

Journey to the Cross: Prodigal & Older Son - Luke 15:11-32

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[0 : 00] Good morning everybody. It's great to see all of you and hear voices ring out in worship.

It's always an absolute highlight of mine and my wife's to come and to sing and to do so with worshipful hearts. So thank you for singing. And now as we jump into God's Word to be edified and sharpened by it, I pray that our hearts would be sensitive to what the Lord has for us. So go ahead and turn with me to Luke chapter 15. Luke chapter 15.

We're continuing our series in this journey to the cross. We're seeing Jesus as he goes and as he prepares himself to take on our sin by bearing the weight and guilt of it on the cross. So on the way Jesus heals people. He teaches. He tells parables. He does miraculous things. One of the things that Jesus does more than often is he converses with the Pharisees.

And as he converses with the Pharisees, what comes out often is some sort of accusation about Jesus, the way he's living, the decisions he's making, the things he's saying. And the accusation always seems to be directed towards the fact that Jesus doesn't do things the way that the Pharisees want. And here we have no different. If you look with me in Luke chapter 15, let's go ahead and read verse 1 and 2 before we jump into our text this morning. It says this, now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to him.

And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled saying, this man receives sinners and eats with them. They grumbled saying this man receives sinners and eats with them. The parable we're going to look at this morning is called often as the parable of the prodigal son. The word prodigal is taken to symbolize a term that's used of the younger son as he lives. And it's called reckless living. Prodigal means reckless living, extravagant wastefulness. The type of living that doesn't just lead to a sorry state where nothing is owned, nothing is possessed.

[2 : 49] But prodigal suggests this reckless living that to get to that spot of absolute emptiness and bitterness, extravagant waste got me there. Aristotle, the great philosopher who liked to dabble in Christian texts and talk about the Bible often, he said this about the word prodigal or reckless living. A man who has a single evil quality, that quality of wasting all substance aptly put. But I want to just encourage us this morning for we read. Even though this parable is known as the prodigal son and prodigal the younger son is, it would be more accurate to state this parable as the prodigal sons for there is an older who is also lost. More accurate still, this parable centers around not just two wayward reckless sons, but actually it centers around a loving father who has an overwhelming love for his children. So let's consider this parable this morning for my sake in the very least, the loving father and his wayward sons. Luke 15.1-2, tax collectors, draw near and the sinners draw near to Jesus and the Pharisees say to them, you receive sinners. This man receives sinners and he eats with them. The scandalous affair of Jesus spending time, meaningful time with sinners. And this alarms the Pharisees. This doesn't seem to make sense that a man claiming to be a religious authority and claiming to himself be of God has come to spend time with those who are unrighteous. That doesn't make sense. And the reason this doesn't make sense to the Pharisees is this is against their own modus operandi. To see to be a Pharisee was to be clean and holy by their own standards in the highest level, which meant not associating with anyone who was considered unclean and living a life that is completely separated from the world in which they were called to minister and separated even from the holiness of God as they work towards holiness by their own standards. So when they see Jesus associating with sinners, here's what Jesus does. He teaches three back to back parables about God's love for the lost. He eats with sinners. Jesus says, let me tell you three parables. And today we're looking at the prodigal son, the loving father, but it comes on the heels of two other lost and found stories. Now we have a lost and found. I thought for you this would be a good point to make a note of this. In the church, we have a lost and found. So if you go out this door, you kind of head towards the main doors, right to the right, there's an elevator room is what we call it. And in there you go in, there's a cabinet with a bunch of lost and found. I actually went in there. There's jackets. This guy named Jack.

