

Moments in the middle (Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32)

What comes in between being lost and being found?

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March 25, 2022

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These days are long gone, but I return often to my writing when the children were younger.

As we continue in the season of Lent, in the midst of quiet and darkness, I often wonder about the in-between of being lost and found, particularly with the parable of the prodigal son.

The following comes from shortly after the birth of our third child.

Nearly two weeks. Of middle-of-the-night wakings. Of stumbling down the stairs to refill a sippy cup with milk for a feverish child. Of trips to the potty. Of soothing a child woken up by dreams of squids and spiders. Of patting a child back to bed with their blanket-duck.

Isn't this supposed to be happening during their infant stage? Aren't we supposed to be past this right now? Shouldn't I be getting way more sleep?

I'm walking through a lot of the night and even the day half-awake. It's almost *deja vu*, this feeling I remember from the first six months of the twins' lives when the days were marked not by minutes or hours but by the nurse-sleep-change cycle, so

there was no morning or evening. Just life on repeat. An oddly blissful music from the scent of fresh baby, but a broken record permanently settled on the fog of weariness. A state of perpetual on-the-verge-of-collapse.

These days, though, it lends a peculiar sensation mixed in with this feeling of being at a crossroads in life. Fatigue provides a softness, in some ways, an openness, with nerves raw and emotions on the surface—it can lead to snippiness, but it can also lead to a strange and unexpected clarity. A feeling-things-deeply.

So, I am letting it in. I'm still on this whole #middle kick. As an image. As a season. As a location. As a struggle. Lauren Winner's *Still* offers these beautiful words from Rowan Williams:

It is not that I have a long journey to undertake in order to get to God, but that I have a long journey to my own reality. It is my heart, the centre or source of my own being, that is furthest away from my surface mind and feelings, and pilgrimage is always a travelling to where I am. . . . God is not merely, like the Prodigal's Son's father, on the way to us: he is there at the heart. Or: he travels to meet himself in what is always other, eager to recognize his own joy and beauty in the distinctness of what is not God's self. However we put it—there are countless ways—God's loving kindness is there ahead of us. Forgiveness is never a matter of persuading God of something but of discovering for myself that there is no distance to be crossed, except that longest journey to that which gives truth and reality to my very self.

All of life is vocation.

Right now I'm understanding vocation to be more and more about living into the way God lovingly created each of us—each with our gifts but also our interests and passions, hunger and vision. But it's realizing, too, that vocation isn't static. It requires a continuous openness and posture of listening. Because vocation will always be about God's call—not just to a particular task but to a community, to follow God more closely, to be loved by God more deeply, to enjoy God more fully. As C.S. Lewis's Aslan says, to go further up and further in.

And these moments in the middle, in the in-between, these are times to cling to these realities and promises all the more. More middle-of-the-night stillness. Being half-awake is sometimes a part of the journey.