

Luke 15: 11-32 // The Father Who Ran

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[0:00] That's Luke 15, verses 11 to 32. If you look up a lot of things about what churches are doing for Father's Day, I found it very interesting to look at some of the slide presentations that a lot of churches had from last year.

And there would be these huge billboards or presentations behind the preacher and the pastor. And there were messages like, do better. Man up. You suck. Be better.

I mean, I'm starting to kind of go off on a little bit of a tangent there. But all of it was just this harsh, heavy thing. And so I wanted to say before we get on, Happy Father's Day, genuinely.

There are some wonderful, amazing fathers in this room and fathers-to-be. Good men growing up that will be fathers of the next generation of Jesus people.

And it's pretty awesome. I've got to witness your fatherhood in action. I've got to witness how you love your children, how much your children love you. I've been able to witness some of this.

[1:14] And it is truly a blessing. Truly. So Happy Father's Day. You are enough. You're doing a great job. But just keep on doing it. Luke chapter 15, verses 11 to 32.

Now, we went through this in the discipleship class earlier. That we can look at this passage and focus on the younger brother. The story of a prodigal coming home.

You would not be wrong in doing so. But there are other people involved in this as well. There's the father. And there's the older brother. There are encouragements.

And there are warnings for all of us here. Man or woman. Brother or sister. Mother or father. So I'm going to read verses 11 to 14 and then just dive right in.

Jesus continued, There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them.

[2:13] And not long after that, the younger son got together all he had. Set off for a distant country. And there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything.

There was a severe famine in the whole country. And he began to be in need. The younger wanted his inheritance. It wasn't entirely unheard of.

It wouldn't be complete social break for a son to do this with his father. The father had every right to say, No, son, I know you.

You're a wild one. And if I do this, you're going to run into trouble. The father had every right to do that. But he gave the son free will to be able to take this inheritance.

And spend as he would. That's one of those questions that I scratch my head over often enough. Because how often do we want to keep our kids from running off that cliff that we see them run towards sometimes?

[3:13] And one of the most bitter lessons I've had to learn as a dad is that we cannot keep our children from their testimonies. We can protect them as much as we are told to.

Shown how to. As much as we are capable of doing. But there comes a time where life is their experience outside of us. Away from us. And they will have a testimony with the Lord.

There's times where I've wanted to be Superman and just swoop down and save the day. But reality is that's Jesus' job. And so we look at this father who waited and prayed as well.

The son went off. And we don't know exactly the carousing he did. Different translations will use the word prostitute. Some will say wild living. It's basically just somebody out there making it rain with throwing money around and doing these things.

Having friends. Feeling like a big shot in the moment. And it all came crashing down around.

There's probably a thrill for a little while.

[4:14] Because when you're on that high and you write it. Your mind is not necessarily in the right places. Verses 14 to 15. After he had spent everything.

There was a severe famine in the whole country. And he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country. Who sent him to his fields. They're sorry. Sent him to his field of pigs. I guess yeah. They become his friends in a way. But it's a bad combination of events. Don't you think? Now the famine was not the younger son's fault. But his actions and the way he was handling his life. Did not prepare him for the famines that would come. If he had stayed in his father's house. If he had stayed under his protection. The famine would have still happened. But he would have been in a better place. More protected. And here he was out on his own. And unprepared. He didn't have the training. He didn't have the money. He didn't have anything now.

[5:10] He was in great need. This prodigal life left him no condition to weather the storms of life. No condition to weather the famine that would come. Because his mind was elsewhere.

Driven by hunger. Driven by need. He accepted the work that would be holy. Offensive and unacceptable to a good Jewish man.

Go and feed the pigs. I imagine that the listeners who heard Jesus share this parable would have been in absolute shock. He went to feed the pigs.

It's the lowest of the low. No good Jewish man should do this. That is what they would have thought. Verse 16. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating.

