

JESUS ON ANGELS AND PARTYING

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[0 : 00] Father, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you, Father, that he left the glory of heaven to set aside his glory and majesty and divine prerogatives to humble himself and take into himself our human nature.

We give you thanks and praise that he came and was born amongst us through the Virgin Mary for his life on earth, his simple life. We thank you, Father, for his miracles, for his mighty teaching. We thank you, Father, most of all, that he died upon the cross for us, that the cross is the power that comes from you for salvation.

We thank you, Father, that Jesus tasted all there is to taste of death, and he did that for us. And we thank you, Father, that he rose triumphant over sin and death and all hostile spiritual powers in his mighty resurrection.

Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would gently but deeply fall upon us this morning. We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would both humble us, and at the same time, Father, help us to come to ourselves so that we might turn to Jesus ever more fully and completely.

[1 : 14] All this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. You're going to need your Bibles because we're going to look actually this morning.

I'm not going to have a whole pile of points. I have three pictures and a Bible. So, Andrew, if you could put the first picture up, that would be great, the first work of art.

If you could put it up, that would be great. We're going to be looking at Luke 15. So, if you have your Bibles, it would be really great. We're going to slowly read Luke 15 this morning.

And if you don't have your Bibles with you, there's always a few Bibles up here at the front, and you're welcome to come and take them. This is a... I hope you can see it all right. It's an interesting picture.

It shows it's a triptych. It shows a sheep, and then it shows the sheep. You can sort of see a snake there at the bottom. You can see the vulture. You can see the sheep is caught in thorns. And then you see a picture of a shepherd carrying the sheep back.

[2 : 21] And we're going to read the parable that influenced and inspired that. But just I want to mention something first about the picture. The woman who drew that, there's a famous literary critic, an artistic critic in England during the 19th century, and he believed that women couldn't paint.

And he met this young woman and saw some of her paintings, and he said that this woman changed his mind on whether a woman could paint.

But shortly after that encounter, she came to faith in Jesus, and she continued to paint and draw.

But then she felt that God was calling her to go to an unreached people group, to lost sheep, and to tell them about Jesus.

So she made several attempts to get on with the mission agency, and she always failed the physical. She was from money, and she had two other women friends who were also of money.

So the three of them decided that they were just going to go to Algeria. They didn't speak French. They didn't speak Arab. They don't know a single person there. They just decided they would go to Algeria and start to share the gospel.

[3 : 45] And that's where she spent the rest of her life. And this picture here and others were just part of the little notes that she did. She didn't do anything to get published or become famous.

But she continued to paint occasionally and draw occasionally, and these are all sort of, this was found in her notes after her death, because she spent the rest of her life in Algeria. So what causes people to do such things like this, turn their back on artistic fame and on money and comfort, and go to a place like Algeria in 18, I think it was 1878, not knowing the languages, and just determined to

learn the languages and meet the people and tell them about Jesus?

Well, these three parables, so we're going to look at these three linked parables, this helps us to understand and maybe be caught by something similar, not that God is necessarily calling us to forsake everything and go and do something like that, although he may call some to do such things, but to at least get a sense of what it is that can come into a human heart that could so change them. So Luke 15, they're sort of all famous parables. We don't always sort of understand or remember that they all flow one into another.

They're in fact all very specifically linked, and it's Luke 15, verse 1, it starts like this. Now the tax collectors, and in Jesus' times, tax collectors were basically helping the occupying power keep the Jewish people in their place, and they were all, as a rule, deeply corrupt.

[5 : 28] They were thieves. Now the tax collectors and sinners, and this word in Jesus' time meant that they were, they'd probably been, they were people who were in and out of jail, they were people who were thieves, they were probably prostitutes, or just like a whole group of people who sort of like the underclass of society that did a whole pile of things connected to vices.

And so the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled. And in the original language, it sort of, they didn't just grumble once.

The grumbling was long. It went on for a while. In fact, they were in danger of becoming a grumble. You know, some of us, that's the danger with every grumble.

It can start as a grumble, and before we know it, we have become a grumble. We're only a grumble. And they grumble and said, this man receives sinners and eats with them.

And so Jesus 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?

[6 : 43] 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 note that again here. Isn't it really interesting? Not only does he go, I mean, that's this wonderful triptych, eh? It shows the sheep getting lost. What happens when it's lost? It shows the shepherd.

But it's, I have found my sheep that was lost. And verse seven, just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who needs no repentance.