If your name is Jack and you have a jacket that's missing, it's in there. There's Bibles in there. There's mugs in there. Here's the point. Jesus is telling three parables about lost and found. But unlike that lost and found, in which half the stuff in there has been in there for years and years, and will probably never come back to its rightful owner, in these three parables, that which is lost is found. So first, Jesus tells a story about a woman that loses a coin. And it's one of 10 coins that would be a day's wages. And this woman is absolutely impoverished. The fact that she has 10 coins, 10 days wages, which is honestly not that much. She loses one of them. And it completely disrupts her world to the point where I will spend any and all energy to find this coin. And she searches, she searches, she finds it. And out of her absolute glee of refining that lost coin, she invites everyone over to have a party, which may have taken all the rest of the nine coins. Intentional by Jesus. And then secondly, you have a story about a shepherd, a good shepherd that has 100 sheep. And 99 are in pasture, and one wanders away. And what does the good shepherd do? The good shepherd first knows one is missing. Good shepherd knows and counts his sheep. But secondly, the good shepherd doesn't just think about, well, maybe it'll be fine that she will just go, I have 99. It's got 99%. That's okay. I'm willing to lose one. No, no, no, no, the shepherd does every single thing in his power to go and find the one exhaust every avenue, all energy and countless time. And he seeks out the one and takes it back. And then thirdly, we have the most personal of all of the lost and found parables. It is the climax of this tryout of stories. And although these three stories go together, like a song with different instruments, we've one beautiful symphony of truth that comes from God himself. The third, the parable of the wayward sons and the loving father is the unmistakable climax. We pity the lost sheep and we prize the lost coin, but identify most closely with this third lost entity, human being that has chosen himself to go get lost. Not haphazardly like the sheep or helplessly like the coin, but willfully and defiantly. He is lost because he wants to be lost. But because he is a son, there is greater joy, greater joy when he is found, says one commentator. So the opening verse of our story brings this into focus. Let's look at chapter 15 of Luke verse 11. And he said, there was a man who had two sons. First, this parable is foremost primarily about who? The man, the father. There was a man, Jesus says, and then he says this, who had two sons? Secondly, this parable is about two wayward sons. When we think about the parable of the prodigal son, so often it's easy, at least in my experience, to focus solely on the younger son and lose

sight of the older son, or even worse, to focus on just the sons and say, yes, there's a father that welcomed them back, but let's focus on the sons. But this morning I want to encourage us all and carry our eyes to the most important figure in this story. You and I identified by the younger and older, yes, and we'll talk about this, but the central figure of this beautiful story that Jesus is clearly highlighting is this loving father, loving father. So I want to encourage us this morning as we now look at this text and study what's going on and see the redemptive themes of how the gospel shines forth through this story. I want to encourage us to choose self-examination over self-justification. The tendency of our self-justifying hearts is to hear the account of the two wayward sons and immediately think of all other people in our life that we know that fit. They match the description. Yeah, they are wayward right now. Yes, they are entitled and bitter right now. Man, I need to pray for them and pray for them. But I want to encourage us this morning as Jesus is trying to get the Pharisees to do and all who are listening to any of his parables. The point is for ourselves to examine our own hearts to see the ways in which the gospel allows for sinners, you and I, to identify as sinners so that the grace of God can be more powerfully felt and appreciate. And the genius of this story is that regardless of whether we have been born again or not, whether we know Jesus or don't, we all can find ourselves lost from home or lost at home in the case of the older brother. For the unsaved, I want to encourage you this morning to see this story as a picture of what can be. To be unsaved is to be lost in the darkness from your true home. The creator of the universe that created you to be with him forever. He's calling you home back to right fellowship with him. And for the born again, we often wander from home, don't we? We know our home, we know our father, we know our place, we know our identity, but it's so easy to wander. There's something else out there. I'm going to leave home for a little bit, dad. I'll come back. All of us know the experience of being lost. And that's what this story is going to teach. So let's read verse 11 to 13. And he said there was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me. And he divided his property between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country. And there he squandered his property in reckless living, reckless living. Again, extravagant wastefulness. The younger son we see from these three verses was reckless in two different ways. First, he was reckless fiscally. Now, if you're like me and you don't do well with budgeting and money and investments and it's not your wheelhouse, I get nervous with money. When I make a wage or someone gives a gift or we sell something and gain some money or assets, I get nervous with what to do with it. So my dad taught me, if you don't know what to do with money, put it into savings or investment. Okay, got it. That's all I need to know. That's what my dad taught me.

