

The Prodigal Son - Part 2: The Father

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[0 : 00] Please take your copy of God's Word and turn to Luke chapter 15. Having finished our exposition of the book of Acts, Luke's second account is account of the work of the risen Christ.

We're taking just a short little interlude to do some smaller expositions. And we've come to his first account of Jesus's earthly ministry.

And a particular set of parables that he told in Luke chapter 15. Now, like we did last week, I'm going to read the entirety of the chapter to you.

Because we want to set this parable that we most often know as the parable of the prodigal son in its proper context. There's a great truth being communicated here.

And we don't want to miss that as we study it across these three weeks. Last week, today, and the next as well. Our focus for today, though, as we read the chapter and we'll come back to, is verses 20 through 24.

[1 : 05] So, Luke chapter 15. Before I begin reading, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's Word to us. It was written for His glory and for our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Luke chapter 15, beginning in verse 1 and following. Now, the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to Him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.

So He told them this parable. What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.

Just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?

[2 : 21] And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost. Just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

And he said, There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of my 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. And there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and 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. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread? But I perish here with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

[3 : 34] I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. 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 quickly the best robe and put

it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.

For this, my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field.

And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, Your brother has come and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.

But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him. But he answered his father, Look, these many years I have served you and I never disobeyed your command.

[4 : 52] Yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.

And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad. For this, your brother was dead and is alive.

He was lost and is found. And so, as I said, our major attention is on this parable that's most often called the parable of the prodigal son.

And there are many commentators who have a problem with that title. Say it should rather be called the parable of the two sons. Or the parable, as Tim Keller says, the parable of the prodigal father. Father. Because we can, if we only think of the younger son, we can miss the point altogether of this text.

[5 : 56] You see, Jesus is juxtaposing the attitudes of the Pharisees and the scribes with the rejoicing of heaven over lost souls being found.

He is not in any way suggesting to the Pharisees and scribes that they themselves are righteous. They are as desperately lost as those Gentiles and tax collectors that are gathering around Jesus. But they don't have a perception of this. They are the older brother. And so, we're driving to that point, which we'll make readily and at length next week.

Last week, we focused on verses 11 through 19, the younger son, the one that we call the prodigal. And we noted the various stages in the history of this type of sinner, this licentious sinner.

They were, as follows, number one, a desire for independence from God. The truth of it is that we never really are independent from God, but we can seek to be independent from Him.

[7 : 05] We can believe that we are independent from Him. The second stage in the history of this sinner is the indulgence of self.

Investing in us. The experience of the fleeting pleasure of sin to its end. The third, which some people reach, and I pray you never do, is insanity of the soul.

This young man came to the place where he wanted to eat inedible food. Food that was given to pigs. He was brought that low in his sinfulness, in his rebellion against the Father.

And then, as the prodigal seems to, and if you have come to place believing faith in Christ, we see on his part repentance and faith.

We see him come to himself, believing that his Father will be good to him, and will take him back into his control and care. This morning, we're going to focus our attention on the love of the Father for the younger son.

[8 : 17] And today, if you're here with us, you find yourself in one of three places. Number one, it is possible this morning that you are presently the prodigal son.

You've sought your independence from God. You indulge yourself. You may even be finding yourself this morning at the very end of yourself. Maybe that's why you chose to accept an invitation to come to church.

You don't know where else to go. You've sought out the pleasure of the world, and it has left you wanting. My hope for you this morning, my prayer for you this week, is that you will see with what kind of love God loves.

That you will see that God's love is offered freely and lavishly to anyone who will come to him in repentance and faith, and that your heart will be drawn to him.

Secondly, you may find that you are the elder brother who we'll talk about more extensively next week.

[9 : 35] But that's to say that you are self-righteous. You think you've done enough good to seek God's pleasure. You desire to obey God, but that desire, that obedience has nothing to do with a

love for him, but is rather motivated by what you can get from him.

You think there's some promise on the other side if you will simply obey. You also, just like the younger son, wish that the father was dead, and your sin may be the worst of the two because it is so much more deceptive.