Now, this is a pretty cool story. It's a pretty neat picture. And, but, you know, here's the thing that really struck me. On, I wish I could tell you that I'm so smart and so perceptive that it struck me the first time I read the text, but it didn't because I'm not that smart and I'm not that perceptive.

If we were going to tell people a story about repentance, would we use this story about what it means to repent? Listen again to how the story, how Jesus summarizes the story.

[8 : 00] Just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over the one, over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. But if you think about it in the story, that sheep does nothing.

That sheep does absolutely nothing. This isn't a parable about the sheep doing a particular ritual, feeling a particular thing, feeling guilty.

It's not a story about a sheep saying, oh, here I am caught all up in these brambles and the little sheep falls down on its knees and goes, shepherd, come and find me.

The sheep does nothing. Every single thing in the story is all about the shepherd with nothing left out.

The shepherd notices that the sheep is gone. The shepherd goes looking for the sheep. The shepherd finds the sheep. The shepherd picks up the sheep.

[9 : 04] The shepherd brings home the sheep. And then Jesus says, this is a story about repentance. Isn't that really puzzling?

Like, this is a, this, if we just are honest for a second, this actually doesn't make very much sense to us. Because we would think that a story about repentance would be more about somebody falling on their knees or maybe somebody falling, crying or calling out to God.

That's what we would think repentance is about. But Jesus says this is a repentance story and it doesn't seem as if the sheep does any repenting. The sheep is completely and utterly helpless and

passive.

Well, maybe Jesus is going to correct it with the next parable. But actually, in the next parable, Jesus makes it worse because he uses an inanimate object as the heart of the parable.

If you could put up the next painting. This is also by a 19th century painter. And this actually is also one that has a conversion story connected to it.

[10:09] This fellow was the, the illustrator, the painter of this was very, very successful in France. And he's, his big specialty was painting rich ladies who were all dolled up.

And in fact, now Hollywood and others use his paintings to try to get a bit of a picture about what people in the late 1800s, how they dressed, especially rich women. And he had a very, very fine and it was celebrated and then he met Jesus.

And after he met Jesus, after a bit of a struggle, all he did after that was his only goal was to paint stories that illustrated and brought the Bible home. I'm not saying that was the right decision, but that's what God put on his heart.

That after making his living, painting rich people, that he would paint the Bible to help us to understand and see what the Bible was talking about.

So here, remember, we said that the last, the first thing, it's a very, very odd repentance story. Like, where's the repentance? This sheep does nothing.

[11:20] Well, how does Jesus fix this problem? He tells this parable. Or, see, Jesus links it. Or, verse 8, what woman, having 10 silver coins, or drachma, and that means it's the equivalent to one day's wage for an average working person.

Okay, that's how much the coin is worth. So what woman, having 10 silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?

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. How does Jesus summarize the parable?

Just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. And look, there's a couple of things that are really interesting here.

There is joy before the angels of God. So in the first one, the angels throw a party. Who's the one jumping up and down in joy in front of the angels?

[12:28] It's God. In the first one, it's angels doing, whoo, here it's God doing it. In front, the angels are watching.

And once again, look at that. It's over, in verse, look at that in verse 10 again. Just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Jesus says, this is a story about repentance.

Yet, it's a coin. But what's that coin doing to be found? That coin's not calling out to the lady.

Come on, lady, please find me. I'm way here in the corner. I feel really lonely. I feel broken. I feel depressed. I need you, lady. Like, the coin's not doing anything like that.

The coin's a coin. It's just sitting there. The lady does everything. Like, even more than the sheep.

[13:26] At least you could say with the shepherd that maybe he'd help to find the sheep because it's going, bah, bah, two terrible sheep. Bah. And that helps the shepherd to find the sheep.

But that coin does nothing. In fact, in this picture, it's not even glinting. It's just off in a dark corner. And yet, Jesus says, this is a repentance story.

So here's the first thing that's going to rock our world. Okay? Um, you see, one of the problems that I have in this church is that I believe that I'm the center and everything else has to revolve around me.

It's a problem in my family as well. If the family would just get on the page that I'm the center and everything revolves around me, everything would go far easier. See, the problem is everybody in my family thinks the same thing.

And the other problem is that everybody in the church thinks the same thing. You know, if the pastor would just do everything exactly the way I want it to be done, things would go a lot smoother. You know, if the Sunday school, if the singers, if everybody's just...

