light of day  
Clothed in insanity  
Extinguished by humanity.  
Echoed calls  
Fail to reach deaf ears  
The rock walls  
Magnify my fear  
And rend my garb  
With taloned shards  
Of protruding stone  
'Til all that's left  
Blood on blood.  
Bone on bone.

And when the last  
Glimpse of hope is gone  
I strike the bottom  
In woebegone  
Senseless ruin.  
Not caring that I am trapped

Handicapped and wrapped  
In self-pity.  
No way out.  
No reason to thrive,  
Barely alive.  
The only emotion, sorrow.  
A formless mass  
Of spiritual trash  
Hidden from God  
So as not to offend  
His sensitivities.

It is only there  
Rock bottom and defeated  
Huddled mass, wounds untreated  
That I come to grasp  
The value  
Of unity, serenity, and security.  
I choose to take the plunge  
Spread my arms  
And with fervor, dive  
Into this dark and fetid place.  
I choose the dark  
And not the light.  
Here I lie  
Without my voice, without my sight.  
No one can see me  
And even if they could  
No one would want me  
And in all likelihood

They would avert their eyes  
And walk away.

No one but God  
Could love this fractured me,  
This broken, beaten, obscenity  
Unmatching puzzle pieces  
Scattered in disarray  
A blemished, tarnished lamb  
Unfit for use and not worth a damn.  
As I wander and ponder  
In misery  
I feel that even He  
Should turn His back on me.

But I hear His whisper  
In the gloom  
“My child, there is always room  
At my table.  
Come, take my hand  
And you’ll understand  
That I don’t care  
The fool you’ve been  
I only want your heart to mend  
I’ll give you blood and fix your bones  
You’re loved, my child.  
Now please come home.”

*Rev Walt*

**Where, exactly, is Rock Bottom? Or, more appropriately, what is it? Is it a place, like discovering the only location that one can find to sleep, is in a deserted doorway? Or is it a point in time when a person realizes that there just isn't any more rope to hold onto and that they are living just to exist, no longer thriving? Maybe every waking moment is spent struggling to make enough money for their next fix, drink, or satisfaction of an impulse that has turned from a desire to a need, or even just to bring a little food to their broken, miserable bodies.**

**Perhaps, it is a realization that all bridges have been burned and there are no longer any connections in one's life. No relatives, friends, or even acquaintances to turn to for a handout, where strangers show more contempt than compassion. Maybe, it is that moment when one finds themselves sick and realize that there are no resources to turn to. It might also be that point where one awakens to the fact that it is the middle of winter, and the temperature is going to drop below freezing and there is no blanket, or fire, or heat, or coat, or shelter. It can also look a lot like the utter sense of hopelessness that occurred when the stock market crashed in 1929 and so many, once wealthy individuals, took their own lives with the realization that they had lost everything, not realizing that their fortunes were not who they were. It could be that moment when a person has lost their only source of income and their children are hungry, or maybe an event that occurred that motivated a person to end an abusive relationship. And yes, it can look a lot like feeding the pigs for a farmer and realizing that the pigs are eating better than a struggling young man.**

What I can tell you is, it doesn't usually come with a loud thud. It is usually a progressive process and the result of bad choices and decisions or extreme and unexpected circumstances. As Christians, we can't afford to point fingers. It is never the Jesus way. Yes, people do make bad choices and some of those choices lead to lives that are barely worth living. Sometimes, it's a choice to commit one's life to a compulsive lifestyle. Other times these circumstances can come about through omission, where someone chooses not to take their meds, or resists help of any kind. But none of those actions or inactions give cause for us to sit in judgement, and it is certainly not the way Jesus sees people.

The problem with hitting rock bottom is, more often than not, it's a bounce; kind of like a trampoline but not as soft. We hit bottom and we try to right ourselves and we hit bottom again, so we make a few adjustments and we hit bottom again. And each time we hit the bottom, it hurts just as much as the last time we hit rock bottom, until we get so use to hitting rock bottom that we become numb and stop trying to change the outcome, stop resisting what seems to be the inevitable.

The only way this cycle ends well, is if something or someone steps in to break the cycle. Someone who isn't going to start by pointing fingers or ignore the situation. Someone who isn't like the Pharisee who stood on the corner in Luke 18:11 and prayed: **“God, I thank you that I am not like other people--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector.”** Or the priest and the rabbi

that ignored the injured man what was eventually helped by The Good Samaritan. No, it takes someone who realizes, had circumstances been just a little different, we might be in the very same boat as the tax collector, as the man on the side of the road. The very same boat as the unemployed person struggling to find a job. The very same boat as the homeless mother and her children living in their car. The very same boat as the alcoholic or drug addict living for the next drink or fix. The very same boat as the person struggling with schizophrenia, PTSD, depression, or dementia. The very same boat as someone fighting every day with a life debilitating disease like Cancer, Parkinson's Disease, ALS, Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy, or even COVID. And we often can't see these struggles, just the results. All too often, we choose to ignore those struggles when we don't take the time to provide love and grace, justifying our actions with "Well, they should have made better decisions." We can also lack compassion and understanding if their circumstances happen to inconvenience us.

