

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

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[0 : 00] Good evening. I bring with me greetings from North Harris Free Church. Let's just spend this! time before the service just focusing our mind on the Lord. I want to read to you from Psalm! 136. O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. O give thanks unto the God of gods, for his mercy endureth forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his mercy endureth forever. Let's begin this time of worship this evening by singing from Psalm 147, Psalm 147, and we'll sing verses 1 to 11, a psalm of praise to our God, who is a good and loving God.

Praise ye the Lord, for it is good. Praise to our God to sing, for it is pleasant, and to praise it is a coming thing. We'll sing Psalm 147.

Praise ye the Lord, for it is good. Praise to your God, who is a good and loving God.

Praise to your God, who is a good and loving God.

Praise to your God, who is a good and loving God.

[2 : 24] Praise to your God, who is a good and loving God.

God of all those yards, be in them and loving God. It is the Lord, God of God. Praise to your God, who is a good and loving God. It is the Lord, God of God. It is the Lord, God of God. Praise to your God, who is a good and loving God. It is the Lord, God of God. It is the Lord, God of God. It is the Lord, God of God.

The Lord is on the deep, God's high, the wicked to the ground.

Sing to the Lord, God's given sight, on power His grace is done.

Who covet the heavenly God, who are the earth below, He created great, the wicked glass upon the earth is yours.

[4 : 27] The gifts of peace, His worthy peace, the kingdom of Christ.

His grace, His love, in our hearts to stand, not in my sexed life.

But the Lord is on the deep, God's given sight, His mercy, in the cross, the highest, His mercy, By hope and justice.

Let's pray together. Our loving Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this opportunity to be here together this evening.

And Lord, just as we've been singing, we're reminded of a God who provides, a God who gives what we need, a God who is tender and merciful and good to us.

[6 : 04] Despite our sinfulness and our weakness and our failure, you're a God who is faithful and never gives up on us. And we praise you and worship you for that.

We praise you that you're a God who is mighty as well. A God who created vast galaxies, more than man can ever know.

But the same God who created tiny little details on the back of a bumblebee's furlough. Just tiny little details and vast details. A God who is interested in big things, but also in us, in our little world, in the things that go on in our lives.

And we thank you and praise you for that. Thank you, Lord, that you are a God who is just. That, Lord, even when we see things around us that upset us and aren't right, things that shouldn't be the way they are, we can knowingly leave these things in your hands in prayer.

Because you are a God who will make all things right. And you're a God who won't let those who've carried out injustices get away with it. Lord, we praise you that you are a God who saves.

[7 : 19] That, Lord, you stoop down from the glories of heaven to this earth, sending your Son to die for death that we should have died. Sending your Son to take our place.

Perfect. The darling of heaven, given for us. And, Lord, when we think about that, when we take time to dwell on it, it amazes us. And it's beyond understanding in some ways why the holy and righteous and perfect God would pay any attention to us.

Sinful, broken vessels, Lord. And yet you do. You lavish us with love and attention and care. You provide for us and you promise us a dwelling with you in eternity in the new heavens and the new earth.

And, Lord, these things are far more than we can ever understand and far, far more than we would ever deserve. And yet, Lord, you are gracious and good to us, slow to anger and abounding in mercy.

Father, we look at the world around us and we see a world that is in turmoil. Wars and rumours of wars. We see diseases and famine ravaging the world around us.

[8 : 38] And, Lord, it's very easy to watch the news or to read the paper and to feel despair, to feel that there's no hope. But there is hope, Lord. We know that. We know that there is hope in you.

And despite what the world does and what goes on, you are still sovereign and you are in control. And, Lord, we pray to you that you are a God who, Lord, cares for the details of what's going on around us.

That you are not a distant and far away God who has no interest in mankind. But that you take care of these intimate details.

Lord, we pray for those in positions of leadership over us on the island here and, Lord, in Scotland, the first minister and the prime minister in London and the king.

And, Lord, all those who have positions of authority, we pray for them, Lord. We pray that you would very much become real in their lives. That, Lord, they would repent of their sin and come before you with bowed knee and acknowledge and recognise that you are God and that they need wisdom from you to know how to lead us.

[9 : 56] And, Lord, we thank you for those we do have in positions of authority that do love you and have a relationship with you. And, Lord, that we can rely on them to speak what's true and to refer to your word and to find truth from you, Lord, and are happy and willing to share that even though it might lead to persecution or difficulty down the line.