But no one gave him anything. That is truly being alone. Isn't it? You were the life of the party. You were the one that was buying all of the drinks.

[6:11] And all of the girls. And all of the people. And you had loads of people around you in that moment. And now you have no one around you to even give you the pods that the pigs are eating.

Where were all of his friends? Where were all of his newfound brothers and sisters? Where were they? They were vapor. And they left him alone. No one gave him anything.

When you're longing for food that pigs eat. It's a low spot. And this poor young man was there. But verse 17.

When he came to his senses he said, How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare? And here I am starving to death. In his misery. The prodigal son started to think clearly.

And I don't know about you. But if you're like me. There are moments where the world and everything around me is so chaotic. So noisy. That I just want to hear myself think again.

[7:10] I want to be outside of the craziness of the moment. Maybe the destruction that my sin has caused. I want to be able to just step back for a second. And just have peace and listen to my own thoughts.

And when we're wrapped up in the tornado of a prodigal decision that we may make. Because I believe there's the way that you can look at this. Prodigal. Wild living. It can mean spending a lot of money.

It can mean doing all that kind of thing on all the wrong things. Sure. Sure. But it takes time to do that. It takes spending time in the wrong directions. It spends relational time with people that are not your friends.

That are not your brothers and sisters. It's taking time away from the Lord. And ignoring him. And everything is busy and noisy until all of a sudden it slows down. And you're alone in your feeding pigs.

But he could hear himself think again. And he came to his senses. How many people have we known? Maybe even ourselves. We're in the middle of our sin.

[8:10] In the middle of our away-ness. In the middle of our distance from God and friends and family. We weren't in our right mind. We weren't thinking rationally.

But there is a time where you do come to your senses. And that's where this young man came to now. You can go to someone and say, this isn't you.

Brother, sister, this isn't you. You're better than this. Let me help you. Let me walk this road with you. Be someone's help. God thinks of you as something greater.

You're made in his image. All of this life. This turmoil. This chaos that you're experiencing. You were made for more than this. You don't have to be in the pig pens.

You don't have to be starving. And wishing you were eating what they're eating. God has made you. And set you apart. For a purpose that is beautiful. And awesome. And wonderful. And if you don't see it yet.

[9:11] Go home. Go home to the father. Like this young man did. Go home. Go to your father. And it may be your real life earthly father.

But I think for all of us sitting here right now. It is to our father in heaven. Above all. In his rebellion. In his disobedience. The younger brother just simply was not himself. And when he started thinking clearly. He thought of home. And he thought of his father.

And he thought of the way back. That's where we need to lead people. Not to church. Not even to a community.

We need to lead them home. To the father in heaven. We need to lead them to a place of safety. Because as we're about to read. How this father received this young son. It is how our father in heaven receives.

[10:11] Each and every one of us here right now. Whether we are beloved and known by him. Or whether we are coming into his fellowship. Whether we are understanding his grace.

Whether we have not met him yet. The father is there. Arms open wide. Waiting for you and me. To come home. Religious and non-religious. To come home.

Verses 18 to 19. I will set out. And go back to my father. And say to him. Father. I have sinned against heaven. And against you. I am no longer worthy. To be called your son.

Make me like one of your hired servants. What a genuinely. Humble thing to say. What an incredibly. Humble place. In his life. To come to.

It was a complete. Change of heart. He was alive again. He was awake. He was outside of the chaos. And the fog. Of all that was going on.

[11:08] And he just said. You know what? I am just going to go. Make it right with dad. I am going to go. Make it right with my father. Because some people approach God.

With a give me attitude. You notice at the beginning. Of this parable. Give me my inheritance. This is what I deserve Lord. Bring to me all that I should be.

Make me this. And make me that. Lord. Bring me. I want. I want. I want. But isn't it interesting. How by the end of this parable. Make me one of your servants.

It's no longer. Give me what I think I deserve. It's Lord. Make me. One of your servants. That's a transition. We each have to accept. And think about today.

