

Precis. The third son in the story of the prodigal son.

Rev. Dr. Mark Lewis., June 26, 2022.

The story of the prodigal son is a familiar one to churchgoers. There are two sons. The eldest is a “good” son and stays at home and helps his father work the family farm. The other, the prodigal demands his inheritance and goes to a far-off country where he squanders all of his resources. When he returns home, he is greeted joyfully by his father who celebrates his return with a great banquet. At the time of the story, the stay-at-home son represented the people who grew up in and stayed within the church community. The prodigal son represented those who grew up in the church but then left it. Reverend Lewis suggested that for the story to be relevant today there needs to be a third son who never knew the church. Today, we live in a culture of capitalism, where a person’s value is measured by their net worth and where regular church attendance has dropped dramatically from 70% in 1946 to about 5% post pandemic. Christian expressions and symbols no longer have meaning to the vast majority of individuals. For those raised outside the church, their concept of church, shaped by the media may be that of perverse form of Christian- nationalism marked by racism, sexism, homophobia and materialism. For there to be a healthy future church, the current church needs to “let the world know that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ all point to the equality of all people, the dignity of all people and the eternal worth of all people”. The “third child” in Rev. Lewis’ sermon must be found and welcomed home to a place that has a whole set of different values than the foreign land in which they have been raised.