

Luke 15:11-32

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[0 : 0 0] This morning's text is Luke chapter 15, verses 11 through 32. So please join us there as we turn our attention to the study of God's word, Luke chapter 15.

Now this is most likely a familiar text to you. If you've been following along with our church's Bible reading plan, it was part of Tuesday's reading. I hope this morning you'll be enriched by a further study of it.

Now there is a lot to be said about these verses. I have more notes than usual, so I'm going to move pretty quickly this morning, and I'll structure our study around the three characters.

So we'll first look at the younger son, then at the father, and finally at the older son. I'm going to present a number of points for each of these characters, and we'll do my best to do so in a way that you can keep up with.

But if you do have a pen in your hand and are trying to take notes, I just want to go ahead and prep you. Stretch your fingers a little bit. Get ready to move fast. So let's read our text, but for a bit of context, I want to begin the reading at the beginning of chapter 15.

[1 : 0 1] So this is Luke chapter 15, beginning in verse 1. 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. But 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? 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.

[2 : 0 8] 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 property that is coming to me. And he divided his property between them.

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all that 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 field 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. 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.

[3 : 0 6] 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. Yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends.

[4 : 12] 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 brother was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found. The contemporary pastor and commentator John MacArthur has called the story of the prodigal son, the greatest short story ever told.

This story has been often cited and exists in the collective conscience of our culture, but is most often misunderstood. I pray this morning we will arrive at a clearer understanding of its meaning. The story is primarily told by Jesus in order to address the attitudes of the religious elite, who Luke tells us about at the beginning of chapter 15, verse 2, and the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.

So as Jesus is being compassionate for those who would come to him in repentance, they're upset about it. So in response, Luke tells us Jesus, verse 3, told them this parable.

[5 : 24] And then Luke records the parable of the lost sheep. And then verse 8, or what woman? And then tells the parable of the lost coin. And then, without skipping a beat, verse 11, There's always a great temptation to allegorize Jesus' parables, to make everything in the text take on some complex symbolic meaning.

People do this all the time. But we must be really careful to see here that Jesus is driving a solitary point. He is juxtaposing the attitudes of the Pharisees and the scribes with the rejoicing of heaven over lost souls being found.

We need to keep this in mind as we consider the story of the prodigal son. It sits within a chapter of parables with an even larger cultural reality.

And we need to do some faithful work to understand its meaning and bearing on us today. I want to pose the question at the outset, In what ways are we like the older son?

In what ways are we like the older son? Once we identify any way that we are like the older son, we have been given reason. For repentance. And I pray that we'll do so this morning.

[6 : 38] But first, let's look at the character of the younger son. So first, the younger son. The younger son is the prodigal himself. All of us, in some measure, find ourselves in him.

The word prodigal means licentious or lavish, or as the ESV says in the text in verse 13, reckless. The prodigal son is prodigal in his sin, in his rebellion against his father.

Now, there are various stages in the history of a sinner. This is true of the prodigal and are worth noting for our benefit. This is especially important for you this morning if you have not believed in Jesus Christ.

But if you have believed, do not think that a careful consideration of who you once were is a fruitless effort. This could be of great benefit to us. It's always good to remember the grace of God to us in Jesus Christ.

To be reminded of what we were saved from makes us revel, and I think it should make us revel afresh each time, in who we have been saved to.

[7 : 46] So, some sub points for you for the son. Number one, independence from God. Number two, indulgence of self. Number three, insanity of soul.

And for those of us who are in Christ, right, this journey ends, number four, with repentance and faith. So, first, let's look at the younger son's independence from God, this history of sin, right?

Verse 12 says, The younger said to his father, Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me. And the father divides the property among them. We first learn of a man with two sons.

Inheritance in Jesus' day was governed by the law of primogenitor. I think I'm pronouncing that correctly. Finally, the eldest son, under this law, received a double portion of the inheritance, which means, in the case of two sons, that the older son would receive two-thirds of the inheritance, and the younger, one-third.

Upon the request of his inheritance, the father not only grants the younger brother what he asked for, but also the older. Notice at the end of verse 12, And he divided his property between them.

