

The Sins of the Prodigal's Brother

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again. I know that a couple of you said that you're having trouble staying awake this morning, and so I'm hoping that today's message will keep you awake. And we're going to be this morning in the Gospel of Luke and chapter number 15.

We're going to be looking at one of the parables of Jesus. And we're going to be looking at an often overlooked Bible character.

In this particular parable, the bad brother is the one that seems to get all the attention and all the vilification. He is the one that gets told to Sunday school children as the one that we are not to be like, which for good reason.

He was sinful, and he went out and lived a riotous life, and we know that that is wrong. But for the sake of the parable that Jesus told, that brother was not the villain of this parable.

And so we're going to be looking this morning at the brother. I'm here to tell you that the younger brother's sin of going out and living a life of sin was no less egregious to the father than the sin of the older brother.

[1 : 28] And so that's what we're going to be spending time looking at. And I believe the reason is that we don't spend time on the dutiful older brother is because he is guilty of the respectable sins that most of us harbor in our own lives at times.

Things that good Christians don't look down upon. Things that, you know what, we don't always like to talk bad about the sins that we have. We like to talk bad about the sins that other people have. And so that is what we're going to be spending our time this morning. And we have to look at the context, and we have to look at the audience to whom Jesus was speaking. So let's take a look this morning at Luke chapter 15, beginning in verse number 25.

We're going to go all the way to verse 32. And we're going to not spend the time talking about the younger brother, but we're going to catch the story somewhere toward the middle.

Verse 25. Now the older son was in the field, and he came and drew near to the house. He heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

[2 : 43] By this time, the younger brother had already come to himself. He was eating pig slop. He was eating the leftovers that the pigs weren't eating.

That's how bad his life had become because he had squandered his inheritance. He had friends while he had money. But when he ran out of money, he ran out of friends.

And that goes to show you that those who you think are your friends, be careful. And especially when we're out in the world, especially when we are living a life that is apart from God the Father, we can't always count on people that we think are our friends to be our friends.

And so he finds himself working for someone. And for a Jewish young man, this would have been terrible for him to working with the pigs. But he comes to himself and says, you know, I could be at home right now.

Even if I was a servant, I would be living better and eating better than I am now. And so he decides to go home with his, so to speak, tail tucked between his legs.

[3 : 47] And he's willing to do anything to be reunited with his father, reunited with his family. And so by this time, the father in this parable, the father has been waiting on this son.

He sees him from afar off. The father, which is unusual for this period of time in the Far East for an elderly man to run and out towards his son. And so he does, he falls on his neck, he hugs him, and he comes back and he says, look, let's get the best calf out there and let's get him slaughtered and let's have a feast and let's have a party.

Because my son, which was lost, has come home. Now we pick up the story. The older brother was out in the field. He comes in. He hears the noise of a party. And he's wondering what's going on.

So he tells one of the servants, hey, why don't you go run into the house or run up to the house and see what's going on. And he said to him, he came back, brought the news of what was going on. He says, your brother has come. And because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf. But he was, how did the older brother respond to the younger brother repenting and returning?

[5 : 02] He was angry. He was angry and would not go in. Therefore, his father came out, came out to the field, came out to the edge of where the house was and pleaded with him.

So he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years I have been serving you. Wah, wah. I have never transgressed. I've been a bit. And yet you never give me a young goat. I'd make merry with my friends. But as soon as, notice how he first, brother.

As soon as this fuel came, who have bowed your livelihood, Harley. Lost my place here. You kill the fatted calf for him.

Verse 31. And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad. For your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost, and is found.

[6 : 10] So the prodigal's return, the lost son's return, was a happy occasion. It was a joyous occasion. We see the father running out to meet the son who had left home.

And there is great joy over this lost son who has returned home. And this fits right in with these other parables that Jesus is telling these scribes, these Pharisees, these religious men.

He talks about the lost sheep, talks about the lost coin. And then he talks about the lost son, starting in verse number 11. But there's one man who missed out on the blessing.

That was the older son, the older brother, that comes out from the field. And he refuses to enter into the joy. And therefore, he misses out on the joy of being part of the family.

