Monday Morning Service
Offer and Accept Forgiveness
Luke 15:11-32

Joyful Noise
Somewhere Down the Road
Come and Fill Our Hearts
Light of the World
Fresh as the Morning

Promo Spot
Brethren Higher Education

Announcements

Speaker Introduction
We are so excited to have Eric Landrum as our speaker this morning. Eric is the Pastor of the Lititz Church of the Brethren in Lititz, PA. An energetic and passionate person, Eric's faith story is one that will inspire and challenge each of us to seek how God will use our gifts and talents to follow and serve Jesus. Eric, along with his spouse, Heather, daughter, Roslyn, are ready to welcome a new member of their family soon. Brother Eric, we are so glad God has called you here this morning and we eagerly anticipate the Spirit speaking through you.

Song
Burn Like a Star

Call to Worship
It is hard, at times, to understand the actions of others around us. When there is pain, struggle, and fear in this world, it leads us to do things that we should not be doing, actions that lead us in a different direction than God desires for us to go. We come this morning, broken, wounded, anxious, and angry. We come this morning ready to dive in, ready to learn more about Jesus, ready to dig into the word of God. This morning, as we engage what it means to offer and accept forgiveness, may we release our hearts to God, knowing that God has the transformative ability to change lives, bring hope, and restore us into right relationships. So, let us gather, let us gather together, as friends, fellow travelers, and those seeking to bring help, change, and power to our world.

Blessing of the Offering
Bringing help, change, and power to this world takes on many forms. By participating in local missions while we are here in Colorado Springs, we live out God's call for us to support and
encourage one another. Bringing canned food to local organizations helps support those who are in need of this vital resource. While we may never see faces or hear stories of the lives being lived in the midst of struggle, our participation in this assistance, is allowing Christ to work through us and others to bring hope and peace to the lives of this community. Let us pray. God, we desire to be a support to others in this world. We are to walk with one another. Please bless the hands of those that have held these cans. Bless the hands of those that will give them to those in need. God, bless the hands of those that will receive these cans, that their hearts will be made full, that these cans will bring a small sense of hope, and a bigger sense that no one is alone, because we are bound together by your great love. Amen.

Video
Prodigal Son - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g98fX0BJzj8

Scripture - Adapted from CEB and ESV
And Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country; there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

Finally, coming to his senses, the boy went home to his father, hoping to live as a hired servant. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring my son new clothes and let us eat and celebrate.’

Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing because his brother had returned. Then the older son became furious and didn’t want to enter in, but his father came out and begged him. The son responded, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, and you never honored me this way so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, you gave him new clothes and threw a feast!’ And the father said, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It is fitting to celebrate and be rejoice, for your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

Prayer of Engagement
Your presence is here, God, we feel it. We have come to expect that your presence will engage us in such a way that leads us to know you more and love you more. Challenge us to see you in all that we do during this worship - through prayer, praise, music, and the word about to be preached. You have been engaging us since we arrived here - energizing our heart, expanding
our hope, celebrating our journey together. Right now, God, help us to be calm and centered enough to hear your voice, your call, your hope to be transformed disciples of Jesus. Amen.

**Video #1**
Texting with Angry Dad - Eric Landrum

**Message**

Something I often say when speaking at youth events is “if following Jesus always feels easy and it always feels good - that is likely a big red flag that you might be something wrong. Sure it feels really good to be a Christian. That is because I am obsessed with Jesus. There are days where I read the Sermon on the Mount and it wrecks me in the best possible way. The way Jesus takes the world as we know it and flips it over on its head is, simply put, and in a single word - beautiful. Sometimes I read Jesus and I feel compelled. I feel ready to go! Let’s feed the hungry, let’s clothe the naked, let’s welcome the stranger! Let’s do something to take care of the sick!

Sometimes I read Jesus and I feel stunned. His words somehow draw out the poison within me. The devastating lies I can, and often tell myself. When we see Jesus at work in the Gospels, in the pages of scripture, in people around us, in the stories we tell and create as his church - that is when we see the fullness of God. I didn’t always see Jesus for who and what he was. I usually encountered him through the lens of others.

(Quickly tell the story of my earliest memory in Church.)

I stayed out of the Church for most of my life. I was genuinely afraid of God. That God was going to see me mess up time and time again and one day a BIG lighting bolt was going to come crashing out the sky and zap me. I never really felt when I was younger that I deserved the forgiveness of God. What’s worse? I didn’t believe God was really all that willing to dish out a heaping helping of forgiveness for me when I did manage to mess something up. So how did I remedy that? I got rid of it all.

If I didn’t deserve it, then I wanted nothing to do with God. I had begun to forge my own path. I went my own way. The way that I went, for the record, was completely and totally awesome. I was free of guilt and fear! I was living the life! No more taking time at a meal to say a prayer! I could sleep in on Sundays. I didn’t need to get all dressed up. Just dive on into the good life!

Life was amazing without the angry, violent, “you’re going to get what you deserve” kind of God. And I didn’t need to interact with “God’s people.” I was done. The end. I had found my own way and it was GREAT!

