

The Prodigal-the Father's Response

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[0 : 00] We're now going to turn to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15. Luke, chapter 15. Now this morning we started looking at the parable of the prodigal son.

It's the third parable that Jesus speaks to the religious people who had been finding fault with him because he was eating with tax collectors and sinners.

Now he obviously speaks these parables in order to show them the concern that God has for lost sinners. In all three parables you'll see that there is more concern shown for that which is lost than for that which is already in possession.

And in all three parables you'll notice that there is rejoicing when the lost is found. Now the point that Jesus is making in these three parables is that God is the one who is concerned for the lost. He is the one who is looking for lost souls. In the parable of the lost sheep it is the shepherd that takes the initiative to go and look for the sheep.

[1 : 38] The sheep is unconcerned that it's lost because the sheep doesn't know that it's lost. Sheep don't know when they're lost. And it's only when the shepherd finds them and restores them back into the fold that they might realize that they had strayed.

Now it is God who is concerned. We would never be concerned for the welfare of our own souls unless God had come seeking to find us.

He takes the initiative. We would never turn back to God. Just as Jesus told his disciples, You did not choose me, I chose you.

It is God who is looking for us. It is God who sent his son into this world to seek and to save those who were lost.

And in the parable of the coin, he shows us that we are precious to God. We might not be precious to other people.

[2 : 50] We might not even be precious to ourselves. Maybe we despair of our lives. But we are precious to God. We are of great value to God.

Because God created all of us in his own image. And he wants to restore that image. Because as he sees great value in himself, he sees great value in the creatures that bear his image.

And he wants the opportunity to find us so that he might restore that image. Now in the parable that we were considering this morning, he shows us regardless of our wastefulness, our prodigality, our reckless way of life, and the mess that we've made of our lives, many of us.

He is able and willing to accept us as we are. He wants us to be brought into his family.

He wants us to feel at home in his presence. And that's what we want to consider this evening, the blessing that flows from the love of God for all who will turn to him in penitence.

[4 : 24] Now God doesn't expect us to clean up our lives before we come to him. We see that in the parable here. And the reason that he doesn't expect us to clean up our lives is because he knows we cannot clean up our lives.

He wants us to come as we are and allow him to clean up our lives for us. He will clothe us. And he will give us everything that is necessary for us to be fit to enter into his kingdom.

So that's what we want to consider. We notice that when the prodigal son returned, that he said to his father, I am no longer to be called your son, no longer worthy to be called your son.

And we want to consider verses 22 through to 24, the father's response. The father said to his servants, bring quickly the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet and bring the fatted 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. Well, first of all, he asks for a robe, not just any robe, but the best robe, to be put on his wayward son.

[5 : 59] Now, you can imagine that the clothes his son was wearing as he returned would have been stinking because he had been living rough.

He was homeless. He had spent all his inheritance. And he had been working amongst pigs. So you can imagine that he was stinking. His clothes were filthy. And scripture very often uses this metaphor to give us a description of what we are as sinners as we seek to come back to God. We are clothed in filthy righteousness. The scripture very often uses this metaphor to describe for us our righteousness.

In the prophecy of Zechariah, he was given a vision of Joshua the high priest standing before God, clothed in filthy garments.

[7 : 06] Now, that was the high priest. That was a person appointed by God to represent his people. And here he is, we see the high priest standing before God, performing his duty as the high priest.

And we're told he's clothed in filthy garments. Showing us that the best worship, the highest position that we could have in God's church, and the best worship that we could present before him are in God's eyes as filthy garments.

Then the Lord commanded that these filthy clothes would be taken away from him. And then the prophet goes on to interpret for us the meaning of this.

See, I have removed your iniquity from you and I will clothe you with rich warps. Bring out the best warps. Paul makes frequent use of this metaphor when he speaks of putting off the old man and putting on the new.

In the Revelation, the church in Laodicea has counseled to buy off him white garments that they may be clothed. And later on in the Revelation in chapter 7, John asks, or the angel asks, John, who are these that are robed in these white robes?

[8 : 36] And John replies, I don't know, you know. To which the angel replies, these are those who washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Isaiah says, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation.

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. Scripture makes clear to us that the best righteousness that we can clothe ourselves with are, in God's eyes, foot for the bull.

They are filthy garments. Paul, who was one of the Pharisees that were finding fault with Jesus, thought himself to have an impeccable righteousness.

He says, writing to the Philippians, the righteousness that I had concerning the law, I was blameless. In other words, nobody could point a finger at my life and say that I was living a sinful life.

[10 : 02] But then when God revealed to him whose righteousness, whose standard, as compared to the standard that Paul had attained to, he said it was just fit for the dung.

It was dung. That's how he describes his own righteousness. Because he saw a far better righteousness. He saw a far better clothing.

The righteousness which is of God by faith in Jesus Christ. And when he saw that he would be able to have that righteousness, he threw his own righteousness into the boon.

Because that's all it was fit for. Fit for the dung heap. Jesus speaks another parable on another occasion which speaks of a man that was at the wedding feast who wasn't wearing the right garment.