Help us to be, likewise, Lord, strong and bold and courageous in our faith. We pray, Lord, for the nation that we're in, Lord, where rules, laws and rules of law and decisions are made that are clearly contrary to your word.

And, Lord, it's becoming more and more difficult to be openly Christian in this society. And yet, Lord, we can see you so often in the Bible how you encourage believers through such situations.

It's nothing new. And, Lord, we pray that you would give us the encouragement from your word to persevere, to keep going and not to be afraid of man. Lord, we pray for those in the congregation here who are suffering at the moment.

Lord, you know them. Lord, even those who are suffering quietly. Lord, you know them. Whether the suffering is through physical illness or mental illness.

[11 : 24] Whether it's through recent grieving or something that's happened in their lives that's causing them to feel pain. Lord, we just commit each and every one to you lovingly, Lord, for your arms of protection and peace to be upon them.

Lord, you know the fears that many of us have, Lord, about bringing up children or about future work or financial needs.

And, Lord, again, we just commit all of these things to you. Because in our own strength we can do nothing. But we can do all things through Lord Jesus who strengthens us. Father, we pray for the church here as well and its influence and its ministry in the community.

We thank you and praise you for the recent new member to the church and the encouragement that that is to each and every one. And, Lord, we pray that the world around us becomes more secular and more keen to turn their back on you.

That you would bless this church and its ministry here in this place. That, Lord, each one here would be faithful to you in sharing the good news. Whether it's just to family and friends or whether it's further afield.

[12 : 41] But, Lord, each person here has a unique position where they know people that other people don't know. Or they have understandings of interests that others don't know. That you've given them so that they can more openly share about you in a more natural way.

And, Lord, we pray that, Lord, each one of us would have the boldness to do that. Forgive us, Father, when we are slow to bring our requests and our needs before you. Forgive us when we try and take these things on board ourselves and lean on our own understanding.

Forgive us, Lord, when we don't say the things we should say and we say the things we shouldn't. And, Lord, each one of us, Lord, we know the difficulties, Lord, that we have in our own lives.

And the problems that we have that we need to bring to you. And so often we forget. So often we are quick to watch the television or look at social media or do something other than come to your word in repentance.

And to seek your face, to seek your will and to ask for wisdom. So we commit these things to you now, Lord. And as we take this time just to focus this short time on your word, we pray that it would really nourish us this evening.

[13 : 53] And refresh us and be fuel for us to go into this week. Whether it is a word of encouragement or a word of challenge, Lord. That this evening would be a time that we can look back on as being a time that we learnt from you and we heard from you.

And, Lord, we obeyed you. So we commit this time to you and we pray to you again that you are a God who is so loving despite our weakness. And we ask now for you for forgiveness of our many sins in Jesus' name. Amen.

The next singing is from Psalm 103. And it's from verses 1, 3 to 5. O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord and all that in me is. Be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless.

We'll sing verses 1 to 5 of Psalm 103. O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord and all that in me is.

His holy name to magnify and bless.

[15 : 20] Where so my soul, my soul, my soul, my soul, my soul, my soul, my soul, my soul, my soul, my soul. And I will sing verses 1 to 5 of Psalm 103.

And he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and entreated him. And he answered, and he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.

And yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

[20 : 54] And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad. For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found.

Before we look at this passage in a bit more depth, let's just pray, shall we? Father God, we thank you for this word that we have from the Lord Jesus himself, that we can take on board this evening.

Father, perhaps we've heard this parable many times, but help us to look at this with fresh eyes, to be willing and open to hear afresh from you, and to be touched by you.

Lord, perhaps there are people here who have loved ones who do not yet know you, and it pains them deep inside, because they've longed for them to come to know you, and to have a relationship with you.

Maybe there's people here tonight, Lord, who have still not yet made that commitment themselves, never actually accepted the salvation of the Lord Jesus, and trusted him.

[22 : 11] And perhaps there's folk here, Lord, who have at some point made a commitment, but have drifted away. It's perhaps been a long time since they took communion, and they feel that there's no hope, there's no point anymore.

Or perhaps, Lord, there's others here who are up and down in their walk with you, or who feel at times like they're distant from you, that their relationship with you is cold.

And Lord, I know in my own life, I've experienced that many times. And Lord, we pray that each one of us here, whatever situation we're in, wherever we are right now, that this word would be mightily powerful in touching our souls and our hearts, and making us new again, and renewing our faith and our walk with you this evening.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. In the 13th century, a very cruel experiment was carried out by a Roman emperor called Frederick.