[9 : 02] This fact bears a great deal of significance later on. This morning, what we need to understand about the prodigal's request is that it was absolutely audacious. To ask this of a father was a huge ask.

Under the law of primogenitor, inheritance was only granted upon the death of the father. So the younger son, in requesting his inheritance, was wishing his father dead.

This is the nature of sin. This is the way that sin expresses, right? A rejection of God's good, loving rule. We are saying to God, We wish you were dead.

Pastor John Piper wants to find sin like this. You may have heard this before. It's greater when he says it, but he defined it this way. The glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not reverence. The greatness of God not admired. The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured.

[10 : 05] The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The promises of God not believed. The commandments of God not obeyed. The justice of God not respected.

The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized. The person of God not loved. We can observe the prodigal's expression of sin in the very first sin found in Genesis chapter 3 and in every sin ever since.

Sin expresses a desire for God to be dead. We once sought independence from God just as the prodigal son desired independence from his father.

And this should be an absolute shock to us. The fact that this son would ask that his father be dead that he would get his inheritance should shock us. In a culture where honor was massively important and the fifth commandment, honor your father and mother was not only part of the moral law but also the judicial, this request was more than just a little scandalous for Jesus' hearers.

Let me read to you quickly from Deuteronomy chapter 21. This is the judicial part of the fifth commandment. If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother and though they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives.

[11 : 34] And they shall say to the elders of this city, this our son is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey our voice. He is a glutton and a drunkard. Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones.

So you shall purge the evil from your midst and all Israel shall hear and fear. So they took this kind of rejection of fatherly care very seriously.

Insolence was a serious infraction. And while the instruction of Deuteronomy chapter 21 was very rarely followed, a son like the prodigal would be publicly shamed and disowned.

The father may not have gone so far as to stone his son, but he would have publicly shamed him and disowned him. Here, however, the father divides his property between his sons.

Now we've done this very thing in our willful rebellion against God's good instruction, whether found in the pages of scripture or in the law written on our hearts, we have all rebelled against God and wished him dead.

[12 : 36] We have all sought independence from our good father. We have all wanted ourselves to be gods and we all deserve to be shamed. Secondly, for the son, the younger son, indulgence of self.

So verse 13 says, 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 so the son leaves, which appears to have been his plan, as Jesus states, not many days later.

The son would have liquidated his inheritance into transportable cash. So he sold off land. He sold off livestock. Recall that Jesus is speaking to a Jewish audience.

So the statement that the son took a journey into a far country would have been understood to be a journey to Gentile lands. To Jesus' listeners, there's a compounding audacity of the son going to

live among unclean people to carry out unclean motives.

In their minds, this son is not a forgivable son. He is doing something above and beyond offensive to his father. He takes the inheritance that the father granted him and he spends it on himself.

[13:51] He spends it on his desires. He does not seek to do good, but rather indulges his every whim. He spends it in reckless living. The sinner indulges in self.

The sinner seeks their own pleasure, not the glory of God or the good of their fellow man. And beloved, we have all been selfish in this way.

Paul writes to Titus in Titus chapter three and verse three, for we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

The next stage in this history of sin in the younger son's life is number three, insanity of soul. We see beginning in verse 14 and down through 16 that after he'd spent everything, spent all of his inheritance, a famine arose and he's in need.

So he hires himself out to be a keeper of pigs and he has nothing to eat. He longs to eat the food that the pigs are eating. Jesus next tells his hearers that the young man spent all of his inheritance and found himself in a desperate spot as the land entered into a famine, right?

[15:12] The pleasures of sin are real, but they are temporal and they are fleeting. The prodigal experienced the temporal pleasure of sin in a very stark way.

He ventures rapidly from reckless living to abject poverty. His sin placed him in a dreadful spot. If you have not believed in Christ, I pray that you would repent and believe before you find yourself in such a place.

The prodigal becomes a keeper of pigs, which would have been additionally shocking to Jesus' Jewish hearers as the pig was an unclean animal. The prodigal is further forsaking his father and his nationality and he has become so desperately hungry that he desires to eat something that can never satisfy.