[14:29] See, that's the problem. We're so deeply entrenched in thinking that we're the center so that even when we think of repentance, we think it's all about us. That's why there's lots of people in Canada who asked Jesus into their life 27 times and have been baptized five times because the first time they didn't have the fine emotional feelings they had to have or their baptism wasn't the profound religious experience they thought it should be.

And so, therefore, their repentance is all ultimately, ironically, about me. Now, isn't that absurd? If repentance is about coming to God and it's all about me, like there's something deeply out of whack about that. But the fact of the matter is that we can be out of the whack about ourselves most of the time and think it's normal and not even be shocked.

You see, the very, very first thing that these first two parables do is they want us trying to communicate several things. First, to rock our world, to knock us off balance, to understand that one moment, this is all about repentance, but I do nothing.

I do nothing. I do nothing. The first thing is to understand, the Bible's trying to understand it is that Jesus left heaven.

[15 : 56] He set aside his glory and divine prerogatives. He set aside his appearance as God, his majesty. He still remains fully God. He brings into himself our human nature. He's born of a young woman in a remote part of the Roman Empire at a time that the Jewish people were under occupation.

He lives a normal working class life. He has three years of teaching. He has very few possessions. He teaches. He does all of this thing, but it's all a story. Jesus knows we're lost.

Jesus knows that we were made for God. Jesus knows that we don't know that we're lost. Jesus goes seeking for us. Jesus is the one who provides everything that is needed for us to go home to where we truly belong.

And Jesus is the one who finds us. And our repentance is just us entering into something that Jesus does. In a sense, the emotions we might or might not feel in repentance is the emotion we get when the coin feels the hand of the lady on it.

It's the sheep being found, but it's all from first to last the work of Jesus. And we, in a sense, are brought into that story, brought into what he does, and repentance is just that being brought into it.

[17 : 24] It's something that Jesus does it all. You can imagine how terrifying this would be to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Good grief. Does that mean we don't have to do anything?

Does that mean we can live completely and utterly immoral, dissolute lives? Jesus, you are telling something which is deeply troubling and worrying and will only lead to a completely terrible thing. Jesus, the stories aren't going to deal with that. Jesus just stays on his own track, and that's the first thing that we have to see about this story. It's all done by Jesus.

And then Jesus tells the third parable, because obviously there's some other complexities to this image. If you could put up the third and final picture, and it's just the very, very, very famous picture by Rembrandt.

17th century, the return of the prodigal. Beautiful picture. Beautiful, beautiful painting. Quiet colors, tenderness.

[18 : 35] And this is inspired by the third parable that Jesus tells. Verse 11. And he said, there was a man who had two sons.

Let's sort of pause there for a second. There's some things in the original language which we can't get in English. I suppose if we wanted to try to play around with the Bible, you'd maybe be able to do it, but it would still confuse people.

It would look very, very odd. But in the original language, there was a way that a particular word or phrase could be made emphatic so that people who are reading it would understand that, whoa, okay, this is like, it would be as if, you know, it would be as if you're reading this on the page and as the cursor touches it, it blows up so that you realize it's emphatic or it's bolded or that there's arrows towards it.

And in this story, the way it begins, there was a man and man, the father, is emphatic. See, in fact, some ways, you see, Rembrandt catches that just a little bit, not as much as he should because, you see, really, your eyes are naturally drawn to the face of the father in that picture, aren't you? In some ways, in a very deep way, Rembrandt got it. that this is actually, even though it's called often the parable of the prodigal son, it's actually the story of the father.

[19 : 56] The father is the key actor in the story, the dad, not the two boys. And so here's, so here, now that there was a man who had two sons and the younger said to the father, father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.

And he divided his property among them. Just sort of pause there for a second. In the original language, the word property is actually the life. Give me the share of the life that is coming to me.

So what he's actually asking is that the son wishes that his father was dead so that he could collect his inheritance. inheritance. That's, that's what the son is asking.

The son is really saying to the dad, dad, I wish you were dead so I could have the inheritance, that share of your life which is due me. And this is a, you know, it's, once again, it's a very, very apparently unspiritual idea.

But one of the things that the Bible is trying to communicate to us all the time is that a deep part of every human being wishes God dead.

[21 : 15] A deep part of every human being is wishing God dead and that we could have his stuff.

And many of us go to work Monday to Friday with a boss that acts that out. I'm God. Many of us maybe are in marriages or have friends like that.