And he was thrown out. Because if we don't have the right garment on, we won't be able to enter into the father's house.

[11 : 17] The father, as he ran to welcome his son on his return, didn't permit him into the house until he was first of all clothed.

Bring out the best robe. Take away these filthy garments. They're stinking in my presence. I can smell the pigs of them.

And clothe them in the best robe. So that's the way the father treated this prodigal as he returned. He gave him the best clothing that could be provided.

The righteousness of Jesus. That's what we all need. Because if we're not wearing that garment, we will be cast out.

We may have made it into the church. We may have been accepted into membership into the visible church here in this world. But Jesus will recognize whether we're in the right place or not by

the garments that we're wearing.

[12 : 26] And if we're not wearing the right garments, we will be thrown out and we will not enter into the father's house. Now if we come as we are, clothed, acknowledging that that's exactly what we are, sinners, that have rebelled against God and if we're willing to repent and believe in the gospel, then we will be clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

And that will make us fit to enter into the father's house when we eventually reach that destination. salvation. The second thing that he commands that his son would be given is a ring. Put a ring on his hand. Now the prodigal returned only wanting to be accepted as a hired servant. But the father said put a ring on him.

Well the ring was an emblem of wealth and position. An emblem of honor. And it's also a sign of authority. kings and rulers wore rings and they would use the rings to put a seal on important documents as to give the documents the authority of the king or the ruler so that people who received this document would recognize that it's got the authority of the king impressed upon it. And we see that brought before us in the experience of Joseph down in Egypt where Pharaoh took the ring from his own hand and gave it to Joseph to signify that he has given him authority.

[14 : 21] He carried the authority of the ruler. All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. But it's the prodigal son that receives this authority.

Because he's not accepted into the house as a servant he's only going to be accepted into the house as a son. The father is not going to treat him as a servant the father is going to treat him as a beloved son.

And that's what we learn that Jesus has purchased for us the right to be called the sons of God whosoever believed on his name he gave the authority he gave the right to be called the sons of God.

That's what John tells us. in his gospel in the first chapter Paul tells us that we are co-heirs with Christ his only beloved son God welcomes us as he treats his own son.

We are joint heirs with Jesus. We have the run of the house. Now this isn't what the prodigal expected.

[15 : 48] this goes beyond our wildest imaginations. This is not what we expected to receive from God when we started on our penitent journey back to God.

We didn't expect that he would embrace us and welcome us and clothe us and give us authority and adopt us into his family making us joint heirs with his only beloved son.

Here is a man who had wasted everything that the father had given to him. Here are we if we are in Christ those who wasted so many of the years that God had afforded to us.

So many of the resources that he bestowed upon us. so many of the gifts and the talents that he imparted to us as we were considering this morning.

We were wasters. And this waster as he comes back to the father having acknowledged that he had wasted all of his inheritance coming back with absolutely nothing.

[17 : 06] I didn't expect that he was going to be greeted by the father in such a manner that he was going to bestow more riches on him and more authority and accept him back as one of his own children.

Repentant and restored sinners are given a higher position in heaven than even the angels possess.

because the angels are not referred to as the children of God. We never read in scripture that they were created to bear the image of God, the image that's to be restored.

They are going to be given higher authority in the father's house than even the angels possess.

Because they are the children of God, they are not going to be his servants.

They are going to be treated like his children. The love of God for his people is like a wing that has no end, no beginning and no end.

[18 : 33] He has loved us from all of eternity. And nothing can separate us from the love of God, not even death itself.

The ring or the love of God sets before us that we have been liberated from the bondage of sin. The prodigal was under that bondage until he returned to the father's house.

He was a slave to Satan and he now receives the liberty of the children of God because that's what the Holy Spirit ministers to his soul and enables to call God our father.

What a privilege that we are able to call God our father. He's not just our creator. He's not just the sovereign ruler of the whole universe.

He is our father. There is no higher privilege that God could bestow upon any of his creatures than the privilege that he has bestowed upon the penitent sinners that have returned to him.

[20 : 00] he has made us joint heirs with Christ. The ring is a mark of great honor, a mark of great riches, and a mark of great authority.

It's a sign of sonship and heirship, and it's a pledge of great happiness because we will live as the children of God for all of eternity.

And when the hand of faith is stretched forth to receive that ring, the person who receives it will not use that authority to indulge the flesh.

He will endeavor to use that authority to give glory to his father in heaven. for the riches that he has bestowed upon him.

And thirdly, we see that not only did he give him the best robe and give him the highest place of authority in his household, but he gives him shoes.

[21 : 15] Now, servants didn't have shoes. Only children of rich people would have shoes. And you can imagine from the parable, from the story that Jesus is bringing before us to give us this teaching that if he has returned from feeding the pigs, and if he has spent all his inheritance, that he wouldn't have had shoes on his feet.

He would have been clothed in rags and probably no shoes. He would have been barefooted. But the father commands them to put shoes on his feet, sandals on his feet, so that people would recognize him not as a servant in the household, but as a son.

Because anybody entering the household would easily recognize the servants because they wouldn't be wearing sandals, and they would recognize the children of a rich person because they would have been wearing sandals or shoes.

