

The Father and the Lost Son

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Preacher: Rev RJ Campbell

[0 : 00] Now, as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek his blessing upon his Word. Let us pray. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we give thanks to thee today that we have access into thine own presence, that we can come with boldness and confidence into the very throne room of God, that we can come and appear before thee at a throne of grace, and that in order to seek thy mercy and to seek thy grace to help us in every time of need.

We give thanks that we have that boldness and confidence through the merits of thine own Son, the one who is at thine own right hand, and the one who ministers there on behalf of his people, those given to him by thee in the covenant of redemption, and those for whom he came into the world, taking our nature unto himself, and in that nature went to the cross, and there received what our sins deserved in his own body, providing a righteousness for us, a righteousness that can be imputed to us by faith, a righteousness that gives us a standing before thee, a holy God, a God who is of purer eye than to look upon sin.

But we give thee thanks that we are as those who are accepted in the beloved, that we are accepted in Christ, that we stand robed in his righteousness.

And we give thee thanks, O Lord, for that provision that thou hast made for sinners such as we are, that when we sinned, that thou did put out thine hand of mercy, it hoards us.

And we give thanks, O Lord, for all the tokens of thy goodness and kindness, that thou so abundantly give to us in things that are temporal as well as in things that are spiritual.

[2 : 39] And we pray that this will reflect upon thy goodness to us, that it would humble us in thy presence, that it would bring us in humility of mind, of heart and of spirit, to thine own foodstool, to acknowledge our sinnership, to acknowledge that we do sin against thee in thought, in word and in deed.

But blessed be thy name for the efficacy of the finished work of thy Son, and for the great promise that thou hast given to us, that if we confess our sins, that thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, to reconcile us to thyself, and so that we can have fellowship and communion with thee.

We give thanks that that fellowship and communion that was broken by sin can be restored to us through thy Son, and through that end we pray, O Lord, that it may please thee to bless the gospel today, as it has been proclaimed throughout our islands and throughout our land, even unto the ends of the earth, and all thy servants who have gone forth to proclaim thy word, and all those who will listen to thy word today, we pray that thou would unstop their ears, that thou would enlighten their understanding, and O Lord, that thou would renew their wills, that they may become a willing people in a day of thine own power, to trust in thee and to follow thee, and to know thy salvation.

We pray, O Lord, we pray, O Lord, that thou would bless our homes and our families, and all our loved ones, wherever they may be, that thy known everlasting arms would be around them.

Remember, we pray thee, those who are careless and indifferent to the claims of thy word, O Lord, may thou come in a day of thy power, may thou work among them, and draw them to thyself, that they may come to see their great need, and that they may come to see the sufficiency of Christ, and his finished work, his salvation, to meet with their need.

[5 : 04] We pray, Lord, for those who are ill, may thy healing hand be upon them, and those who mourn, may thy comfort, O Lord, fill their hearts today.

We live in that changing world, but blessed be thy name, that our hope today rests in the unchanging God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And we give thee thanks for all the promises that is in thy word, given to thy people and sealed for them, by the blood of the everlasting covenant.

We pray, O Lord, today that we may be encouraged, that we may be strengthened in our faith, and that thou, O Lord, would help us and sustain us, that thou, O Lord, would be our refuge and our strength, that thou, O Lord, would be going before us, that we would know thine own presence among us, and all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins, is in Jesus' name, and for his sake.

Amen. Let us now read the word of God, as we find it in the book of Psalms, and Psalm 103. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

[6 : 31] Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.

The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, low to anger and plenteous in mercy.

He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy, told them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our fame, he remembereth that we are dust. As for man his days are as grass, as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

[7 : 55] For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness, and to children's children.

To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all.

Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, harking unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

Bless the Lord, all his works and places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word.

Now, seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn to the New Testament, and to the Gospel of Luke, and chapter 15.

[9 : 02] The Gospel of Luke, chapter 15. And we can read from verse 11. And he said, A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, Father, give me the portion of goods that followeth to me.

And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country. And there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many higher servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare an eye perish with hunger?

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

[10 : 19] Make me as one of thy higher servants. And our focus today will be from verse 20. And he arose and came to his father, but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let it seat, and be merry.

For this my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found, and they began to be merry. We return again to the passage of scripture that we have here in Luke chapter 15, and especially to the last part of the chapter that is commonly known as the parable of the prodigal son.

Now last week we saw how the younger son of the house wanted his share of the inheritance, and the father gave it to him. Soon after the son left home, and spent it all, and to add to all his troubles, there arose a mighty famine in the land, and in the end he was found wanting, and came to realize that he was lost.

He had hit rock bottom, and realized that if he continued on the road that he had embarked upon, that it would be sure destruction for him.

[11 : 59] His world was turned upside down, and his only hope was to turn his face towards his father, to swallow up his pride, and to go to the father, and plead for the father's forgiveness.