Are we in the. Give me what I deserve. Stage. Or are we in the Lord. I come with nothing. Make me one of your servants. I don't know about you.

[12:08] But I've been both. And I'm trying to focus more. And more and more. On the make me the man. You want me to be. Make me the father. You want me to be.

Lord. I'll do anything. So if you're in the. Gimme gimme stage. Well you know that. When your kids are young. Every kid's in the gimme gimme stage.

But they grow old. And then they have to get to this place. Where they just look at the Lord. And they say. Make me father. To be the man or the woman. You see me to be. So we have to ask ourselves.

Where are we at with that today? Because there is different places. In the house. There were children. Child. Child of the family. Had position. There were regular servants.

They were treated like family. And then there were day laborers. You know. People you just hire.

Pick up. Clean out a field. And then they go. The younger son was wanting to come back. And be a day laborer. He didn't even expect.

[13:05] To have a position in the house. He was just like. Just let me work. Let me come and make this right. In verse 20. So he got up. And went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off. His father saw him. And was filled with compassion for him. Ran to his son. Threw his arms around him. And kissed him. It's lost in translation somewhat.

But if you look at other translations. And especially the original language. That kissed him. Is not just a. You know. Kiss on the cheek. It was a falling into his neck.

It was repeated kisses. I won't do that to my hands. It'll look really weird right here. But I'll just say.

That it was repeated kisses. Could you imagine doing that to someone. Where you're just.

You're holding him. And it's like. Oh. You're back. I have you back. And the younger son. Would have rehearsed the speech. Father. I've sinned against heaven.

[13:59] I've sinned against you. Help me to be a day laborer. I'll do anything. I'm so sorry. And instead of the father. Standing off and saying. Yeah. You better apologize.

You're right. You really messed up this time. What a terrible example. You were to the other people. No. The father never did that. Peppered him. With kisses. And I'm sure the father. At some point. Was like. Wouldn't even let him. Let him finish the speech. That's what I'm sure of. It's okay. You're home. I'm so glad you're back son.

See this is what our father in heaven. Does for each of us. We think. Oh. I sinned. I feel so distant from him. It's going to be such a long road. To get back. I don't even know where to begin. Or I've heard many people. I can't darken the door of a church. That's why I don't go back. No. Our father in heaven. Is waiting with open arms. Looking from a far off distance.

[14:54] For you and me. And when he sees us. He runs to us. Wraps his arm around us. Kisses us. And says. You're home. I'm so thankful you're here. That is what awaits us.

When we approach our father in heaven. And it's good to say. Lord I blew it. Sure. And it's good to make amends. Where you need to make amends. Yes.

But how much more important it is to know. That you will be loved. Beyond any measure or understanding of the word. On this planet. You will be loved. By a father.

Waiting to welcome you home. No ifs. Ands. Or buts. The younger son.

Didn't stop to think about it. It often happens to us. When we get off the beaten path. Well I just need to think about it for a little while. You know. And I'm sure some of you are thinking.

[15:51] Well I'm not that much of a prodigal. Okay. But here's the thing. We can think about things too long. And if you're an over thinker. You can over think things a little too long.

Right. Just do it. Return to your father today. What are you waiting for? There's no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ. Run to him.

If you feel distant. Stop saying. Oh I feel distant. Run. Get up. Shout out to him. Whatever you need to do in your heart. Ask somebody for prayer. Jerry. Thank you for that. By the way.

I loved that. That happened during communion. And it can happen even after the service as well.

Look around. And pray for one another. You're just like.

I've just been distant. I need. I need to find my way back. Make that decision. Just like the younger son made this decision. He got up and he did it. Yeah. It's uncomfortable.

[16:47] The revolution of the heart is an uncomfortable process. Who cares? Do it anyway. Verses 20 to 24. So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was a long way off. His father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son. Threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him. Father I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants. Quick. Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it.

Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. The father.