Now the shoes on our feet are speaking of our walk of life. Because our walk of life belonging to the household of God are to be different.

We are no longer walking on the broad road that leads to destruction. We are now walking on the narrow road that leads unto life.

[23 : 04] And that ought to be evident to everybody that sees our walk of life, that we belong to the household of God. Because we're walking in a different road from the rest of the world.

We're walking in obedience to Christ. We are those who have taken up our cross and are following Him. Now Paul speaks of having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The gospel is the shoes that we wear on our feet to help us to walk in the path of righteousness that God wants His children to walk in.

If we're going to follow Christ we're going to encounter difficulties in that path. Now you can imagine that those that were barefooted when they walked over rough stones that the stones would cut them.

It wasn't easy to walk barefooted especially when the path got rough. Now Christians have been warned by their Savior that they're not to expect an easy walk.

[24 : 24] In this world you're going to have tribulation. It's not going to be easy to take up our cross and follow Christ. The road is narrow and sometimes the road is rough and sometimes on the road we're going to be attacked by robbers and those who would want to kill us and destroy us.

Jesus has warned us against the enemies that will seek to destroy us as the followers of Christ. They will hate us because they hated him.

They don't want to have us setting a standard different from the standard of this world. And as we endeavour to walk in accordance with that standard having our feet shod with the gospel of peace, then we are going to be confronted by trials and tribulations and temptations and the difficulties that the scriptures warn us of.

And as we walk through the world our feet will sometimes even with sandals our feet as we walk through dusty places will become dirty.

Because we are walking in the world and our feet will be in need of continual washing.

[25 : 55] And that's what Jesus through the gospel has promised to do for us. To sanctify us by his word. The gospel of peace as it's applied effectually to our souls.

Now we see him as the servant of God with the towel and the basin ready to wash his disciples' feet. And Peter objected, you will never wash my feet.

And we sometimes object, I don't want you to wash my feet. You shouldn't be washing my feet. Only to get the response that Peter got, if I don't wash your feet, you will have nothing to do with me because you need to be sanctified, you need to be cleansed, and you can't do that yourself. Just as we couldn't justify ourselves, we cannot sanctify ourselves. We need to live wholly in dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ to wash our feet so that we will walk in the path of righteousness.

We need to live in dependence upon him, the father commanded the servant to put sandals on his feet.

[27 : 12] Jesus is the servant of God. That's how Isaiah depicts him. He didn't come into this world as God in the form of God.

He came into this world taking to himself the form of man and he became a servant. He didn't come to be served. He came to serve because if he didn't come to serve, we would never be able to prepare ourselves.

The prodigal came back as he was in his own faith. And only the father could command that he would be prepared before he entered into the house to partake of the great feast that he was about to command, which is the fourth thing that we see he commanded, that the fatted calf be killed so that they would eat and celebrate.

For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate. celebrate. The prodigal was half starving.

And the father commands that the fatted calf be killed so that they would celebrate. Remember that's what drove the prodigal son back to the father's house.

[28 : 43] He was almost dying of starvation. He was almost eating the pig's food. It wasn't as a result of his love for the father that drove him back to the father.

It was his stomach. And we have to acknowledge that sometimes our motive for coming back to God isn't the right motive.

It's for what God can give to us. because we know that he has these resources that he is willing to bestow upon us.

The prodigal realized that even the servants in his father's house had a better life than he had. That they were well fed. That they were looked after.

And the motive that drove him back was his sense of hunger. And not only his sense of hunger but his realization of God's mercy or his father's mercy even to his servants.

[30 : 02] And if we didn't anticipate that God is a merciful God, we would never come back to God. But it's because we realize that God is a merciful God.

Because we believe that God is a God who is willing to receive sinners to himself, that we will go to him to get the provision that we have come to realize that we're lacking.

And we go to him for the wrong motive, not for himself. We often go to him for what he can give us. Because that's the motive that drove the prodigal back to what his father could give him.

He could give him food. But thank God that he doesn't hold that against us. That we don't always come to him for himself, for what he is in himself, as we should, but for what he can give us.

And he's more than willing to give it to us. And the only reason that he's willing to give it to us is because of what he is within himself. A merciful and a loving God.

[31 : 22] But we don't always see that. The prodigal son was prepared to lose his sonship in order that he might get something to eat.

But he couldn't get what he wanted. on the terms that he desired. Because what he wanted the most was not what he needed the most.

And the father knew that. He first of all had to be forgiven for his sins. He had to be bathed in an overflow of the father's love before he would feed him.

And the overflow of the father's love provided for him a garment. The righteousness of Christ.

The overflow of the father's love for him accepted him back into the family not as a servant but as a son. And the overflow of the father's love for him provided for him shoes to put on his feet so that he would walk in the paths of righteousness.

[32 : 43] So that he would live the kind of life that he ought to be living before he commanded that the fatted calf be slaughtered.

God and that's the order of our redemption. First of all there is the work of regeneration where we turn from our sins and repentance and we believe in the gospel of peace.