And that's what I do with money whenever I can. But here's what's amazing about this story. The very nature of the younger son going to his father who is still alive and saying, give me your inheritance. The inheritance that I am due is essentially going to the father and saying, I want my lot. I want my inheritance and it would be better that you would just die so that I can have it. Because legally, lawfully, what was the case was that the inheritance would never be truly given fully out for someone's right own possession until death had occurred. So the younger son goes to his dad and he says this, hey dad, can I have my inheritance? Yeah, the same inheritance that I get when you croak. Can I have that? Which is roughly one third of all of the father's possessions, property, assets, an immense amount of wealth. And we know that this is a father with immense wealth based on how the story ends. And the feast that's thrown, the signet ring, the cloak, the shoes, all symbols of wealth. This man is wealthy. Give me my one third. One third because the oldest, the first born would get a double portion. So dad, I'd like my inheritance now if you could give that. Of which, the father has every single right to say, no,

I'm not going to give this to you. Which brings us to our first wrestling point. Is the father enabling his reckless son by giving him a third of all that he owned? I remember when I was a kid and my dad and I got in an argument. I was about 13, 14. So pretty young. And I remember just getting this argument with him. I don't even remember exactly what it was about. But I remember it got heated and I got angry, which I didn't get angry often, but I got angry at my dad to the point where I yelled at him and I ran up the stairs and I went into my room and I slammed the door. And I remember my dad comes up. He would not put up with that. I knew I was in trouble. And he came in and he opened the door and he said, Eric, you are not allowed to yell at me and slam the door. Do you understand?

[16 : 27] And I got even more angry and I went over and I slammed the door again. Now, 99 times out of 100, I had a full expectation that my dad was going to burst that door open and I was going to get the wall thing of my life. But I was surprised because you know what my dad did? He didn't open. He didn't say anything. He left me in my room after slamming on him.

The agony of sitting in my room thinking about what I had just done to my wonderful blessing of a father, the provision he's given me, my six siblings. He loves us. He works hard.

He provides for us. He's such a loving father that I slammed the door twice and yelled at him and he left me to it. It was far worse than he's thinking I could have got. I'll never forget. I cooled off for 20 minutes and I went out and I just went to my dad sobbing.

I'm so sorry I did that. My dad just embraced me. He said, it's okay. I forgive you. I did not expect that. Why didn't he come in and punish me? I think it's a similar thing going on. We have a great father who is patient, who loves us and who is willing to show us renewed joy amidst our own self-inflicted suffering. That the father is not enabling his son by giving him his third owed. He is merely allowing to take place exactly what the son wants, which sets the stage for the grace of this story. Not only is the younger son disrespectful to his father, hey, I want all of this wealth, but he's also incredibly foolish because here's what he does. This is the younger son's ultimate act of fiscal recklessness. He essentially takes all of the property, all of the possessions that he's been given, and he liquidates it all into cash. Look with me. Again, it says this in verse 13, not many days later, the young son gathered all he had and took a journey. Now the term gathered all he had literally means turn assets into cash. In the original Greek, turn assets into cash. So he takes it all, liquidates it, and he literally has a giant wheelhouse bag, whatever, of cash. And you can see the recklessness of this. I'm about to travel to Italy for 10 days here this month, and this would be the equivalent of me selling my home, my car, all my possessions, emptying my retirement and all other investment funds, and carrying the total amount of all of that cash with me into Italy. What would you think?

Well, he's got one purpose in mind. He's going to go and spend all of that in another country, but not just another country. It says this, he took a journey into a far country, meaning this. This son intentionally goes to a foreign land. This is what sin does. Sin pushes us to pursue all forms of lack of accountability. The people he knew, the family he lived with, the father who loved him and gave him protection and oversight. I'm going to take everything, all of my sin and my burdens and my temptations. I'm just going to go somewhere where no one knows me. No one will hold me accountable because no one has any means to do that. I can just live how I want. No one will say anything. No Christians in the church will hold me accountable, will encourage me towards holiness. I can live how I want. I don't need the church. I don't need fellowship. I just need what I got in myself. This is the attitude. He's reckless fiscally, but he's also reckless relationally. The structure of the story is the younger son is sick of home. And being sick of home, he becomes sick. We'll see in a second. And once he becomes sick, he becomes homesick. After he becomes homesick, you know what he does?