And this experiment, he wanted to know what was man's original language. You know, what would people speak if they were never taught a language? And he wanted to know maybe it was Hebrew or Greek or Latin.

[23 : 29] Which one would it be? So he decided to isolate a few babies from birth so that they would never hear the sound of a human voice. And he reasoned that eventually they would begin to speak, and he wanted to know which language they would speak.

So he obtained wet nurses who were sworn to absolute silence. They weren't allowed to talk to the babies at all. And though it was incredibly difficult for them, they still did it.

They abided by that rule. And the infants never heard a word. Not a single sound from a human voice. And do you know what happened? Did those babies grow up speaking Latin or Greek?

Well, no. Within months, they were all dead. And this tragic story goes to show that we can only live in relationships. We all need relationships to live.

And that's why when relationships break up, and, you know, many of us know the feeling of having a relationship that's broken up, it can tear us apart. And the longer I'm a Christian, the more I've come to realise that the Christian life is all about relationship.

[24 : 42] It's all about relationship with God. And relationship with others. And the Bible, when we read it, is all about relationship. And this parable is no exception.

This parable is all about experiencing a relationship of such love, such generosity, that it can dramatically change lives.

And in fact, it's about experiencing a relationship that can turn any life around. No matter how far you think you've gone the wrong way, it can still turn your life around. Which is perhaps why this is the most famous short story in the world.

And because it's well known, it's very easy for us to switch off. We've all heard the parable of the prodigal son many times, perhaps maybe even since Sunday school times. But let's see what the Lord can reveal to us this evening through this passage.

You know, one of the best ways I've heard the parable described is as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. An earthly story with a heavenly meaning. And as we begin to unpack the story, it soon becomes clear that there are three main characters here in this passage.

[25 : 55] And there's one very obvious one. The father is like God. That's who it's intended to be. And the other two characters, the younger son and the older son, are very much like those who are actually listening to Jesus, listening to the story.

And we find them in verse 1 of chapter 15 if you look. The younger son that we see in this parable represents the publican or tax collectors and the sinners.

And then the elder son in verse 2 is like the Pharisees and scribes. So that's the two groups that are listening to this story. But this evening, we're the ones that are listening to this story.

And Jesus is intending for us to see ourselves in this story as we study it. And we need to see where we fit in. Are we like the elder son or are we like the younger son? Sometimes both.

And we're going to look at how these two children relate to their father this evening. Firstly, the younger one and then the older son. And we're going to find three things, three points. Firstly, that they have similar situations.

[27 : 06] Secondly, they have different responses. And thirdly, they have different outcomes. Similar situations, different responses, different outcomes.

And hopefully, we'll discover, as we look at those three points, some wonderful truths about the Father heart of God. So, can I suggest this evening that if we're going to look at these relationships, we need to sort of take off these 21st century glasses, as it were, and we need to put on the glasses of a 1st century Jew to see it from their perspective.

You know, when Jesus told them this story, what would have struck them? What would have been particularly poignant about this story? So, let's firstly consider the two sons and their relationship with the Father.

And we'll look at the first son in verse 12, the younger son. Now, in the West, we often take this verse for granted. I'll just read it through.

The younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. Let's just replay that in a slightly different dialogue, if you like.

[28 : 23] Imagine what's being said here. So, it's like the son is saying here, Father, give me my inheritance. And the father is saying, well, son, it's going to be yours when I die anyway.

And the son saying, well, yes, that's exactly the point, Father. I wish you were dead. I want your inheritance, but I don't want you. You know, at the time, ask your father for his inheritance was like the highest insult possible.

It was unthinkable. It brought such shame to the family. And you can imagine, it would have been on the neighbor's lips for generations. That's how serious it was. Did you hear how he was disgraced by his own son?

In fact, there's an historic record from around this time of a Jewish family where the son did ask the father for his inheritance, just like the prodigal does in his passage. And what do you think the father's response was?

Well, the father didn't have an opportunity to respond. Because history tells us that the shock of it killed him instantly. He died on the spot. That's how unthinkable it was for him to do this.

[29 : 36] It would have actually been kinder for the younger son to just have killed his father outright and saved him the shame and the pain. But let's not forget that our sin, and rebellion is deeply hurtful to our heavenly father too.

So here in verse 12, the younger son tells the father that he would rather he were dead. He effectively says, I no longer want to be part of this family. I don't want to be your son anymore. He turns his back on his father and he leaves.