You think you're accepted by God by your works, and your works will come up short. My hope for you this morning is that you will also see your need for repentance and faith, that you would love God in his ways to have him, and not merely what he can give you, that you also would fly home to your father, that you may rejoice in his goodness to mankind.

The third position you may find yourself in this morning, I hope that most of you, if not all, find yourself in this place, having been a rebel of one kind or the other, having been the younger or been the elder son, you have humbly returned to God, and he has given you a place in his household.

My hope for you this morning is that you will appreciate afresh God's loving kindness towards you. Beloved, it is very possible to be found in Christ, to be justified before God because of what Christ has done on our behalf, and to forget it, and to function as if.

[11 : 27] We need to earn our way to God, or to function as if we can live however we want, and be accepted by him. It's very possible to find ourself in the proper stance with the Lord, but not living in accordance with it.

So I hope this morning you will appreciate once again how good the Father is to his people. As his sons and daughters, we would want to live in his house joyfully and obediently.

That despite how difficult your week may have been, that you will revel today in the fact that you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ, given the authority to be a herald of God, and you have been called a son.

So we're going to consider the love of the Father toward the younger son. On the front of your bulletin is a quote by A.W. Tozer from a book he wrote called Knowledge of the Holy, which I commend to you.

He was a 20th century American pastor, and he said this, speaking of God's attributes as they relate to his love. Because God is self-existent, his love had no beginning.

[12 : 43] Because he is eternal, his love can have no end. Because he is infinite, it has no limit. Because he is holy, it is the quintessence of all spotless purity.

Because he is immense, his love is an incomprehensibly vast, bottomless, shoreless sea. So let's get to it.

Let's consider the Father's love toward the younger son. The outline for this morning's text is as follows. Number one, the compassion of the Father.

Number two, the son interrupted and restored. And number three, the celebration of the Father and his servants.

Number one, the compassion of the Father. We see this throughout our text for today, but predominantly, mostly I want to look at it in verse 20 this morning.

[13 : 56] We see, coming off the rest of our text from verse 19, the prodigal son arose and came to his father.

Now, it's really important that we understand what this young man would have been going back to in this particular culture. Remember that this story is being told predominantly to these scribes and Pharisees, right?

Jesus is driving this point and he is using shock and awe to accomplish it, right? Already, these Pharisees and scribes would have just been astounded by the flagrant disobedience of this young man, right?

This young man in asking for his inheritance from his father has said to his father, I wish you were dead, right? He's gone to him and said, just go ahead and die so that I can have what's coming to me, right?

He has gone off to unclean people, to Gentile lands. He has spent this money in a licentious way. The older brother tells us he must have heard reports that he sent it on prostitutes.

[15 : 07] He finds himself now destitute, caring for unclean animals. These scribes and Pharisees are astounded at the rebellion of this young man.

So remember in this culture, God's given instruction in Deuteronomy chapter 21 that if a son is rebellious, he will not listen. There's no bringing this son to correction.

That the people of the town were supposed to take the son outside the gate and stone him to death. So this is the kind of serious culture that is looking at the story and thinking about obedience. Now, the instruction of Deuteronomy 21 was very rarely, if ever, followed in this day, but there would have been a great deal of scorn for this young man as he comes back.

The cultural expectation. These scribes and Pharisees are thinking to themselves, oh boy, here it comes. The son's about to get it from his father. The cultural expectation is that the father would have had nothing to do with him until the son had sat outside of his gate for an extended period of time.

[16:21] Weeks, even months. Sat outside the gate. And the job of the town folk would have been to ridicule him. Would have been to tell him what a horrible, disobedient son he was.

To spit on him. To throw rotten food at him. And if the son would persevere outside the gate. If he would stay in that spot receiving all of this scorn.

All of this ridicule that was due him for his disobedience. The father may take him back in. The father might deal with him as a hired servant.

And this is the hope of the son, right? He's just saying, my father will at least let me live on the land and work for him. I'll at least have food for my belly.

And this is what he goes back to. This is what he's headed back for. Remember that he had a plan, right? He had thought up this plan. He was going to say this thing.

[17:22] He had come to himself and I'm going to say, verse 18, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.