But the Bible is going to try to communicate to us that every single one of us at some level desires God dead. God is dead. I want his stuff.

I want his job. Who better than me? No, you can't say that to yourself. I'm saying that, okay? I'm going to be one God. So the young son wants the father dead.

Verse 12 again. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of property, the inheritance that is coming to me. And this is just a parable. It's really funny reading academic commentaries.

[22 : 18] They get in long discussions about completely irrelevant parts of the story. Jesus isn't asking you to start to analyze all the different intricacies of how this would go about. It's a story.

Get to the point, okay? So anyway, I had to keep reading the commentaries. Good grief, you missed the point. Anyway, not many days later, the younger son gathered, verse 13, all that he had and took a journey into a far country.

And there he squandered his property in reckless living, in riotous living. In other words, he did a lot of very, very naughty things and completely blew all the wad of money.

In verse 14, 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. And in the original language, no one is emphatic.

[23 : 19] It's bolded. So the story is trying to say that this young guy there in the rags, he blows everything and now he has to go and hire himself out to a pagan and the pagan gives him a job feeding the pigs.

He still doesn't get enough to eat. The famines come. He's completely and utterly alone. Now, here's a little bit of a pause. I like reading movie reviews.

I like watching movies. And there's one movie reviewer that I read fairly regularly who will remain nameless. But this particular movie reviewer, I know that if they don't like a movie, it might mean I like it.

If they really like a movie, I probably won't like it. Because this movie reviewer, the type of movies that they like, I'm trying to make sure you can't figure out who it is.

You know, if it ends with everybody depressed and committing suicide and lives ruined, it gets lots of stars. Generally speaking, I don't want to watch a movie that's all about complete and utter failure and depression.

[24 : 35] There's enough depressing things in the world, I don't want to usually spend two hours watching a movie that wants to make me depressed. But if we were watching one of those types of movies, it would end right here.

Young guy starts off rich, privileged, the party guy, the fraternities, he wishes the dad dead, he wastes his money, the famine comes, he's completely and utterly desolate, and then the credits roll. And this movie reviewer will give it five stars. Maybe you like movies like that, that's fine, we can all like different types of movies. But the parable could end there, and some people think it would be a better story if it ended there, but the parable doesn't end there.

The parable is going to go to another part, and here's what happens in verse 17. But when the young guy came to himself, you might not have noticed when I was, I mentioned this a little bit in my prayers.

One of the interesting things about this story is that coming to ourselves and coming to Jesus aren't contradictions, but fit together.

[25 : 50] You see, it's part of this biblical idea that just as on one part, there's part of every single human being, it doesn't matter if you're Pope Francis, it doesn't matter if you're Billy Graham, it doesn't matter if you're George Sinclair, it doesn't matter if you're Mother Teresa, it doesn't matter if you're Joe Blow or Susie Smith, that there's part of every single human being that is in rebellion against God and wants God dead.

But the other part of the biblical truth is a deeper, older truth that God really did make us for himself, that he made us to fit into this created order.

And so at a very, very deeper level that when we start to come back to God, we're also actually coming into our right mind. What we were made for, what really fits us.

Verse 17, 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. Just sort of notice two things in that text. It's a whole other series.

[27 : 12] It's a whole ethics lecture. But one of the things which distinguishes the Christian understanding of the world from non-Christian understanding of the world is that every wrong act, if I steal money from this congregation, I've not only harmed you, but I've wronged God.

That every wrong act is not only something wrong against a person or an animal or the created order, but it's always as well a wronging of God. That's why the young son says, father, I've sinned against heaven, in other words, you, and you.

I've sinned against you, dad, and I've sinned against God. And then he's going to go back to his father. He's not going to make any excuses.

And in fact, in the original language, there's three levels of servants slash slaves. And the word which is used here is the lowest of the three. But he's going to go back to his father and he's going to say, father, here's what we see, right?

Part of that. Just take me back as the lowest servant you possibly have. Verse 20. So he arose and came to his father.

[28 : 24] But while the young man was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. That's obviously going to happen just after this picture right here.

in the original language, the father seen is emphatic. In other words, Jesus is telling the original hearers, one moment, remember this, this is not a story about the younger son, this is a story about the father.

That's emphatic. And so what's emphasized is not so much the journey of the son back, but that the father sees the son long before the son sees the father.

And long before the son realizes that the father is there, the father does something which an ancient Jewish father would not have done, he runs.