Jesus said he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate. These pods would have been carob pods, which was a hardy plant that produced tough, leathery pod shells with hard beads. They're barely digestible for pigs and they're not digestible for humans, although I've been informed that they can be ground into something that kind of replaces cocoa powder, so sort of, but I don't think he had a food processor on hand with him.

[16:24] This is the way of sin. Seeking to be satisfied with that which will never satisfy. This is insanity of the soul and this is people before they're regenerate, before they find their joy and satisfaction.

In Christ, seeking satisfaction with things that will never satisfy. We are offered abundant satisfaction in relationship with God, but we turned to worthless things.

Jeremiah chapter 2, verse 12 and 13, Be appalled, O heavens, at this. Be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord. For my people have committed two evils.

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water. Paul expresses the same in Romans chapter 1, verse 21 and 22.

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.

[17:27] Christian, you have been delivered from such utility by the grace of God. Rejoice in him and remember you have been delivered and spared from. If you have not placed believing faith in Jesus Christ this morning, take a moment to consider the prodigal and his desperate state.

He surely would have died had he stayed in that state. Jesus concludes this portion of the text with a statement and no one gave him anything. He had left the goodness of his father's house to find himself desperately lost in a foreign land.

If you were not in Christ this morning, whether you recognize it or not, you find yourself in the very same state. Charles Spurgeon once said, if you must play the fool, take some lighter things to trifle with than your souls and your eternal destinies.

Shut yourselves up alone for a while. Go through the matter steadily. Lay it out in order. Make a plan of it. See where you are going. Think over the way of salvation, the story of the cross, the love of God, the readiness, of Christ to save.

So fourthly, for the younger son, we see repentance and faith. Verse 17 and following, 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.

[18 : 51] I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him, father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. Praise God that the prodigal of Jesus' story does not stay in this desperate state, but Jesus says he came to himself, that he returned to his right mind.

He recognized the goodness of his father. He remembered that even his father's hired servants had more than enough bread and that he was being foolish to stay where he was and perish with hunger.

So he makes a plan. He decides to go back to his father, humbly admitting the error of his way, saying, I have sinned against heaven and before you and being willing to live once again under his father good instruction, not as a son this time, but as a servant.

The prodigal turns from his wickedness, the foolish error of his way. This is called repentance and he turns to his father, believing that his father will be good to him.

This is the prodigal's faith. We will see next the loving kindness of the father toward the son as he repents and believes.

[20 : 05] We will see that as the son returns in repentance and faith, the father becomes humble himself in order to love his son and to spare him from his deserved punishment. The father takes on the son's shame to restore him to sonship and there is much rejoicing.

Dear listener, if you have not humbled yourself before God, recognize that you have sought independence from him, that you have lived in a state of indulgence of self, that if you are not already there, you are at risk of an insanity of your soul.

My plea to you this morning is flee to Christ. Let this day be a day of repentance and faith, that there will be a great rejoicing in heaven over the salvation of your soul.

So let's look now at the father. The sub points for the father are as follows. First, the compassion of the father. Second, the son interrupted and restored.

You could say the interruption of the father. And third, the celebration of the father and his servants. So first, the compassion of the father. The beginning of verse 20 says, and he arose, the younger son, arose and came to his father.

[21 : 15] But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced and kissed him. A father with this kind of wealth would have had both a home in the country and a home in town.

Right? Most likely, the home in the country would have been the larger home and the place where they stayed more often, but would have come into town to deal with matters of business or attend a celebration or would have had a home there also to stay in.

But here we find the father in the townhome. He is expectant and he is watching. He is eagerly awaiting the return of his son. And when he sees him from a long way off, Jesus tells us that he felt compassion for him.

Customarily, a son such as this would have returned and been forced to sit outside of the gate to his father's house and endure the ridicule of the town. But Jesus says that the father felt compassion.

The Greek word used in the original text is stronger than just a momentary feeling of affection, but speaks of a deep love, a visceral, a guttural love.

[22 : 26] This is a father who would have done anything for this son. Psalm 103, verse 13 speaks of our heavenly father as a father shows compassion to his children.