And beyond Jesus telling the story, I just imagine him rehearsing that over and over again in his head, right? Waiting. I'm going to sit outside the gate. I'm going to sit outside the gate. I'm going to sit outside the gate.

And when I get an audience before my father, I'm going to say this thing. And we see in our text today that he launches into it, right? He's got it ready to go. But look at what happens instead.

And he arose and he came to his father. But while he was still a long way off. Now in this day, landowners would have had homes in the city.

For me as a person who currently lives in the city of Gainesville and really loves being out, I think, why? I'd rather have a house out on the land someplace. But it wasn't safe to have a house out on the land.

[18:24] So they all had homes in the town. So the young man is approaching the town and while he's still a long way off, his father sees him expectantly watching for him.

This isn't a walk by a window when he happens to see a dirty young man coming into town. He is outside. He is expectant. And he is watching for his son's return.

And the text says he felt compassion. He felt compassion. The Greek word used in the original text is a lot stronger than the thought that comes to my mind when I read the word compassion.

I think of kind of a momentary feeling of affection. But the Greek word speaks of a guttural, a visceral love for this young man.

This is a father who would have done anything for his son. Fathers in the room, I know there's not a lot of us, but I think we can in some measure understand this, that we would do anything for our sons.

[19:39] When Cade, who is my oldest, who is now seven, was five, I took him and his younger brother, Judah, to a playground. And there was a family reunion that looked like happening nearby and this group of probably cousins, they just seemed like a family unit playing a game together.

They were playing tag and Cade wanted to get in on this game. So he just invited himself into it and was just bouncing around and playing in this game with them. There was the oldest of this crew who was probably eight or nine who kept saying to him, no, you can't play with us.

But Cade didn't hear that. He just kept playing anyway. Like, hey, guys, guys. And he's running around, running around. And finally, this older boy got his attention from on top of the play set and Cade's standing down and I'm sitting over on the little wall as parents do, observing.

And the young boy got his attention and said, hey, kid, you can't play with us. And Cade looked over at me. I'm going to cry thinking about it. Cade looked over at me and his little arms fell like this and his big tears welled up in his eyes and I just went like this.

And he came running across the playground and just fell into my arms. And I wanted, I wanted to go pinch that kid's head off. Right?

[20 : 54] Which would have been highly inappropriate for me to do. But gosh, you just want to do anything for your kids. And that's, that's small. Right? In comparison.

Right? So, so small of an example. And then just for your sake, um, maybe for mine to tell you that not too many moments later the kid was running full on and was looking over his shoulder and just slammed into a pole.

And, and to, to my, to my shame, I went, yes! So, right, um, Psalm 103, 13 says this, as a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

Right? So the father has, he sees the son from a long way off and has this guttural love for him. And what does it do? Like, what does it compel him to do?

He runs to his son. Now, I think, I think for us, 21st century readers of this, we just, we see a movie play out in our mind, the music queues up as he sprints to his son.

[22 : 12] To Jesus' listeners, they would have been horrified by such an action. Now, remember, this father should have scorned him to begin with. This father should have, should have had nothing to do with him.

Right? Even seeing him a long way off, gone back inside the house. But instead, he runs. Okay? So not only does it go out to him, but he goes out to him with haste.

And the thing for you to know is that men of wealth in this day did not run. They didn't run. They never ran. Boys and servants ran.

Right? So if you needed something, you sent somebody to run for you. You didn't run. It was shameful to run for men in this day. Not only the very act of running, but he would have taken his long robe, his well-dressed robe, and he would have had to hike it up to his knees to run.

Right? And he showed the bottom of his legs. This was a thing that slaves had exposed, not men of wealth and of honor. So he humbles himself out of this visceral love for his son.

[23 : 28] He humbles himself and he runs out to him. God humbled himself. He became a man and he suffered and he died in our stead.

Hebrews 12, 2 states that Jesus endured the cross despising the shame. Paul writes in Philippians 2, 6-8 of Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

So this young smelly rebellious kid is coming home and the father shames himself shames himself to go out and to meet him before he makes his way into the town.