[20 : 55] He comes home. This is our story, church. This is our story. We leave the God of all providence who made us to be in that garden sick of this. I want my own way and we go.

And here's what the reality of this disrespect relationally is. That when he looks at his father and says, give me my inheritance and leaves, there's only one pathway at this point.

And you have to ask, why is he so reckless? Why? Because rejecting God's authority, the father stands for God or Jesus clearly in the story, rejecting God's authority over our lives is what human beings do. This is what we do. Our selfish hearts so readily spit in the face of our God in the name of personal freedom, personal happiness. This is the greatest deep seated sin that lies at the core of the fallen human condition. Here it is. I can live my life without God. It's the heart of the fallen condition. It's the heartbeat of the pride that lurks within me. God, you made me. You created me. You have authority over me. No, I have authority. Thank you very much. I will live how I please. This is not just the heart of Christians that go away where this is the heart of the world as well. The message of all of the culture and the movies, the shows I've been watching recently and

I've just seen this more and more. The condition of the heart says, I can do this on my own. I certainly don't need a God to help me. So here's what I want to ask us to do in the face of this immediate problem we see with the younger son. Sess your heart this morning.

Ask not if your heart is rejecting God's authority in your life. Instead, how your heart is rejecting his authority. The default setting of the heart is to choose my own way. So I encourage everyone here to run a, what I call a judges diagnostic test daily. What's that? What's a judges diagnostic test? Judges 21 and 25 says in those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Two questions to run this diagnostic test in your life. The first one is quite simply, who is king in my life? The time of the judges which is described as an evil time but I believe it's also descriptive of every time that the human heart needs to ask the question, there's no king, so who's king? Am I king?

[23 : 51] Am I allowing the Lord to be king? And secondly, who's rightness am I living by? Judges says everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Just like this prodigal son, this wayward younger son, it's so easy for us, saved or unsaved to see a God and say, again, I'd like to be king. So then we see in verse 14, and when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country and he began to be in need. He goes, he takes, he spends, and the implication we have is that it's not just spending, it's luxurious, elegant spending.

The finest meals, the finest Arabian bees, the finest experiences almost with zero care fiscally. As if nothing will run out, I can just keep living this way and it will all continue to happen. But here we have verse 14 that says, when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country. The instant his bank account hit zero, famine.

And this is a stark, stark image for what sin does to us. Sin leads us to a place of emptiness. This morning in the youth discipleship group, we talked about idolatry. Now, idolatry is anything that leads us to worship created over creator. And what does idolatry do? In the very end, it leaves us empty. For when we worship that which is not God, and we follow that which is temporal, what ends up happening is that temporal thing we're worshiping gives way to nothingness eventually over time. And our meaning that was placed into that thing is now also empty. But the only thing that can give lasting purpose and meaning is something that is eternal that the Father offers. Sin leads us to a place of emptiness. And when the last of our vain pleasures run out, we feel unsatisfied. Whether that pleasure be the last bottle, the last episode of a godless show, the last sexual thrill, the last cutting word during a gossip session or the last lazy Sunday avoiding church, any meaningful accountability in my life, we are left empty. And it is in these times of pure emptiness of soul and strength that oftentimes further tragedy finds us. And we see that a severe famine arises at the very bottom of this man's experience. This is like a lost hiker who goes into the woods at night and he gets lost. I don't know where to go. I'm lost. I'm scared.