That relationship is completely broken. It's gone. And that's the first scandal here in this parable. But the second scandal that would have astonished the community is that the father actually let him have the inheritance at all.

Why did he do that? But again, this tells us about the father heart of our God. And it mirrors, I think, Genesis 3, if you think back to Genesis 3, where even though it pains the Lord, he gives Adam and Eve the freedom to discover that sin has consequences.

So, we're told that the prodigal goes off to a far-off country and he indulges in wild living, self-gratification. In fact, verse 30 implies that he squandered his inheritance on a life of vice.

[31 : 03] Then his world falls apart and he ends up in the ultimate gutter for a Jew, feeding pigs, unclean animals. And he's so desperately hungry he's even willing to eat their swill.

That's how desperate he was. Are you or is someone you love in a far-off country right now? Have you turned your back on God and decided to go it alone?

Or has someone you love decided that seeking pleasure will bring them happiness? Well, the turning point for the younger son comes here in verse 17, if you look at that.

I think this verse is actually the key verse in this passage. Verse 17, where it says, when he came to himself. When he came to himself.

In other words, when he came to his senses. What we're seeing in this passage at this point is what we call repentance. Because it's as though the younger son suddenly realises what he's put his father through.

[32 : 05] And he's genuinely sorry for the mess he's got into. And his desire changes from wanting to follow his own very selfish path. And instead he starts to long for home again.

He wants to go home. You see, home is not a building. It's a relationship. I think we all know that. You know, a proper home is the place where I belong.

It's a place where I'm accepted with no strings attached. You know, home's not a place where I'm only accepted if I'm good looking or rich or clever. It's a place where I'm unconditionally accepted.

And the younger son comes to a point of turning around because he realises that it's not just his father's food he needs, it's his forgiveness. He needs to go home. And so in verses 18 and 19 you see him rehearsing, going over in his mind what he's going to say to his father.

Let's just look at that. He realises he's not worthy of his father's love.

[33 : 22] After all, he has cut himself off the family. He's cut himself out by demanding his inheritance. That's what he was doing. But he's going to still beg for forgiveness.

Because he's wronged him. And maybe, just maybe, his father might allow him to be a servant. So he sets off. And on that long journey home you can imagine what must have perhaps been going through his mind.

Would his father even remember who he was? Would he have moved on because of the pain and the shame he caused? And just to get over that his father might have blocked him out in his mind, might have forgotten him?

Hudson Taylor once wrote this, he said, I've always known God wouldn't forget me. But now I have children of my own. I know God can't forget me.

I've always known God wouldn't forget me, but now I have children of my own. I know God can't forget me. And that's what we see in these wonderful verses starting in verse 20.

[34 : 23] what we have in this parable is not a father who is forgotten, but a father who can't forget.

He's pining for his son, he's scanning the horizon looking for him, longing to see his face again. Spurgeon was a famous preacher in the 19th century, and he wrote this, I'll just quote this to you.

The father saw his son. There is a great deal in that word saw. He saw who it was, saw where he had come from, saw the swineherd's dress, saw the built upon his hands and his feet, saw his rags, saw his penitent look, saw what had been, saw what he was, and saw what he would soon be.

His father saw him. God has a way of seeing men and women that you and I cannot understand. He sees right through us at a glance, as if we were made of glass. He sees all our past, present, and future.

See, when the father saw his son coming in the distance, what was his reaction like? Did he have icy eyes, you know, as he thought of the disgrace that that son put him through? Did he clench his fists in fury at the shame?

[35 : 47] No, verse 20 tells us that he had compassion. Or literally, the real, the literal meaning of that word is that his stomach turned within him.

And that's echoed throughout scripture. So many examples of the compassion of God. Just think of Lamentations 3 where it says it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

Now what comes next would have also caused gasps from a Jewish first century audience. Verse 20 tells us, the father ran to his wayward son.

He ran. When she was alive, did you ever see the queen run on TV? No. It just wouldn't happen. It's totally ridiculous.

It's unheard of. And it's no different here. In that culture, for a respectable man to run, it's completely unheard of. A minister I know from Northern Ireland once told me that he was on a tour of Israel.

[36 : 55] He was leading a Bible tour of the Holy Land type thing. And one morning, he brought the coach load of tourists to this famous tourist location.

And the group got out of the coach, made their way up a hill to this popular site of interest. And when he got there, he suddenly remembered he had left his camera in the coach.