We'll see why in a moment. But he makes himself a fool. You have to imagine. It's daytime he sees him a long way off but people are out about in the town they're in the marketplace and they see him run out to his boy.

From our daily Bible reading for this past week Mr. Doug read it to us this morning Genesis 22 we read of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac and that sacrifice of Isaac being replaced with a ram who is a type for Christ.

[25 : 09] And what does he do when he gets to him? he doesn't run out to him in order to bring to him the condemnation that's due to him but he embraces him and he kisses him.

He fell on his neck some translations will say he collapsed onto his son and wrapped his arms around him and the tense of kissed him means to kiss him repeatedly.

this compassion is overflowing into a great joy to see his son return. John MacArthur said of this little moment in the story the prodigal came home prepared to kiss his father's feet instead the father was kissing the prodigal's pig stinking head.

And the father's compassion does not stop there. Secondly let's look at the son interrupted and restored verses 21 and 22.

So what happens? The son launches into his speech just up in verse 18 and 19 but he doesn't get all the way through it and I love this in Jesus' telling here he says father I'm sitting against heaven and before you I am no longer worthy to be called your son and what is it that he was going to go on to say treat me as one of your hired servants but he gets interrupted I think that's the right way to read this right the conjunction verse 22 but is in the original text but the father he's in the middle of the speech but rather than him getting to finish the speech he said I'm not worthy to be called your

son what does the father do?

[26 : 58] He does all of these things to show the son that he is restored to him as a son he says to his servants bring quickly here's the running that's going on right I'm presuming they're still outside the town they've yet to walk through the crowd back to the house and he sends the servants running you gotta imagine they ran after him why is our master running let's run after him to see what's going on they send him he sends some of them back to bring what?

the best robe a ring and shoes these are significant things that this loving father brought to put on his youngest son first the best robe is brought and it's put on him the best robe was an extremely significant article of clothing every wealthy man would own an ornate robe made of the finest fabrics that was reserved for the very most special of events this was a robe that the owner wouldn't wear to a wedding he was invited to this is how special it was but would rather only wear it to the weddings of their own children we don't have anything like this in our culture I don't even think most people own like a nice tux anymore right this would have been better than that this was in high reserve for very very special events this robe and it was his robe giving this robe to the son is not even a normal honor that a son would receive right this isn't extra special it's a very high honor and what he is doing is he is saying this boy that rebelled against me is restored to the honor of my house right this is my best robe and I am putting it on him he belongs to me so as he gets taken back through that town everyone can see the son has been restored psalm 54 also from our reading this week says for you are not a god who delights in wickedness evil may not dwell with you so god our father cannot exist with us in wickedness god can associate with us in our unrighteousness right in our evil deeds in our rebellion so how is it that we come into right relationship with him it's that our sin is imputed to christ as christ died on the cross he took our sin and we're given his righteousness his perfect life is imputed to us it's called the double imputation right it's this great trade martin luther called it the great exchange right our sin given to christ his righteousness given to us and we often speak in terms of being clothed in the righteousness of christ you see the picture here god comes to us in repentance of faith he comes to us and he wraps us in christ righteousness he says this is my son and when he sees us he sees christ and escorts us back to the house paul writes in 2 corinthians 5:21 for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of god i think this is the best verse that speaks of double imputation christ and and charles hodge who was a 19th century theologian he was the president of princeton theological seminary back when that meant something said this of 2 corinthians 5:21 there is probably no passage in the scriptures in which the doctrine of justification is more concisely or clearly stated than this our sins were here's that word imputed to christ and his righteousness is imputed to us he bore our sins we are clothed in his righteousness christ bearing our sins did not make him morally

