

Date: 23 October 2011.

Place: Harringay Church Baptist, London

Title: The God of Second Chance

Biblical Text: Luke 15vs11-24

1) Introduction: Personal testimony

I was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1963. This county has welcomed immigrants from all over the world. My grandparents were Armenian refugees, who had to leave their own land because of a persecution and genocide.

I am grateful to God for the Christian testimony left by one of my grandparents who was a faithful believer in Christ. Also, to my younger sister who a year before Christ changed my life gave me a Bible as a present for my birthday. But I refused to accept it and rejected it. I mistreated her who also suffered violence from me. But she prayed to God faithfully. A year later I got ill and had to be in bed without any chance to practice any sport for a quite long time. Then I started to read the Bible and the Holy Spirit began His work in my life. This ended with my life of disobedience and separation from God.

I remember that since I was a little boy my father took me to watch football matches. Football became a god to me, the reason for my life. I could not think about anything else. Even when I was at school my mind was distracted with what happened with my favorite team and the matches to come. In the classroom I sat in the last place where I could hide myself to read football magazines and sport sections of the newspapers. This took my attention away from what the teachers taught and did not help me to progress in my education.

Quite often instead of going to school, I played truant with my classmates. We went somewhere else to play football and to have a day of fun. I began to develop violent attitudes, rebellious acts and a very bad vocabulary, which I used against my family, friends, teachers and those people who did the things I did not like. Several times I was expelled from school because of my bad behavior and the negative influence I was for the pupils. I gave up going to school at a very early age. Then, at the age of 18, I went back to study in an evening lessons school because during the day I began to work.

In my childhood and youth, I played football and basketball. I had very good coaches who imparted me with a wide vision and love for sport in general and not for one in particular. In Buenos Aires, I started to play football in the streets, which were like football grounds. In spite of the danger of the cars coming toward us, we did not care; we made the goals with stones and still played. With my friends we disturbed our neighbors who were very angry because of being disturbed by the noise, the breaking of windows, glasses, plants and gardens.

But there was a day; I still remember it, on 11 July 1982, after watching the final match of the football world cup in Spain (played between Germany and Italy), I went to an evangelistic meeting held in a Church where the powerful message of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, was preached. There the preacher gave the opportunity to the people present, to pray and accept Christ as a Lord and Savior. I needed a miracle in my life I was among several people who decided to repent from my sins, to receive Christ, eternal life, become a child and a

follower of the true and living God. **“To those who received Him, believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God”, John 1v12)**

Soon after I became a Christian I started to testify to the people who surrounded me day by day, about what He had done in my life. I began to work among the Armenian community. Then my vision and understanding widened to expand the Christian ministry activities (Sunday School, Preaching, Radio programmes, Writing articles in the newspapers, Counseling, Visits to Hospitals, Orphanages, Family homes) among different kind of people (children, young, adults and elderly). I strongly believe and know that no matter of race, creed, colour or class, all need the Gospel.

In 1987 God opened the doors for me to begin with my missionary activities outside my country. Then in 1989, in a prayer meeting God confirmed my calling as an evangelist. **“To go to all nations, to preach the gospel, to make disciples”, Matthew 28vs 18-20.** I have worked in South America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa with the only objective to support Churches and Christian organizations in their evangelistic ministries. For the past 10 years and in an unexpected way God opened the doors (in Yemen, Muslim country of the Arabian Peninsula) to begin with the sports ministry. I received football coaching qualifications in the UK (through the Football Association-FA), which have helped me to extend and develop my evangelistic ministry.

I am also grateful to God’s mercy that through the years he has placed me next to godly people from different denominations and nationalities. They have given me good advice and counseling which has contributed to the development and growth of my Christian life. They have prayed and blessed me so that my life is fruitful and faithful to God and to what He has sent me to do. I try and enjoy using every opportunity and place to be His witness not only with words but also through the love He put in my heart and the work he allows me to do. **“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us”, Romans 5v5)**

At the present time football is not a god to me. It is a means to express God's love to children and young people with whom I spend most of my time. I am a soccer coach and I use this capacity to do the work, to relate to the youth, to build good relationships with their families so that they have the opportunity to see the difference that God makes in the life of those who believe in Him. It is my joy and passion to see their lives changed by Christ and to see them being agents of change in the society where we live.

2) What is a Parable?

It is a short story that uses ordinary life to illustrate moral and spiritual truths / a puzzling saying intended to provoke a thought making the teaching clear and intelligible.

3) Luke 15: Lost and Found

- A sheep v.6
- A silver coin, v.9
- A son, vs. 24, 32

4) The Parable of the Lost / Prodigal Son

It begins with a man who had 2 sons. The younger son asked for his share of the inheritance and travel to a far country where he wasted his money on dissolute living. The country was struck by a severe famine and the son ended up in the desperate situation of feeding pigs. Tired and hungry, he returned to his father and offered to work as a slave. His father, instead of reacting with anger, welcomed his son back into the family and gave him the best robe (symbol of honour), a ring, and sandals (the mark of a free man), and held a feast to celebrate his return.

5) God is a Forgiving Father

- *He accepts all those who come to Him*
- *He does not discriminate*
- *If you confess your sins he is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse says the Bible, 1 John 1vs9*

6) What does Jesus do to find the lost?

- *He associates himself with sinners, Luke 5vs29-32*
- *Welcomes them and eats with them, Luke 7vs36-50*
- *There's joy celebration because of sinners who repent (Luke 15vs7, 10, 32)*
- *There's joy in heaven because God's salvation, Luke 15vs7, 10, 32*

7) As Jesus involves himself with sinners, so should his disciples

- *Those who are called Christians*
- *Born again people*
- *Followers of Christ*

8) Listening to Jesus is a major theme in Luke

- *People crowded around him to listen God's word, to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses, to be delivered from evil spirits, 5vs1, 15*
- *Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say? The wise builder builds his house on the rock (Christ). The foolish builder on the sand (Matthew 7vs24-29)*
- *All the people, tax collectors, etc, when they heard Jesus word acknowledged that God's way was right (7v29). It is not only to listen is considering carefully how we listen.*