And he runs to the son and throws himself upon the son. And if we were watching a typical Hollywood movie, that's how the movie would end, right?

[29 : 40] I mean, if the movie can't end with everybody clapping, or if the movie can't end with the guy and the girl kissing, then the movie will end with some type of reconciliation like that.

That's the type of movie that Disney likes. That's the type of movie that's very, very popular in our culture. It ends with the father and the son reconciled, hugging, and all that other messy stuff is not necessarily discussed, and the credits roll and some nice piece of music that hopefully will end up being very popular goes in the credits, and we all get up and walk out of the theater, and we've now watched a Disney film.

But Jesus doesn't end the parable where Disney would end the parable. Jesus is going to go after the heart, not the emotions, but the center of who we are.

He's going to figure out a little bit more fully what's going on with the son, and that continues in verse 21. The son has his sinner's prayer all prepared.

I don't know if you're from an evangelical type of background, but one of the reasons that sometimes people feel they have to keep asking Jesus into their life to save them or be baptized is because he didn't quite get the words of the sinner's prayer right.

[31 : 03] As if sinner's prayer is like one of those long passwords you get from a bank that has 15 different characters, and if you don't get every single character right, the web page doesn't let you

log in.

And a lot of people think that the sinner's prayer is like a long, complicated log in ID and password, and you've got to get it all right, or God will just go, good grief, I'm going to shut this page down, they can't get the stupid web address right.

And that's how a lot of Christians somehow think. So the son has his sinner's prayer ready, and he starts into it in verse 21, and the son said to him, I guess that's what's going on right now, the son's kneeling, and says, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

And you know what's really, really neat is that he gets two-thirds through the way of the prayer, and the father interrupts him. Father stops him.

Word for word, two-thirds of it is word for word what was just he prepared his sinner's prayer, and the father interrupts him. You see, God is not waiting for you and me to get a sinner's prayer right, like it's some password to log into a web page.

[32 : 28] Why? Because it's not really a story about the younger son, it's a story about the father. Why? Because remember, the sheep did nothing, neither did the coin, it's all the shepherd, it's all the woman, and here the father is the center of the action, and it's all because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross that we can be reconciled to him, and it's all because he has sought us that we can be found.

The father has to come and realize that he's part of this drama that's all about Jesus coming and seeking us in the father's heart for us, and that's the overwhelming heart, the overwhelming action, and we get included, we get found, and so it's showing here a little bit of the inner dynamic, but we only start to go a little bit of the way through it, and the father doesn't even say, well, actually, son, you should have said this.

It just starts, and the father says, and the father says, bring, verse 22, bring quickly the best robe, the best robe would have been his.

He clothes his son with his robe. I mean, good grief, you can just imagine when St. Paul heard this later on, and now you can understand a little bit about the book of Galatians, and the book of Romans, and the book of Philippians, and the book of Colossians, and you can understand Thessalonians, and you can understand this, that you can understand other Christians, Hebrews, and John, and they all talk about being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, that we do not, in a sense, come before God with our own good deeds, our own discipleship, our own exemplary conduct, that we only come before the father.

He does not weigh our merits, but pardons our offenses. He clothes us with his righteousness, and this story of the father and the two sons, and this image that the son, who's completely and utterly destitute, who can't even finish the sinner's prayer, that before he finishes the sinner's prayer, the father clothes him with his robe, the best robe, and so he will stand before the father, clothed with the father's robe.

[34 : 45] in the father's embrace. That's what Jesus does for us on the cross. And our repentance, our repentance, our repentance, it's really just God doing all this stuff for us.

You know when I say the mission statement of this church is making disciples gripped by the gospel living for his glory. What a difference it makes to be gripped by a story like this.

To be gripped by a story like this will change how we live. It doesn't mean we live a certain way so that the father will put his robe upon us, but to understand that he sees us, he finds us, he clothes us, as that story grips us, we are changed in how we act.

But it goes on, so verse 22 again, 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. Remember the earlier stories of the shepherd and the celebrations all the way through it and they celebrate.

[36 : 13] Now you know, remember I said to you, my movie reviewer who likes dark, depressing movies and they would stop movies at one point and Walt Disney would say, no, no, no, no, you don't stop movies then.

You keep going, oh, and the hugs. You stop the movie there. Soundtrack, theme song, inspiring music and then, you know, us evangelicals will say, no, no, no, you don't stop the story then.