So what caused? Our question this morning is, what caused the older brother to miss out on the joy of this occasion? Well, the first thing that we see, and it's what Jesus is teaching or attempting to teach to the Pharisees, these religious men who had a problem with Jesus rubbing shoulders and palling around with sinners and all this rebellious rabble that he was spending time with and eating with.

[7 : 44] So what caused? The first thing that caused this older brother to miss out on the joy of this occasion was the sin of a negative, critical, grumbling spirit.

He got angry because instead of being filled with joy, because my brother who had left, my brother who had gone out and lived this horrible lifestyle, has repented and has returned home.

And dad is happy about it. Dad has opened and received with welcome arms. And instead of pointing his finger at him and saying, you terrible son.

And I know what does he do? Let's have a party because my son has returned home and the older brother has issue with it. And he thinks that he should have had a party just because he was obedient and stayed at home and was the good son.

And Jesus says to these Pharisees, listen to this story and I will tell you and I will give you a glimpse into your own dark hearts.

[8 : 47] And so, first of all, we see the sin of a critical, a negative, critical, grumbling spirit. So in order to understand why Jesus told this parable, we have to look at the audience and the context.

If you go back to the beginning of chapter 15, we see that all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Jesus.

So in the beginning of the chapter, this sinful rabble who were attracted to Jesus's message, Jesus's teaching, wanted to get close to him and they wanted to hear him speak.

So we have the people who knew they were bad off. The people who knew they were judged by the religious people and they knew they were in an awful state. They were the ones attracted to Jesus's teaching.

Jesus repelled the religious and attracted the sinful because he offered forgiveness. He offered relief. He offered rest from their trying to work their way to heaven by being good.

[9 : 53] And so now, all of a sudden, they have a chance to get right with God because God accepts them the way they are and God was going to take care of the rest.

In verse 2, we see, and the Pharisees and the scribes did what? They complained. They grumbled. They criticized Jesus.

This man received sinners and eats with them. So in verse 2, the religious people, Pharisees, the scribes complained, saying that Jesus was entertaining sinners and he was eating with them. So what does Jesus do? He begins to rapid fire these stories with a moral. And he is attempting to correct their faulty thinking and their wrong attitude of these critical people.

So contrary, as we said, contrary to popular belief, at least in this story, in this parable that Jesus told, the lost son is not the villain in the story.

[11 : 00] It's the older brother that Jesus was using to say, this younger son did what he was supposed to. He realized he had a problem and he repented and he returned.

The problem is the older, dutiful, good brother is the one who had the bad, negative, grumbling attitude, thought he was entitled and criticized the father for accepting a sinner.

And so that is what we're going to be looking at this morning. As we look at the attitude of the older brother, can you tell the one that, who he represents in the story?

Let's look at verse 28. What attitude, do you remember? Verse 28 says, He would not go, therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

The final section that we're looking at this morning, I've said to the older brother who symbolized the Pharisees. He symbolized teachers of law. They same attitude towards sinners.

[12 : 03] The older brother had toward his young brother. The sin weren't worthy of sharing in the thought. These people who had wasted their entire life living, living apart from God, had no business.

And how in the world could they spend all this time living in the world? And then all they have to do is just come and repent. And all of a sudden they're just welcomed in like nothing has ever happened.

Well, isn't that what the gospel offers? That God receives us as we are. Whether we're good or whether we're good morally or whether we're bad morally, we know that we're all enemies of God. No matter our moral standing in this world. So the Pharisees said, These are sinners. What business do they have being part of the kingdom with us?

But interestingly enough, the father goes out and he pleads with the older brother to come in to the feast. And we know that Jesus ate with Pharisees.

[13 : 07] As a Pharisee. See, he didn't pick sides. And he didn't play favorites. Matter of fact, Jesus didn't want to exclude the Pharisees. He didn't want to exclude the religious people of the day.

The problem was they excluded themselves. They didn't want part of a religious system that allowed everybody to come in and be accepted. So what they did was they criticized and they humbled.

So what we see is the Pharisees. He had never been honored for the feast. He had never had all of these things. So he says, Verse 29, All these years, in effect, he says, I've been slain for you, and you never disobeyed your orders.

These words track that the brother thought of a relationship with his father because of his work. So in effect, what the older brother is saying is, I have a relationship with you, Dad, because I'm good, and because I work for you, and I've done all of this.