So the Lord chose compassion to those who fear him. And this father in the parable upon seeing him and feeling compassion runs to him.

Men of wealth in this day did not run. Boys ran to play. Servants ran because they were told to. Men of wealth had people who ran for them.

In order for the father to run, he would have had to pull his robe up to his knees, gird up his loins is a phrase you may have heard before.

And this was not a dignified thing for the father to do. So just imagine, right, again, a parable, but in this setting, this wealthy man in his town home and the city is seeing what's going on, right?

[23 : 26] They're seeing the son coming from a long way off. They're anticipating that this father is going to shame this son, right, who rejected him as the father. And what they see instead, right, is a man who shames himself, right, picks up his robe to race outside of the town and to meet the son.

Like the father of Jesus' parable, God humbled himself, became a man, and suffered and died in our stead. Hebrews 12, 2 states that Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame.

In Philippians 2, verse 6 and following, says 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.

And so, I do believe that we are meant to see the kindness of the father in the person and work of Jesus Christ. So, the parable, certainly the father could be considered God the father, but how did he accomplish his humility?

Well, through Jesus. So, I think Jesus is the father in the text, showing this love and compassion for a wayward son. So, he runs to him and then he embraces him and he kisses him.

[24 : 53] He fell on his neck and kissed him repeatedly. John MacArthur says of this phrase, the prodigal came home prepared to kiss his father's feet.

Instead, the father was kissing the prodigal's pig-stinking head. What a picture of compassion, loving kindness towards this son. But the father's compassion did not stop there.

We see, secondly, the son interrupted and restored. 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.

And that's where his speech stops. And this is a variance on his planned speech. If you look at the end of verse 18, he says, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son. And then he says, treat me as one of your hired servants. So, he's interrupted, right? He has rehearsed this speech.

[25 : 52] He has likely said this over and over and over in his head as he has journeyed home. And he doesn't get the last sentence out because the father interrupts him and says 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.

Now, the best robe was an extremely significant article of clothing. Every wealthy man would own an ornate robe made of the finest fabric that were reserved for the most special of events.

This was a robe that the owner wouldn't wear to another child's wedding. So, it wasn't even, the other child's wedding wasn't worthy of it, but only to the weddings of their own children.

It was reserved for very, very special instances. Giving him this robe granted him more honor than was ever normally bestowed upon a son.

The son didn't get to wear the robe, it was the father's to wear and only in very special circumstances. So, this was a massive way for this father to say, this is my son, to bring him back into town, right, under everybody's watch and saying, I'm taking my very best robe and I'm giving it to him.

[27 : 09] 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21, Paul writes, for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Way more honor than we deserve. And he gives a ring to him and this ring would have been a signet ring which had been carried by the family crest or seal so that it could be pressed into wax on formal letters or documents as verification of legal authority.

So in placing a ring on the finger of a son, the father is not only showing the son has restored honor, but also restored authority. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 20 the first path.

Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us. Restored honor, restored authority. And he puts shoes on his feet.

Hired servants and household slaves customarily went barefoot. Masters and their sons wore shoes. So to have shoes placed on the son's feet was yet another gesture of restoration towards this son.

[28 : 19] 1 John chapter 3 beginning of verse 1 see what kind of love the father has given to or lavished on us that we should be called children of God and so we are.

Jesus tells us even more about the father's compassion. Third point, the celebration of the father and his servants. He asked the servants to bring the fattened calf and kill it.

This is verse 23. 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. To slaughter the fattened calf was a big deal.

It is likely a calf such as this one that would have been set aside in preparation for the wedding feast of the eldest son reserved for a special occasion.

For this my son was dead and is alive again. he was lost and is found. There's the special occasion. There's the wonderful reason for rejoicing. The son was dead and now is alive.

[29 : 19] He was lost and now is found. And if you think back into chapter 15, the beginning of it, 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?

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? And then there's this rejoicing, right?

Verse five, when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 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. And verse nine, when she found 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's joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. The rejoicing in heaven is and will be great over the salvation of souls, because it displays the goodness of God the Father.