I'm frightened. And just as he's getting to that panic point, what happens? His flashlight batteries run out. That's the picture we have here. The bottom of the bottom is the youngest son right now. But here's the good news. Verse 15. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into the fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods of the pigs ate and no one gave him anything. The picture of where sin leads us, reckless living, godless living, my authority over God's. Here's where it leads us symbolically to a place where we are in a pigsty. And the only thing that we have to somewhat satisfy us is pig slop. This is where sin leads us. Here's the good news.

We see a heart shift. Verse 17. 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 rise 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.

[28 : 02] I usually want to encourage us. Saved or unsaved, if you feel this weight, I have been living under my own authority for so long. I have lived recklessly. Sin has grabbed ahold of me to the point where I find myself in a pigsty and I can't get out. Here's the encouraging word that we see what happens in the younger son's heart. It is through the humbling act of admitting we are lost that the pathway home becomes visible. Here's the encouragement I want to give us. The younger son reached a point in his life where there was literally no other exploits to be chased, no other pleasures to be had, and no other paths to be taken.

The bottom of the bottom. And here's what he does. It says he came to himself in 17. Sin leaves us needy. Verse 14, it says he began to be in need. Verse 16, it says longing to be fed. Listen to this. Verse 16, at the end, no one gave him anything. And then verse 17, I will perish here with hunger. You hear those? Jesus is telling the Pharisees and all that are listening in us that sin pursued to its end point leaves us in extreme need.

And here's where the Gospel shines forth. He admits his lostness. He admits his need.

He says, I perish here, I will rise and I will go to my Father. The place in the darkest deepest pit where I have nothing and nothing will ever ever give me any satisfaction. I am lost completely. The only thing the Son knows is to go home. This is amazing. So what does admitting that we are lost mean? We see that he admits he's lost. I'll rise and go.

I'm no longer worthy. All of these things are happening is his declared statement. It means that we repent. Admitting we are lost means that a heart condition has changed to the point where softness is now the definition of my heart. Here's the steps of repentance that he takes and that we're encouraged to take when we find ourselves lost like the younger son. First, confess. To confess our sin simply means to agree with God about my sin. Not to say I did something wrong and I know it was wrong, but to say God, you say this is wrong and I agree with you, it is wrong. I confess that I have transgressed your law. That's confession biblically, but then you see this. He says, I will rise and go to my Father and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, the younger son admits, Father, I have sinned. What's amazing, he makes no excuses. True, genuine, honest repentance from the heart led by the spirit leads us to a place where there is no excuse. There is only ownership and recognition that we have sinned. Second is contrition, which is brokenness over sin before God. And you see this in verse 19.

[31 : 35] I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. He is broken. I have behaved in such a way that I am no longer your son. So here's what this means for us. Wayward son, wayward daughter. You feel as though this is a definition not just of a younger son and a parable but of yourself. For me, I read this story in so many different things flashed through my mind of times when I did this, I walked away and got myself lost. Here's the good news. Go home. Repent. Both the born again and the lost.

Confessing your sin and brokenness. Postures our heart rightly to receive the grace of God, which leads us to verse 20. And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still along the way off, the father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said, and father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to one of his servants, bring quickly to quit the best robe and put it on him and have a ring put on his hand and shoes on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us eat and celebrate.

For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost in his found and they began to celebrate. And so should we. This is the joy of the father that his son has been found.

The lavish love of the father. He's so delighted to see his lost son again that he runs to him. And I want us to miss this. This is a big deal. Okay. This is a really big deal. A, that an old man would run socially unacceptable at that time. But in some ways, in this time, I'll never forget, we played wiffle ball like 10 years ago. I saw my grandpa run to first base and we all thought who's calling 911. No offense. If you're older than here and you're like, I can still move, Eric. Amazing. But in this culture and age, old men did not run. First of all, second of all, why is he running after that son? He just blew a third of his entire wealth. He's solely the name of his father. He betrayed the trust and nurturing environment that the father rose in it, raised him in what why would they? Everyone would see this act. But the picture we get is this, not that the father is ashamed of his son, but instead of the father has not stopped thinking about his son from the day he left.