So in effect, he's thinking that he has the right relationship with the father, and the father should have thrown him a party just for being good. And that's what he's thinking.

[14 : 23] He even thought of himself in bondage to his father, because the word that he used here was almost like, I've been slaving for you. I've been toiling for you. I've been working. I've been working like a mule all this time, and I never ran away from home and did all this, but you never gave me a party.

And so what happens is, the father points out that the older son had the joy of what? Of being in his house all this time.

The son had the joy of receiving all of the benefits that belong with the son, being in his family. He says, You were always with me, and I have.

In effect, what was he saying to the older son? Son, if you want to have a party, all you had to do was go out and find a calf, kill it, and invite your friends. That's exactly what the father was saying. He says, All this time, you've been with me, and everything that I have is yours. Enjoy what you want within the family, but what you're doing is not right.

[15 : 28] And God's people, the Jews, were thinking basically the exact same way. They were entrusting God's word all through these generations.

They were entrusted with the fact that God was a God who loved them and who did the entire world.

Because what was God for the Jews in the Old Testament? He wanted not only for them an example, but he wanted them to tell the entire world how good he was. And they didn't do it. What did they do? In effect, just like the song says, they hid their light under a bushel. This is our religion. This is our God. And they were like, you know, we're taking our toys, and we're not letting you play with them.

You can't have part of our God, because he's our God. And God says, that's not the way it was intended. You've been with me the whole time. You're my people. You're my chosen people. And these are all people that I want to change their life.

[16:31] I've redeemed them through my son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross in their place. So in effect, he's saying, what's your problem? I died for you.

I also died for them. And so, whosoever will may come, apply to everyone, not just to the religious people, but they misconstrued the message that Jesus was teaching.

He said, all may come. Everyone's a sinner, even you guys, that he was saying to the Pharisees. And he says, what's the big deal? They're coming to me because they want their sins forgiven.

And now they're seeing that they have a chance for their sin to be forgiven. And that's why they were attracted to Jesus. And Jesus was offering them a life of following him without having to live by the rules and regulations in order to have a relationship with him.

The holy life was going to come as they were growing in Christ and as he was teaching them and as the Holy Spirit was getting rid of these sins in their life. But what the Pharisees wanted to do was they wanted them to clean up their life before they came to God.

[17:45] And so he said, no, you've got the cart before the horse. So they were the recipients and the guardians of the covenant of the law. We see that in Romans 3, verses 1 and 2.

We see that in Romans 9, verse 4. God intended his people to be the light of the world, even his Old Testament saints. So rather than feeling angry, they should rejoice when other sinners were joining them and they would be a part of the kingdom as well.

So today, one of the gripping evidences that we have negativism in our world today is often, rather than working together to share the gospel, win the lost, and to disciple others, what we see is, we see very often, grumbling, complaining, and griping.

How different we are from the early believers. Paul could praise in prison, but yet we pout in prosperity. Paul gloried in his infirmities.

And we growl in affluence. Look at all we have. You know, if you grumble and growl all day, don't be surprised if your dog tired at night. But we do that.

[19:08] We do that. And we even see that in other areas of life. We see that in the, we even see that in the military. And for those who've been in the military, when, when we're, when they're not engaged in battle, and it's just doing the job, and they show up for work, and they train, and they do this and that, they might tend to grumble about the food.

Maybe grumble about having to wake up at five o'clock in the morning because, you know what, they're not being challenged. There's, there's, there's no enemy that they're fighting. And so, therefore, they, the, the possibility of grumbling and complaining can come to the forefront. But what happens when they're in battle, they're concerned about staying alive. So, you know what, just as long as I have something to eat, they're not going to be complaining about the mess. They're not going to be complaining about the food when they're worried about staying alive. And we, as followers of Christ, we're not going to be as, as, as much concerned about the color of the, the walls or the, whether the, the temperature is two degrees off or not when all we care about is winning the lost.

And so, I think what Jesus was trying to get across to his, to his audience was, let's get excited about the lost coming to Christ.

[20:32] Let's get excited about those who know they are sinners, who repent of their sin and begin to follow Christ. But yet, like the older brother in the story, the parable, he was telling them that they had issues.