So he said to his wife, look, I'm just going to pop back and get the camera. It's just downhill, so I'll just start running down. It won't be long. So he jumped back to the coach, and within seconds, he was surrounded by armed police.

Why were they suspicious of him? What had he done to cause a reaction like that? It's very simple. What aroused the suspicion of those soldiers was the fact that he was running. And men in the Middle East don't run, ever.

But in this parable, the father ignores the fact that it's unheard of, ignores the fact that the neighbours will stare. All he sees and cares about is his son coming towards him.

[37 : 57] So he hitches up his ropes and hurtles down the path towards his son. This is our God, a God who pines after us and longs to be in relationship with us.

A God who is willing to endure the scorn and shame and ridicule from us when we come home in repentance to him. The God of all creation sees us from afar and he runs and runs.

This is the God we're here to worship this evening. Going back to the passage, the father not only runs towards his wayward son, but when he gets there, he throws his arms around his stinking, filthy son and kisses him.

Apparently in the original language the word kiss here is in the present continuous tense. In other words, he kisses him on the cheek over and over again repeatedly.

You matter to our God. We matter to him. I notice the difference between what the son actually manages to confess to the father in verse 18 compared to what he was hoping to confess in verse 18 to actually what he manages to get out in verse 20.

[39 : 11] He doesn't manage to say it all in verse 21 because the father knows he's repentant. He doesn't need to finish the sentence. He's come home. That's all that matters. He's welcome back into the family circle and he's showered with blessings.

The question I have this evening is are you needing to experience God's kiss? Maybe you've never trusted him or perhaps you have but recently you've drifted away and the relationship's not right.

Is it time to come to your senses and to realise that you've wronged him but you want to restore that relationship with the one who made you? Or maybe it's time to repent for the first time.

You know the most common name for this story is the parable of the prodigal son. I'm sure that's what most of us would know who tells. In other words the son who squandered everything. That's what it literally means.

But in some versions of the Bible you see it called the parable of the lost son. And perhaps that's more in keeping with the, there are two parables that we skipped there. I don't know if you noticed I jumped from verse 2 to verse 11.

[40 : 18] There's two parables that we skipped which are the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin. So maybe saying it's the parable of the lost son is more in keeping. I think we could go even further and call it the parable of the lost sons.

Because if we look closely we begin to realise it's not just the younger son who's lost here. Let's briefly take a look at the elder son. there's much more said about the younger son in this parable but actually the plight of the elder son is also documented and Jesus seems to be showing these grumbling Pharisees from verse 2 that their situation is no different to that of the publicans and sinners who are represented by the younger son.

I don't know about you but if I was the younger son I'd be extremely glad that it wasn't the elder son who welcomed me home. Let's look at his reaction when he discovers the celebration party.

Verse 28 and he was angry and would not go in therefore came his father out and entreated him. He's furious. He's raging.

Not only is his wastrel of a brother being treated with such honour but he's being allowed to wear the family ring. His father's own robe and sandals that are rightfully his inheritance.

[41 : 37] not his brothers. Look at verse 30. He won't even acknowledge him as a brother. He calls him this thy son and he refuses to go in.

And I think this is another situation where the first century Jewish audience would have gasped in astonishment. You see for a son to publicly refuse to join his father's party was an incredible offence.

And in fact for the ancient Jews for a son to be so publicly rebellious was actually a sin that could be punishable by death. That's how serious it was. Another thing I think that would have been obvious to anyone in that culture at that time is that it was the elder son's responsibility to go looking for that younger son.

Go find him. Find out what he's doing. Bring him home. But there's no mention of that happening at all here is there? Instead what we find in the elder son is someone who's living at home but is actually as far away from the father as the younger son is even though he's living under the same roof.

He's not truly home. He's lost. He's out of relationship with the father. So both of these sons are in the same predicament. They're in similar situations and that was the first point.

[42 : 59] We've done that. Sorry it took quite a long time but the next two points are a lot quicker. But just building up that's the first point. They're both in similar situations. On first reading the passage you might think they're very different but actually they're not.

They're similar. They're both in a broken relationship with the father. Both lost and they both need to truly go home. But where we see the youngest son in verse 17 come to his senses we don't see that with the eldest son.

So although they are in the same situation their responses are actually very different and that's the second point. Their responses are different.

In verse 28 despite him shamefully disgracing his father in public and sinning against him the father graciously pleads with the elder son to come in. But what stops him from repenting?