You keep going and you stop the story with the sinner's prayer clothed and the robe and then we would want to stop the story there but Jesus doesn't stop the story there because Jesus is going after our heart.

And so Jesus continues the story because there's another brother. Now, his older son was in the field and as he came and drew near, that's verse 25, near to the house he heard music and dancing.

one 19th century commentator had a long aside on whether or not this Bible passage justified Christians dancing. He tried to show that it didn't.

[37 : 22] I'm neutral on the subject. Although if you ever saw me dance, you'd say Christians shouldn't dance. This is how I dance.

I just jump up and down, probably not in rhythm. But anyway, we won't go any further with that. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. This is the older brother. And the servant said to the older brother, your brother has come and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.

But the older brother was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated, implored the older son. But the older son 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.

But when this son of yours came who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.

What is it, the heart of the older son? For it's all I, all me. You know what? he understands that all the years he was serving his father and with the father, it was like being an unpaid slave.

[38 : 45] He portrays his time with the father as if he is feeding pigs and is hungry.

he's the religious one. And all his servitude, all his serving and being with God has done.

He comes to the church services, goes to the Bible study groups, helps out, and all he feels is good grief. just one menial task after another, I feel like I'm serving pigs and not getting enough to eat.

His body is close to God, but his heart is completely and utterly far from him, and he's filled with self-righteousness. The father entreats him, verse 31, son, you are always with me, and all that's mine is yours.

The father's not going to say whether or not any of that is true, just the way he would have yelled it at the father, and what he revealed his heart reveals that none of what he said is true. It was fitting to celebrate, son, you're always from, verse 32, it was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead and is alive.

[40 : 10] He was lost and is found. Here's how I just want to close with two very simple things. The first thing is this, because we are fallen creatures in rebellion against God, we want to divide the world between older sons and younger brothers.

But let me tell you this, the division between older sons and younger brothers goes right through each single one of us. The distinction between older brothers and younger sons goes right down the center of who you and I are.

There's not a single person here, and I include myself, who does not have some part of the older brother in them. And every single one of us, whether we recognize it or not, are a younger son.

And we need to understand to live like a younger son, not in terms of what got him in trouble, but that we need to come to the father. And the other thing is, you know, this whole text says that if you've come to the father like a younger son, if you recognize that you're that lost sheep, if you're that lost coin, that Jesus has done what it has taken to bring you back to himself, then how can you and I not seek the lost?

How can you and I not pray for it? How can you and I not hope that the father rid us of every aspect of elder brother, older brotherhood in our lives, and hope and long, hope and long for the lost to be found, the dead to be made alive?

[41 : 47] Please stand. I'm going to mess with your heads, I'm not going to give you a sinner's prayer, but I'm going to tell you that some of us may be the Holy Spirit pressing upon you that you need to try to do some type of business with God.

Some of you might just say, Father, I confess that even though I have given my life to you, I have so much of the older brother in me, and Father, maybe for the first time, or maybe just the courage to say, Father, I hate it.

I hate it. I don't want to have that older brother be the dominant voice in my life. And maybe for some of us, we're saying, you know, I need to be that younger son and come to the father. And you know what, maybe all you have to do, because God's not looking for perfect prayer, is all you have to do in your heart and soul and point at that picture and say to God, God, I want that to be me. I want that to be me.

And because it's all about Jesus finding the sheep, and Jesus finding the coin, and Jesus seeing us when we're a long way off, that'll work just fine. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

[43 : 04] Father, you know how much of the older brother is in each of us. You know how much of the older brother is in us as a congregation. Father, we repent of it. We ask Father that you would deliver us from this.

We ask Father that your Holy Spirit would come into our lives and quieten that, still that, heal that, rebuke that, help us to put it to death. Father, thank you that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Jesus came so that the dead will be made alive, that the lost will be found. Thank you Father for Jesus, for what he did for us on the cross. Father, we are all younger brothers as well, and we come to Jesus yet again.

We come to you Father yet again. We thank you Father that you will in no ways cast out any who come to you through Jesus. We thank you Father that you will clothe us with your finest robe as we stand before you.

No longer destitute, but embraced by you and clothed with your finery, not because of our merits, but because of what Jesus has done. Father, we ask that you would make us disciples gripped by the gospel, gripped by these gospel stories, make us disciples gripped by the gospel, living for your glory, seeking for the lost, praying for the lost, and putting to death the older brother in our hearts.

[44 : 24] And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your son, and our savior. Amen. Amen.