Never have Christians had so much and appreciated so little as, as we do today across America. and what do some Christians grumble about?

Some Christians grumble about their families. Some Christians grumble about their job. They grumble about the government. You know what? Sometimes even Christians grumble about their Heavenly Father's weather. I'm guilty of that.

Oh, it's been a horribly rainy winter and I wish and this is terrible weather. Well, who sent the weather? God. You know, and so sometimes I'm even guilty of complaining about things God does. And so we grumble and we complain about things that we have no business grumbling and complaining. And some of us are specialists at finding faults. I'm the first one to stand up and raise my hand on that one.

[21 : 41] And we have to be careful that we aren't doing that. Some grumble at their churches. Some grumble at their pastors. Some grumble at their deacons. Just, if you always think that churches grumble about their pastors, just attend a pastors meeting and you'll find that some pastors grumble about their churches.

And so it's across the board. We're complaining people because we're human beings and that's our tendency as human beings. So the older brother misses out on the joy because he had a sinful, negative, grumbling, critical spirit.

And secondly, what he suffered from was the sin of an offended spirit. Do you know what? We live in an offended society.

Do we not? We think we have the right to be offended over everything. Now, there are certain things that are offensive to God the Father.

And I believe our righteous indignation will lead to being offended by sin. But we take it so many steps further.

[22 : 57] Well, you know what? I'm offended because of whatever. You know, I take offense because of this. I take, and we all, we're offended by everything. Do you know what?

There are certain things that, you know what, who cares if you're offended or not? If it's not sin, do we have the right to be offended over things that are not sinful?

You know what? There are things that we prefer. You know what? Most of the time we get offended over our preferences. Well, I prefer this, and I don't like the way you're doing that, so that's offensive. And that's what the Pharisees, the issues that they had.

Verse 29, So he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years I've been serving you, I never transgressed your commandment at any time, and yet you never gave me a young goat that I might make merry with my friends.

The problem, verse 30, he says, but as soon as this son of yours came, what did you do? You went out and you killed the fatted calf for him.

[24 : 03] In our vernacular, it would be like saying, you went out and bought 100 pounds of crawfish for that spoiled brat. You never did that for me. When was the last time you did that for me, dad?

And that was his attitude towards his father. Telling his father that he wasn't fathering properly because he had joy over the son who came home, but yet he ignored him because the older brother, he ignored the older brother because the older brother was dutiful and stayed home. So the older brother had a bad attitude. And furthermore, what we have to understand is, especially in this eastern culture, by staying outside the house, by refusing to join in the feast, the older brother humiliated his father and humiliated his brother.

And so probably many in the crowd, in the guest of the feast were saying, where's whoever the older brother's name is? Well, I don't know. Why is he not here?

He should be here. And if only they knew why he wouldn't have been there, it would have humiliated the father because the older son had this bad attitude. So how much of the work of God sometimes or often is hindered by this sin of this grumbling, critical spirit and being offended by things that to some are not offensive?

[25 : 33] In verse 28 and 29, it made him grumble when it was time for him to glory. His brother who had been lost has now returned. It also, verse 29, made him exaggerate his own righteousness.

I doubt very seriously that he was a peach to be around 100% of the time. If he was this angry and this grumbly complaining, I guarantee you there were other days when he was grumbling and complaining to his dad.

If not to his face, for sure behind his back. And it also made him feel sorry for himself, we see in verse 29. And it also, verse 31, made him forget all that he already had. What did his father say? Son, you've been part of my household. Everything that I have is yours. What did he forget? He forgot all the benefits that he already had. You know, sometimes we forget that as followers of Christ.

We forget that we have so many things. I forget that I have so many things that God provides. His provision is so much beyond what I deserve.

[26 : 43] His love is so much above and beyond what I deserve. His not zapping me every time I have a bad attitude is, see, I don't deserve his mercy.

I don't deserve his grace. Neither do any of us. We actually deserve his judgment. But how did he judge us?

He judged us in Christ. And Jesus was the one who received the anger and the hatred of God on sin.

And so that's why God turned his back on Jesus Christ while he was hanging on the cross when our sin was applied to him. Him who knew no sin became sin for us.