[30 : 28] It is this goodness that Jesus speaks of as he tells his parables, that his hearers would see the compassion of the Father, the Son interrupted and restored in the celebration of the Father and his servants, and be given much reason to join in the rejoicing of heaven.

Now, as Jesus is about to drive home the point, the whole point of this parable, recall that for us this story is so endearing, right? Up to this point, we love to consider a wayward son returning home and being embraced by his Father, but the Pharisees and the scribes would have been astonished that the Father would have treated such a disrespectful son in this manner, right?

They are still angry at the son, right? We're so glad for the restoration and the celebration. They're indignant at this point. The younger son in asking for his inheritance was wishing the father dead, and the Pharisees and the scribes could not fathom a father that would love his son in this way, right?

At this point, they would have been furious, right? The scribes and the Pharisees are represented by the older brother in the story, right? They are having the emotions, as Jesus tells us to his original hearers, that the brother is about to express in the story.

They see Jesus with tax collectors and sinners drawing near to him, and they as self-righteous religious elites want to preserve their status as such.

[31 : 54] They would never want the reputations of those drawing near to Jesus to solely their reputations, and they, as we will see, want nothing to do with a God that would love the younger brothers of the world.

May we not be those people. So let's look at the older son. Sub points for the older son. I know this is a lot. I hope it will serve you.

The failing love of the eldest son for his father, the failing love of the oldest son for his younger brother, and the unfailing love of the father for his oldest son.

verse 28. He was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated with him, but he answered his father, look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends.

The oldest son is furious, and he is furious with the father. He stands outside fuming. Why? Because his perceived rights have been trampled upon.

[33 : 01] Because he didn't run about seeking his pleasure like his younger brother, but stayed and shouldered more than his fair share of the work on his father's estate. He wants justice, not mercy.

He wants his younger brother to get what is coming to him. He wants him punished, not celebrated. And so he begins to grumble. Right? Look, these many years I have served.

I have never disobeyed your command. Is it true that the oldest son was never disobedient? Of course not. No one is ever perfectly obedient, but his perception is that he has been perfectly obedient.

He is self-righteous. He believes that he has been perfectly good, or at least good enough to earn his father's favor. This was the state of the Pharisees and the scribes.

Luke chapter 5, verse 30 through 32. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners? And Jesus answered them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

[34 : 08] I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. Is Jesus suggesting that the Pharisees and the scribes are well? Absolutely not. He is addressing their perception of themselves.

He is saying, You do not see that you are sick, so therefore you do not see your need of a physician. In Matthew chapter 23, verse 27 and following, Jesus says, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. righteousness. The Pharisees and the scribes should have seen themselves in the older brother and been broken by their self-righteous indignation toward the younger sons who were gathering around Jesus.

They should have humbled themselves and turned to the one who is telling them this very story. They should have done so in the spirit of Matthew 5, 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mankind's issue before God has never been one of outward activity, but rather one of inward affection. God wants our affections to be set on him, which yields obedience, but that obedience is ultimately for God.

[35 : 29] It is aimed at him to please him and glorify him. The older son is not obedient in order to please his father, but to get what he can from him.

Look what he goes on to say. I have been so perfectly obedient, yet you have never given me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends. He is angry at the father's celebration over the return of his younger brother, not because he has not been celebrated, but because he has not been given something material so that he might celebrate with his friends.

He wants nothing to do with the father, just like the younger son wanted nothing to do with his father. They both want, in the case of the younger brother, wanted him dead, right?

The oldest brother failed to love the father. Remember verse 11 and 12. 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 property that is coming to me.

And he, the father, divided his property between them, the sons. Note verse 31. And the father said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

[36 : 45] He already had everything. What the father wanted was his affection, but he did not want the father. So this morning, you may have never placed believing faith in Jesus Christ.

You look really good on the outside, but your obedience, your imperfect obedience, I must add, is not aimed at the pleasure and glory of God, but at yourself. You think that if you live just so, you will earn God's favor, and this is a damning thought.

Do not be like the older brother. Turn to God in Christ. Recognize that no amount of your working will ever earn you a place in his kingdom. But the offer of the gospel is that by faith in the perfect life, the perfect death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you can have your record of guilt expunged, and you can have the righteousness of Jesus.