a sinner nor does christ's righteousness become subjectively ours it is not the moral quality of our souls our sins were the judicial ground of the sufferings of christ so that they were a satisfaction of justice and his righteousness is the judicial ground of our acceptance with god right so the prodigal was still the prodigal he was still the son and he had still done the things he had done but he's now clothed in the father's robe right he is now no longer to be scorned right abused spit upon by the town folks right because he has been restored as a son but not only that not only is the best robe brought to him and put on him but also a ring now this ring would have been a signet ring which would have carried the family crest or seal so that it could be pressed into wax on formal letters or documents as verification of legal authority probably seen a movie in which this happened right they often wore that as a ring right so that they can make that stamp on letters or documents right so in placing a ring on the finger of his son the father is not only showing that the son had restored honor but also restored authority he's saying once again this young man is my son and he speaks on my behalf second corinthians 5:20 just a verse before where we just were paul says therefore we are ambassadors for christ god making his appeal through us we implore you on behalf of christ be reconciled to god so just as we've been clothed in christ's righteousness right god says this is my son ladies you want to be a son you want the inheritance that is due you this is the language of the time i am god's son and i speak on his behalf we are ambassadors for christ inconsistency with his revealed word as a side note but not only the best robe and a ring but also shoes hired servants and household slaves customarily went barefoot masters and their sons wore shoes right so it's another status thing so to have shoes placed on the son's feet was yet another gesture another showing that this young man has been restored i recall last week that we defined the word prodigal

as licentious or lavish or as the esv translation of the text which i use on sunday mornings puts it in verse 13 reckless right reckless living licentious sinning that's what we mean when we talk of the young son the prodigal son right the story's most often deemed that this prodigal son story because of this excessive rebellion against the father but let's not miss the prodigal nature of the father's love for his son his love is absolutely reckless the first part of first john chapter three verse one john writes this see what kind of love the father has given to us and some translations will say that the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of

God and so we are but Jesus tells us more about the father's compassion his great lavish love for his son thirdly the celebration of the father and his servants the last two verses verse 23 and 24 he says and bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate for this my son was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found and they began to celebrate now to slaughter the fattened calf was a big deal for time I'm going to save you the details of the preparation of the fattened calf but this calf was likely being prepared as would have been the custom for the wedding of the oldest son it's likely why this calf is in reserve being prepared but this event happens this great event verse 24 my son was dead and is alive again he was lost and he is found and that is the thematically what's happening in chapter 15 right back in verse 4 what man of you having a hundred sheep if he's lost one does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it verse 8 or what woman having ten silver coins if she loses one coin does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it right so lost things now found!

they began to celebrate the father and his son and those in his household begin to celebrate again in the previous parables verse 5 when he has found it the sheep he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing he comes home he calls together his friends and his neighbors saying to them rejoice with me for I found my sheep that was lost just so I tell you there be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents and over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance and then verse nine the woman who finds the coin when she finds it she calls together her friends and neighbors saying rejoice with me for I found the coin that I had lost just so I tell you there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents and we'll transition next week into the response of the older son who if he loved the father the way he should have if he was obedient if he stuck around with the father for the reason that he should have it would have been for the father himself so he would have been drawn into the rejoicing of the father the father says look

[38 : 34] I have found something was my son he's been restored to me and the older brother would have gladly joined in about rejoicing the rejoicing in heaven is and will be great over the salvation of souls because it displays the goodness of God our father it is this goodness that Jesus speaks as he tells his parable that his hearers will see this compassion of the father the son interrupted and restored and the celebration of the father and his servants and we would see this and be given much reason to join in the rejoicing of heaven in lost souls coming to faith in Jesus Christ right because we love our father we rejoice in what he rejoices in I want you to turn with me away from

Luke chapter 15 in your copy of God's word to revelation chapter five is the apostle john's heavenly vision I don't want you to get too caught up in the potential symbolism of the chapter that's not the driving point that we're looking at here but I just want you to consider the rejoicing in heaven over the accomplished work of Jesus Christ beloved you want to have joy here be saved by God because of this lamb that we're going to read about sacrificed on our behalf and then join in his work in the world right what he is doing to continue to save this is the work of Christians joining in the joy of

God as he calls together his church for the praise of his name pick that up in revelation five yes the whole chapter it's too good not to read the whole thing and then we'll close so in verse one and following then I saw on the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals and no one in heaven on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it and one conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals and between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven horns and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth and he went and he took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne and when he had taken the scroll the four living

creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints and they sang a new song saying worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you had made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing and I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying to him who sits on the throne the lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever and the four living creatures said amen and the elders fell down and worshiped let's pray!