So we need to make it right. If we have that issue in our own life, if we find that we're grumbling, complaining at a brother or sister in Christ, or if we're sometimes complaining because God allowed this in our life, or because we're not as healthy as we think we should be, or because whatever, the job is not what it's supposed to be, or we we may ought to rethink our complaining or grumbling at God and saying, God, thank you so very much.

[28 : 01] Thank you for your love. Thank you for your forgiveness. Thank you for saving me and restore unto me the joy of my salvation by realizing what I have in Christ.

And this older brother did not realize this. The older brother missed out on the joy because of the sin of a negative, critical, grumbling spirit. Secondly, he suffered from the sin of an offended spirit. He was offended because the dad was happy over the young son who repented and came home. But we also see verse 30.

We also refer to that. Thirdly, the sin of a compassionless heart. That's what the younger brother had.

The sin of a compassionless heart. Verse 30. But as soon as this son of yours came who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you kill the fatted calf for him.

[29 : 02] The older brother didn't have compassion for his younger brother. The older brother only thought about himself. The older brother only thought about how good he thought he was. He only thought about that he was the dutiful son who stayed home that didn't go out like the younger brother did.

So all he was doing was thinking about himself. So why was the prodigal's brother unmoved by his return? Do you realize that it's possible that he was unmoved at his being away?

You thought about that? Because sometimes sometimes what happens to the youngest in the family?

sometimes the youngest in the family seems to get all the parents attention. Not always but sometimes they seem to get away and I'm an only child so I never experienced this but some of you who have older or younger brothers and sisters sometimes and it's almost like children are to their parents when their parents become grandparents.

Mom, dad where were you? You know the first child? Your parents learned on you and they practiced on you and then the more children they have the more they realize you know what?

[30 : 26] I can loosen up a little bit and they won't die. Right? And so oldest will say mom, dad you never let me right?

Why do they always and so he might have had the older brother syndrome I don't know but he was possibly unmoved at his return because he was unmoved because he left and so all of a sudden now he could get all his father's attention.

This is just conjecture here but he didn't appear to be that concerned over his younger brother being reunited with him. He had worked hard on the family farm but unlike his father it's possible that he didn't care as much for his younger brother.

The father cares and who's the hero in the story? The father. Who does the father represent? God. Who does the younger son represent?

He represents all of us who have been away from the father. All of us before we came to Christ. All of us who were enemies of God separated from him. and now we realize we need salvation.

[31 : 44] We come to the father. We admit that we're sinners. We return home and we say God I'll take whatever just I'm just so thankful that you you're willing to forgive me and you're willing to save my soul.

And who do the older brother represent? The older brother represented the Pharisees, the scribes, the religious people of the day who thought they had worked their way to be right with God.

And the father says I am so glad that this lost son has returned home. Let's have a party. The older son says but where was my party?

All the while not realizing he had all the benefits of being part of the family. Do we see ourselves at times in this wayward brother?

Do we see ourselves sometimes in this dutiful brother? I think we may see ourselves at different times in either one of these. And then as we close I think we need to understand that there are times when we need to confess those respectable sins.

[32 : 57] You know God I was a little irritated and I was angry because I didn't think it was fair and I grumbled and I complained. or I felt entitled and or I was prideful of my life and I judged someone else and I made myself appear to be better than I was and we need to realize we need the compassion.

We need to see others the way God sees them. Works in progress because whether we realize it or not we're all works in progress as well. Let's pray.

This morning God we thank you. We're so thankful that you love us. You accept us as we are.

There are some of us who still have some rough edges.

There are some of us Heavenly Father who still falter and fail and we need to confess and Lord we thank you for being long suffering.

we thank you for your love. We thank you for your mercy and your grace. Lord I pray that your Holy Spirit may produce within us the fruit of the Spirit.

[34 : 13] Lord may we live holy lives because we are connected with you. Or not to try to live a holy life because we think it will gain us brownie points.

Father I pray that you would help us to be more and more like Jesus Christ each and every day that we live on this earth. As long as we're here until you take us home.

Father I pray that you help us to be thankful. That you would help us to be grateful. And Lord may our hearts be full of compassion for those who do not yet know Christ as their Savior.

We thank you. We praise you Father. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.