We listen as people tell us, "Black lives matter", "Asian lives matter," "White lives matter," "Hispanic lives matter," "All lives matter." We hear the words America first and jump on the train. I support the tenets of our founding fathers. I also embrace "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!", the poem on the base of the Statue of Liberty, written by Emma Lazarus. God does

**not place one life over another. Every single soul matters to God, for each of us are His children. And yes, we are our brother's keeper.**

**Jesus did not allow these kinds of things to interfere with his love for people. And we shouldn't either. He never asks anyone why they find themselves in the condition that they are in. You do not find him asking why someone is blind, why they are sick, why they are lame or even why they are lacking in faith. It does not mean that He does not recognize those issues in their lives. When Jesus is talking with the woman at the well, he describes her situation accurately, but doesn't condemn her or ask her why she has had such a difficult history.**

**No, Jesus is the "start here" kind of guy. The past is the past. We can't fix the past. We can apologize and ask forgiveness for the mistakes we've made, we can provide recompense, but we can't make people forgive us. When we enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, we are new creatures. We are at square one. We are starting at GO. It doesn't mean that we are not going to mess up again, only that we are starting with a clean slate and that we now have a relationship with Jesus to help guide us and give us strength.**

**We all know that the young man in our story brought his ills upon himself. And when we look at the scripture for today, we see that somethings happened that was totally out of his control as well, heaping coals on his already troubled life.**



**14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.**

**15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.**

**16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.**

**He didn't cause the famine, but because of his lack of decision making skills, he had an even more difficult time handling his needs during the famine.**

**Because of his foolishness, augmented by the famine, the young man hit rock bottom, and bounced, hit rock bottom, and bounced, hit rock bottom, and bounced. In a desperate move to break the cycle, he went looking for work and took the only job that he could find, a below minimum wage job feeding a local farmer's pigs, the pigs that were eating better than he was.**

**But I suppose that gave him time to think. Something that he probably should have done from the beginning. It provided him with the opportunity to change his perspective about what is important in life. For the first time, he was able to see beyond the end of his nose. He may have despised his job, but that job feeding pigs allowed him to break the cycle of destruction in his life, to stuff his ego back in the box and realize that things hadn't been all that bad at home to begin with. He begins to understand that it was extremely foolish of himself to burn the bridges with his father and brother. He probably had spent much of his life**

looking down his nose at the servants on his father's farm. But that perspective was shifting as he realized that the lives of those servants were much more fulfilling than the life that he had been living. At least they knew where their next meal was coming from.

When we burn bridges like that, we seldom reflect on how the other person in a relationship is faring. This boy never stopped to consider how much his father missed him and longed for him to return home. The father was most assuredly praying that his son would come to his senses and find his way back home.

It is easy for us to get lost in the drama and problems of the struggling young man. Our feelings vacillate between how incredibly selfish, stubborn and foolish he is, to our love and desire for him to make it home safely to his father. We want him to learn his lesson, but we also want him to find redemption. We know how the story ends and we long for that point of reconciliation. We are going to talk more about that next Sunday.

It is more difficult for us to get caught up in the pain of the father, even if we have suffered through the same dilemma. After the son leaves the country, we don't hear about what is happening at home. But you know the father has to be worrying. You don't just forget about and ignore your children, even when they treat you badly or leave you on bad terms. We long for reconciliation ourselves

when we become estranged from our children. And we would really like for that to happen before they hit rock bottom.

I want us to take a moment and look at the second half of verse 16. **“but no one gave him anything.”** The implication here being that boy expected someone to rescue him from his dilemma. He’s in the bounce cycle at rock bottom and hasn’t realized yet that the only option he has is to change his perspective. His vision is clouded. I am pretty sure he has the thought running through his mind that he has spent all this money on “friends,” and now that he needs help, they are ignoring him. It’s not that **“no one gave him anything,”** it’s that he is looking in the wrong place for help. You can’t buy love. He doesn’t understand that his father still loves him because he hasn’t reached out to him.

We are often the same way. We invest in people, financially, emotionally, spiritually, and when the chips are down, we expect them to be there for us, quid pro quo. And sometimes they are. And sometimes they aren’t. But the love Christ Jesus gives us to invest in others is not a love that demands recompense. Jesus does not expect for us to repay Him for the love that He provides to us. That’s what grace is all about. And to be like Jesus means that we should never expect to be reimbursed for the love and grace that we show others. We can’t buy friendships, even with love. True love and grace are unconditional.

**God fills us and by doing so, expects us to invest in those around us that are in need, no strings attached, except our willingness to help others as Christ has helped us. When we do so, we are truly joyous when they find their way back home, not with expectation of repayment, but because we love them.**

**Hitting rock bottom can be a turning point for most people. When find ourselves bouncing about, we can see people holding out their hands to help us up. Some of those people are only interested in continuing the cycle. Those that truly love us, want to help us break the cycle. We get to choose which hand we want to take. The hand that is the best choice for breaking the cycle, is the hand of Jesus, a hand we find being offered through His followers as they strive to reach into our lives and bring us back home.**

**I have hit rock bottom several times in my life, but the hand of Jesus has always been there to break the cycle. It is probably why my relationship with Christ is so very strong. I know that His hand will always be there, not matter how I got into that dark well. I can see Him in the eyes of so many of the people around me as He uses them to lift me back out of the well. God has been so very good to me.**

**I pray you never hit rock bottom. I pray that guiding and loving hands break your fall in the toughest of circumstances. I pray that even in your darkest moments you can feel the love of Jesus as He reaches out to you through his followers. I**

**pray that you know, without a doubt, that I 'm in your corner and my hand is always available should you need it. That is our purpose as Christians. We are Christ's hands and feet. We extend our hands to the broken. We lift those in need. It is through our dedication to Christ that people can look to us to help them find their way home.**

**God bless you all,**

**AMEN**