What he's been doing, where he was, he's been itching to simply see his beloved son again who left. And the Greek word used here for he ran is usually reserved for competitive foot races in the Bible. It's not just hitching a step. He is running with reckless abandon.

[34 : 53] Like a sprinter in a 400 meter. Amazing. Here's the picture that Jesus says, my father runs after the lost. He pursues those who leave. And not only this, the father does not even let the son finish his rehearsed speech. If you'll notice, it's totally rehearsed because the younger son says exactly word for word exactly what he rehearsed earlier in the story, that the father cuts him off before a very strategic point. Don't miss this. Where does he cut him off? He cuts him off right before the final line of treat me as one of your hired servants. He lets his son say the following. I've sinned against heaven and before you I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. And before he says hire me as one of your servants, the father interrupts. Don't miss this. This is the way God responds to those that repent. At our repentance, the father fully offers forgiveness and warm embrace.

He is not asking the young son to repent and then say, now you got to go be a servant for a long time and then we'll talk. In fact, what we see here is that what we need to get our life back on track is to repent and watch the grace of God transform us. Have you dwell in the grace of God to forgive you and cleanse you? This is what empowers us towards obedience and a transformed heart. It also says that he embraced him and kissed him. Apparently Charles Spurgeon once preached a hour and a half long sermon on just the verse the father embraced him and kissed him and had seven points. The following were the father's kiss and embrace meant love, forgiveness, full restoration, exceeding joy, overflowing comfort, strong assurance of salvation, and intimate communion with his beloved son. Hour and a half sermon on just that point. But not only this, he also gives him gifts of sonship is what I'm going to call it. Gifts of sonship. He does three things. Bring the best robe and a robe replaces his ragged dirty clothing and a regal robe that was the father's mantle to be put over with a sign of sonship that you're part of this family. You are my heir.

I'm going to give you my cloak. But not only this, he calls him a son with the robe, but he also calls him a son metaphorically with the ring, a ring on the finger, likely the signet ring that symbolizes the father's authority over his own estate and all that he owns.

Hey son, here you go. All that I have is yours is the symbol of the ring. You are my son. But then thirdly, this third gift of sonship is he puts shoes on him. He goes from barefoot, a sign of servitude, to shoes, a sign of wealth and belonging. He doesn't just embrace and kiss and show this incredible lavish love. He also speaks an identity into this repented son.

And then lastly, a meal of celebration. Get the fatted calf. Let us eat and celebrate. There's a joyous meal and warm compassion awaiting all sinners. God is always ready to warmly receive us. It's just a matter of repenting, seeing our sin, feeling the brokenness and the weight of that against the holy God and a loving God and turning to him. I promise you, if you're in here and you've never done this, I promise you, you will feel the lavish love of a father who is ready to receive you and ready to throw the greatest celebration.

[38 : 54] My wife grew up with a fantastic family that I've got to know really well. And these parents are some of the best parents I've ever known. And they pray often. They encourage me often. They are great friends. And their oldest son grew up with my wife and they were close growing up.

It was when he decided to go off to college that he essentially did what the prodigal son did. He took everything, went to college and completely gave away to his own authority and rejected God's. It has been a very long time since that happened. I speak with this couple often. And I How in the world do you respond?

He's in sin, he's living a life of debauchery and rebellion. How do you do this? When he comes home, do you have to protect him from your other friends and family based on what he might do or say?

How do you do this? And every time they react to the same thing, he's our son. We love him. And if you were to come back today, we would welcome him in open arms.

But he keeps at a distance because he knows. My parents, they love the Lord. And I think he knows that there is accountability and love waiting, but that means he would have to give up his sin.

[40 : 28] I am so encouraged by this couple to say, we love him, he is our son, and we are praying daily. I want to encourage you, if you're a parent here who has a lost child, mimic the love of the Father, patience with prayer, grace with forgiveness, keep your home hospitable and welcoming, always ready to receive that which is lost.