Why did the younger son repent but not the older one? What stops him from being sorry about his sin? Well if you look at verse 29 and I'll read it to you it says he answered saying to his father lo these many years do I serve thee neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.

[44 : 18] The thing that stops him from seeking forgiveness the thing that makes his response different from the younger sons is his own goodness. his own goodness.

And I think that's why Jesus was comparing this son to the Pharisees. Just for a bit of context the Pharisees were a hyper religious group of Jews. And what perhaps started as good intentions when they were formed of keeping God's law had developed into a system of 613 laws.

365 negative ones 248 positive ones. And by the time Christ came it had produced a heartless cold and arrogant brand of righteousness.

The Pharisees had become a group that were relying on their own goodness instead of God's goodness. And they honestly believed that their self-righteous ways would get them to heaven.

But Jesus says to them think again think again. And we all know people like that don't we? Let's consider someone called Perfect Patricia.

[45 : 28] It's someone I've made up if it's not very obvious but it's a name that's just for an illustration. Mrs. Perfect Patricia. Perfect Patricia is a morally upright citizen.

She's fanatical about doing charitable works and looks down on those who don't. She's often at church but not because she has a relationship with God. In fact she gets a bit perplexed when people talk about that.

No, Perfect Patricia goes to church because it's the right thing to do. Often Perfect Patricia wishes there were more people like her. Society would be so much better if there were.

Of course she believes that she'll go to heaven because heaven is for people like her who've lived good lives. perhaps. Maybe that's you this evening or maybe someone that you know.

You can picture someone who's very similar to Perfect Patricia or perhaps you're someone as you hear about this special relationship with God you're thinking I don't have that.

[46 : 31] I feel like I'm missing out on something. The question is have you been relying on your own goodness for too long? So firstly we've seen that the two brothers shared the same situation.

They were lost, away from home, out of relationship with the father. Secondly we've seen that their paths diverged and although both are equally welcome and loved by the father, only the younger son seems to have come to his senses.

And the result, well, for the younger son he enjoys the father's blessing, but the elder son misses out. different outcomes, that's the third point, different outcomes and it's desperately sad.

Do you find yourself in the position of the younger elder son right now? Perhaps it's time you returned home in repentance because your heavenly father is desperate to welcome you with open arms.

After all, we don't have a stingy elder brother like this one in the parable, a brother who is unwilling to share his inheritance with his lost brother. Romans 8 29 tells us that if you return home, your older brother is Jesus himself.

[47 : 45] He is the only one who has truly earned the robe and ring. After all, his life was perfect, but at the end of his life he was stripped of his robe so that we could be clothed in it instead.

His death on the cross is the only thing that blocks us from hell, and he has paid the cost and opened up the way for us to go home. But it's up to each one of us.

We can choose to trample over that cross, pay for our sins ourselves, die the death we deserve to die and suffer the consequences of being eternally separated from God in hell.

Or like that younger son, we can come to our senses and return home, be embraced by loving God, and receive the life we don't deserve and spend eternity with God, but it's our choice.

This message is not just for those of us who've never trusted Jesus. I think we're all aware, and this speaks to each one of us here this evening, we're all aware that we can be guilty of behaving like either of those sons sometimes.

[48 : 56] I know I certainly can. and it affects our relationship with the Heavenly Father. We're all guilty of being drawn into worldly ways of thinking. We either veer off in one direction, seeking pleasure, or we veer off in the other direction, relying on our own goodness from time to time.

This parable reminds us that all is not lost. We need to just come back home in repentance and those open arms will welcome us back. Let's pray.

Father God, we thank you so much that the death of the Lord Jesus makes it possible for us to come home and to be adopted into your family.

Lord, when we get enticed by the world's ways, please forgive us. And Lord, when we've trusted in our own goodness from time to time, in a relationship with you, please forgive us for that too.

Help us to trust alone in what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Because Lord, we confess that we all see something of the younger brother and the older brother in our own lives, and we desperately need to return home to the Father.

[50 : 11] We pray these things now, asking for forgiveness in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to close by singing Psalm 72.

Psalm 72 verses 17 to 19. His name forever shall endure, thus like the sun it shall, men shall be blessed in him and blessed, or nations shall him call.

Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for he alone doth wondrous works in glory that excel. And blessed be his glorious name to all eternity.

The whole earth let his glory fill, our men so let it be. Let that be our prayer this evening, as we sing this together. His name forever shall do Thank you.

Thank you.

[52 : 41] Thank you.

Thank you.