You can be saved from God's wrath, by God's mercy, to God's presence. What a glorious truth. Now, some of you have placed believing faith in Christ, but we are so quick to forget the great love of the Father for us, and so quick to either presume upon his grace with licentious living, or believe we can earn his grace with legalism.

Beloved, you are saved by grace alone, through faith alone. Your faith will produce obedience in you, but let it be from a grateful heart that loves to please and glorify God the Father.

[38 : 10] Secondly, let's look at the failing love of the oldest son for his younger brother. He says, but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.

Notice that he does not say, when my younger brother came. He says, when this son of yours came, he disowns his brother. But this had happened long before in Jesus' story.

The oldest brother made no attempt to reason with his younger brother. He did not try to stop him from sinning against the Father so egregiously, and he did not seek his return and restoration.

It appears that the oldest brother knew where his younger brother was and what he was up to, but he did not go to him. He says, he has devoured your property with prostitutes. How would he know such a thing? The oldest brother failed to love the younger brother. At this point, if you were in Christ, I want you to long for the younger brother to have a better oldest brother.

[39 : 11] A brother that would humble himself by going on a long journey for his younger brother's return and restoration. A brother who would gladly share his inheritance with his younger brother. A brother who leads his younger brother in a grateful obedience.

A brother who would rejoice to see his father rejoice in the return of his son. Praise God that we have a perfect older brother in Jesus Christ.

But that is not this brother. That is not this brother. He says, you killed the fattened calf for him. Do you hear the Pharisees and scribes in the older brother's accusation?

He is saying, you have received a sinner and are eating with him. This is the very accusation they were making at the beginning of Luke chapter 15.

If the oldest brother loved the father, he would have also loved what the father loves. You may find yourself this morning in Christ, but loving what the world loves.

[40 : 10] What does the father love? The father loves the restoration of his sons. The parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin are about the rejoicing in heaven over sinners who repent.

Jesus says in Luke 19 10, for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost. Lastly, let's look at the unfailing love of the father for his oldest son.

Verse 31. And he said to him, son, you were 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. The father extends the same love he has for the younger brother to the oldest brother. The father's love is unfailing.

When he was angry and refused to go in, the father came out and entreated him. Right? The host of the party left the party to go out to the older son.

[41 : 10] Right? And he entreated him, which means he urged or implored or encouraged him to come in and to join the celebration. The father could have justly been angry with the oldest son for fuming outside.

He could have sent a message to him via a servant, but he comes to him personally and he entreats him. Don't be this way. You are my son. Love what I love.

Love what I love because I love you. And I hope to help you see the connection, right? He entreats him, join in the rejoicing of heaven for it was fitting to celebrate and be glad.

So you see God's sons love what he loves and he loves to see sinners come to repentance. He loves to restore those who are poor in spirit to love those who return to him in humility. The Pharisees and the scribes were showing themselves to not be God's sons as they grumbled saying, this man received sinners and eats with them.

Jesus tells them three parables as a mercy to them. This is Jesus going out to them, outside of the celebration, and urging them to come in and be part of the celebration.

[42 : 20] Did they heed the warning? They certainly did not heed his warning. There's a real life epilogue to this parable. It's not an epilogue that Jesus mentions.

It's an epilogue that Jesus lives. And it would have been told something like this. You could insert this final sentence. The oldest son, in his rage against the father, beat him, spit on him, mocked him, and crucified him.

This is the end of this story. And we do not want to be counted amongst the oldest brothers in the way we respond to the loving kindness of God towards sinners.

Praise be to God that he purposed that Jesus should die, that by the hands of wicked men our Savior was murdered, but that three days later he declared victory over sin and death when he was raised from the dead, and that now we by faith may have life in him.

What they meant for evil, God meant for good. This morning, let us rejoice in the unfailing love of the Father, and let that be a love that turns us in compassion, the compassion of the Father towards others.

[43 : 41] We ought never be, as redeemed people, ever be people who seek our own status, want to fight for our rights.

We ought to be going out in love and compassion for the younger brothers of the world. I do pray that that will be true of us. Let us pray that we need somekkers.