And then finally, verse 25 to 32, now the older son was in the field. And as he came, he drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing, and he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

And he said to them, your brother has come and your father has killed the fat and calf because he has received him back safe and sound. But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and treated him, but he answered his father, look, these many years I've served you and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you gave me a young goat.

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 fat and calf for him, you feel it?

And he said to him, son, you were always with me and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad for your brother who was dead is alive. He was lost and is found.

[41 : 49] Some have said that the older brother, the older son represents the Pharisees, bitter and jealous that sinners get invited to the house of God. Some have just said that this is just a believer.

Serving God, love the Lord, they're part of the house, God even, the father even speaks, you're with me, all I have is yours, this is just a believer who cannot stand the thought of another sinner receiving grace.

Who becomes embittered at the prospect of someone getting what they don't deserve. This is a believer or a Pharisee, regardless a person who misunderstands the gospel.

The older brother has placed duty above blessing. I have been obedient, I've been faithful, and you've never given me any good thing. That's not the gospel. He's more interested in what favor he can earn or achieve with his father than what favor he already has.

Did you catch it? Here's what the father reminds him of what he already has. He says, first, you are always with me. One of the greatest blessings you will ever receive as a son or daughter of the King is his presence.

[43 : 01] Son, you're always with me. But second, provision, all that is mine is yours. All of the blessings, the manifold blessings of God through Christ is ours.

And this son has forgotten those things. Duty has overtaken him. And just like the Pharisees, bitter and jealous, that sinners get invited to the house of God, at the end of the day, the older son represents the bitter heart, hardened by legalism.

The older brother believes in consequential living to the point where grace is an outrageous possibility to the one who does not deserve it. People should only get what they deserve is the motto of the older son.

Bulls sons were unsatisfied with what their father had provided them. Bulls sons tried to manipulate their father into getting what they wanted. Bulls sons valued what the father could give over his presence himself.

But here's what's different about the two sons. The younger son was lost on the inside and the outside. The older son was lost on the outside, inside, excuse me.

[44 : 12] And finally, we see from the parable, the younger son repents of his sin. The older son does not and refuses to go into the party. Regardless of whether you find yourself lost, unsaved, I've never known the gospel or I know the gospel.

I am a child of God, Eric, but I still get lost. This parable speaks about a great father who is overwhelmingly loving.

Just as the father runs and braces, kisses, clothes, anoints and celebrates, he's lost child. The gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of the Messiah come to live perfectly, die sacrificially, rise victoriously to forgive your sin and show you the absolute depths of God's grace.

If we believe in Him and repent of our sin, that gospel runs to us, embraces us, kisses us, clothes us, anoints us and celebrates us, all undeserved.

Which is why Jesus a couple chapters later has a giant reveal in the book of Luke. He says, for the Son of man came to seek and save lost. Run home, run home to the lavish love of the Father.

[45 : 41] For the reckless child, come on home, your loving Father is waiting to embrace you. For the embittered child, recognize you are home and your loving Father is present now.

Let me go ahead and invite the worship team to come on up. We are now going to sing, How deep the Father's love for us. To all those of us who have been found, I know Christ, I know the gospel, I've been transformed by that gospel.

When we sing this song, remember that we often wander, but I want you to sing from experience, not from obligation, to the Lord.

Not from obligation, to those who are utterly lost in the darkness. Ponder the words of this song sincerely. Embrace the Father's love who is calling you home.

How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that he should give his only Son to make a wretch his treasure.

[46 : 51] How great the pain of searing loss the Father turns his face away as wounds which marred the chosen one. You ready? Bring many sons to glory.

God, we thank you for this story. We thank you that you are that loving Father, that you lavishly shower your grace upon us who do not deserve it.

And God, in our waywardness, whether we are like the older son embittered and entitled or like the younger son reckless and rebellious, maybe recognize that our hearts, we run so willingly from your care and oversight.

In that, your love always keeps us coming back. It empowers us, it strengthens us. And I pray, Lord, as we sing now, that you would be honored and glorified as our great loving Father.

We love you, Lord. We thank you for this morning. Amen.