(Pause)

But really, it wasn’t. So what did it take to get me back on the path? Well, honestly, it took the Church of the Brethren. It took a strange, small, bizarre group of peace loving, feet-fashing, bread breaking, ice cream eating, three times dunking, volunteering, hymn singing group of
Brethren to reintroduce me to God in my late twenties. And it also took many of you. I tell you

the truth....I know a number of you here and I confess that I have NEVER heard God speak more
clearly in my own life than I have though so many of you. Thank you. You all were instruments
in what ultimately saved my life.

Here is an example:

I was speaking at an event at Bridgewater College a few years ago. (Quickly tell the story) He
said “How can I love or even forgive a God that for so long, looked like a monster.” So today,

years later, I’m going to address his question. The most important thing I say to myself
whenever I sit down to study the bible is this...

“What God needs to say to me - every time - is said perfectly through the life and words of
Jesus.” The lie I told myself for so long is that God doesn’t want to forgive me. And that I’m not
really worthy of forgiveness. But is that what God is saying to each and every one of us through
Jesus? In the parable of the Lost Son we find a young man that has decided to completely
disgrace his father by taking his inheritance and living a lavish lifestyle. It’s the class “Hey Dad
give me a hundred bucks” story on biblical steroids. This guy - He is an epic screw up. He blows
all of the money in some far away country. Strike one. Hires himself out to attend pigs on a
farm. Pigs were bad for Jews. Unclean. Strike two. He is so desperate for food that he eats the
unclean pig FOOD. STRIKE THREE. Lowest of the low. Worst of the worst. Scum of the earth
award goes to…this guy. The early hearers of this parable were now just sitting there waiting for
Jesus to end the story with this punk getting what he deserved. And Jesus knew his listeners
would be shocked by this because this was textbook unforgivable behavior. According to their
religious and social law.

Jesus, as a level 100 storyteller says “When he had come to his senses…he returns home with
his tail between his legs. Head hung in shame. He wasn’t even sure he would be welcomed
after all the pain and shame he had heaped upon his father. But the best part! And the most
shocking and scandalous part! When he is still a ways off his father’s house, his father sees him
and GOES

RUNNING towards him!

It wasn’t dignified for an old guy to run. Jesus knew that his listeners would know that - and the
father doesn’t yell, the doesn’t hit or beat, he doesn’t turn him away - This is when we learn
something about God. This is when we learn what God is like. The Father throws his arms
around his child and he kisses him. In the words of Jesus, the Father was filled with compassion.
Not rage. And the son like an open book, just starts confessing how he got it all wrong. “I am no
longer worthy to be called your son.” Here is the beautiful truth of what God says to us through
Jesus...God is forgiveness.

God has always been about forgiveness. Giving people what they deserve is what we want. We
like to see that. Forgiving is the way and the heart of God. I think that is one of the main
underlying lessons of what we call the gospel. Jesus says time and time again: -For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, God will forgive you. -If a brother or sister sins against you and confesses it - forgive them. -And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them so that your Father in heaven may forgive your sins. -This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

And the ultimate form of offering forgiveness is what we see on Good Friday. For a long time I had a very different way of looking at why Jesus had to go to the cross. I used to think that God was so mad that the only way God would get over it is if somebody died.

Or...

Perhaps this was not the day that Jesus died to appease an angry Father for all the bad things we’ve done, but this was the day that Jesus showed us the ultimate truth that God is willing to save and forgive even when we are at our worst. The cross is where this truth is revealed. It is on the cross that Jesus ushers in a world, NOT of condemnation, but a world OF FORGIVENESS. God forgave me and I know it. I know because this is what God does. God forgives sinners that want to be back on the right path. When I confessed, and I did, my own self serving, rebellious and selfish ways - God took it all in and and sent it back as forgiveness because that is what is what God does. It is in these moments that God throws a party. Like the father in parable. When we come home, God rejoices. But there is the issue of the brother. He is not very happy that his brother can screw up so royally and receive such a celebration when he comes home. The brother is there to show us how God doesn’t act. We’ve too often played the role of the brother. Pouting and sulking that someone didn’t get what they deserve. But that isn’t gospel behavior.

Why are we often so repulsed by radical forgiveness? If are genuinely looking for God’s radical forgiveness then we must be working in every way possible to offer and mirror God’s forgiveness in towards others. In my time with the Church of the Brethren I have had the privilege of getting to know so many of you through work-camps and retreats and other events. You guys are my heroes. You commit your hard earned summer vacations to weeks to sweating at work camps by serving others. You give time and work hard through soup and salad luncheons to come out all the way out here for NYC so that you can worship and grow in God. You’ve shared with me your struggles through tears, your joys through laughter. See the thing is...you are the only assurance I need to know that God has welcomed me into the family. This new world. Don’t sell yourselves short. Know that you’re going to mess up from time to time. That is completely normal. How you take those moments and use them grow in God is what matters. God has removed the shackles of sin and shame and has clothed us in forgiveness that we both offer and accept. Here is the deal - the work we do together, in the shedding of our own prejudices, in abandoning a hurtful and cruel theology of hate and grudges, that is when we kick off the shackles of sin and put on the humble, forgiving, sin confessing, life changing
love of God and that is when we are made new, we are healed, and we are completely resurrected in Christ! ...Ending

**Video #2**
Texting with Understanding Dad - Eric Landrum

**Song**
Light of the World

**Discipleship Moment**

**Song**
Healer of Our Every Ill

**Sending**