Or sorry. The son having disgraced his father and his family and his village. It's quite possible. It's quite possible. That the father ran to him because he knew everybody else would chase him off.

[17:48] That's possible. It's possible the father went and said. No, no, no, this is mine. He's my son. I've been waiting for him. Everybody just back off and calm down. It's possible that's how this went down.

But the people who would have been hearing about this from Jesus. You notice it's an interesting timing. This comes shortly after the dinner at Matthew's house. Where Jesus ate with sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes.

All kinds of strange people from the rabbinical point of view. These are the people that Jesus was hanging around with. This was the crowd that was hearing this parable. Or soon thereafter. Think about that for a moment.

People that needed to come home. That knew their father would welcome them with open arms.

And not judgment. People who needed desperately to know there was a way to go back home.

A path that they, even in their fallen states and difficult lives, could get back to as easily as saying, Yes, father. How many of us are here this morning where we need that easy a path to come home?

[18:57] Yes, father. Yes, father. Verses 25 to 27. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field.

When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him, What was going on? Your brother has come, he replied. And your father has killed a

fattened calf. Because he has him back safe and sound.

And, I mean, the older brother was hard at work. When he hears his younger brother wasn't being punished. Well, what was his reaction? I think he wanted justice, right?

That spendthrift, that guy, he just went off and did whatever he's doing. And dad, you're doing nothing about it? That doesn't make sense. Where's my sense of justice? The older brother was unappreciative of all that he had.

Angry to the core. Or that his younger brother seemed to be treated really, really well in that moment of homecoming. And every day, the older brother had his father's company and a home.

[20:01] And he still claimed that the father had given him nothing. What have you done for me lately, God? Have you ever asked that question? Have you ever had it in your heart?

Where you see someone else encountering the Lord and you're just thinking, like, I've been here forever. What the heck? We can get stuck in that older brother syndrome as much and as often as we can get stuck in the younger brother syndrome.

You see, there's two prodigals in this story, if you want to look at it this way. The younger and the older brother. They're just very different. And if you want to read an excellent, excellent book on this topic, it's by Timothy Keller called Prodigal God.

Fantastic. If you haven't read it, I might have a copy here. But all that being said, we have to ask ourselves who we are this morning.

Are we the younger brother or the older brother? Because the thing is, if we're honest with ourselves, we've been both. Maybe we are being one or the other now. And we've also been the father or the mother in this idea.

[21:09] Verses 28 to 32. The older brother became angry and refused to go in, so his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, Look, all these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeying your orders, yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

But when this son of yours, who has squandered your property with prostitutes, comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him. My son. Now I want to stop right there. Because in earlier languages and in some translations, it says child.

Even a more endearing term. You can imagine that. Oh, child. It's not like son. It's child. Oh, I love you.

Oh, child. You are always with me. And everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. You can see, almost imagine the father getting emotional over this. Don't miss the love that the father has for the older child.

[22:26] Don't miss the love that the father has for the younger child. Jesus loved the sinners and the tax collectors, but he also loved the religious too.

He loved the Pharisees as much as he loved the Peters and the Matthews. He loves you and me. I don't always understand why, frankly, but he does.

He is a good, good father. He was saying, I love you. I'm always with you. But please don't tell me it's wrong to be happy when my son was lost and now is found.

Help me to celebrate this moment. Don't be resentful of it. Don't resent that I've given my attention to him in this place. You have always had me. You will always have me, my child.

Some of us know what it's like to have prodigal children. Maybe we've been one ourselves. But we can always remember the joy and the love when we come home or when they have come home.

[23:35] Maybe you're praying about that now. Maybe I'm speaking right now to someone who's a part of the religious and proud group. Not for me to assess. But we know our own hearts.

You find it easy to look down on people who are not as spiritual as you are. Father, the father loves you. He loves you. Oh, how he loves us.

So prodigals, fathers, and Pharisees, let's all go to our father's house here and now. Be blessed and happy Father's Day.

Thank you.