He began to think of his father's house, and the privileges that he had despised, and he resolved to return to his father's house, and he rehearsed in his mind what he would say to his father.

I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants.

But it could all have remained there simply good intentions. But then we read the hinge upon which the whole story turns, and he arose and came to his father.

He not only resolved, but put his resolutions into action. This young man did what he had resolved to do. He started out and kept going for him to have any meaningful life, and hope was to return to his father's house, and to be reconciled to his father, and to receive his father's forgiveness.

[13 : 27] His return trip may have been difficult. There may have been many stumbling blocks in the way, but his deep desire was to be reconciled to his father, to receive his father's forgiveness, and to know his father's peace.

And so he persevered. How many are lost? Yes, they may have good intentions, make good resolutions, that one day they would trust and follow Jesus Christ.

Even some may have even started the journey well. But along the way they get weary, and they never persevere.

They never endured. And so they remain lost. But here we see regarding this man, this son, that he persevered in his journey to the father's house.

Whatever difficulties or stumbling blocks may have come his way. Then we read that, when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

[14 : 45] These words, a great way off, must have a wonderful meaning for the son. While the son was a great way off, his father saw him.

This goes to show us that the father was concerned for his son. This was not out of sight, out of mind.

The son was in his father's thoughts all the time. When the son was in the far country, and in the peak's day, he thought no one cared.

But there was one that was concerned, and who cared about him, although it was unknown to him. Spiritually, we are all a great way off, and that measurement is from God's standpoint.

It is an amazing thought, that even when we are a great way off, that the Lord is concerned, and cares for us. We are told by Peter, that the Lord is long-suffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

[16 : 07] Although we are so great at distance, we are not to be discouraged. In Acts chapter 2, verse 39, we read, the promise of salvation goes to all that are afar off.

In Ephesians chapter 2, we are told, But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

And we are told that, Jesus came and preached peace to you, which were afar off. It is never a question with the Lord, how far off we are, or how deeply we have sinned.

It is a remarkable thing, that it is those that was a great way off, that he came to seek, and to save. For he says, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

However far off you are today, however deep you may be in sin, the Lord is ready to demonstrate to you, his willingness to forgive you.

[17 : 25] The father saw the son a great way off. A startling thought, that even when we are a great way off, that the Lord sees us.

This thought startled David, as he writes in Psalm 139, O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me, thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off, thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Now, in the case of the son here, he is not in the position of the man who is careless and entirely regardless of God.

For you notice that the son here is represented as having come to himself, and that he is persevering in returning to his father's house.

And in this case, it is not the position of those whom Jesus are addressing at this moment, the Pharisees and the scribes, who think themselves extremely righteous.

[18 : 44] They have never learned to confess their sin. They have never had a thought to return to the father's house. But here we have one who is thinking of the father's house, who is persevering in coming to the father's house, who is seeking reconciliation and forgiveness with the father.

Well, is that how the word finds you today? Is that how the gospel finds you today? Does the gospel find you careless and regardless of God?

Or does the gospel find you in a position like the Pharisees and scribes, who may be thinking that you are so extremely righteous that you have never learned to confess your sin or that you never had thought to return to the father's house?

Or does the gospel find you as, we find this son today, we find this man today, someone who has come to himself, someone who knows that you are lost, someone who knows that if you continue in the way that you are, it will ultimately result in destruction, someone who has come to himself, someone who knows that you are lost, someone who is seeking reconciliation with God, someone who is seeking the forgiveness of God, the forgiveness of the father.

Well, where does the gospel find you today? When you think of this young man coming back in rags with no shoes on his feet, he is the most wretched, pitiful, and pitiful figure.

[20 : 29] The whole scene looks so tragic and heart-rending, but he is coming back to his father's house, for he has experienced the emptiness of a life away from the father's house.

And as he makes his journey, many thoughts may be going through his mind. There was the cutting off ceremony, which we shall look at later. But I am sure that the most prominent thought and his greatest desire would be to know the heart of his father towards him.

Would his father receive him? Would his father forgive him? We read, when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

When the father saw him, we are told that he had compassion on him. How do we define compassion? Well, the dictionary says that it is a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering of others, and I wish to help them.

Again, we see the workings of grace here when you think of what the son did, the way in which he squandered the inheritance.

[22 : 00] Nevertheless, the father had compassion upon him. That can only manifest to us the father's undesired favor and his tender heart, his compassionate heart with regard to the needs of his son.

The Bible often speaks to us of the compassion of God. In Psalm 145, David writes, the Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy.

Psalm 103 that we read this morning. David reveals the Lord as one who grants forgiveness, who brings healing, who executes justice and righteousness for all.

Then he declares to us the apex of God's goodness to us. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy to them that fear him.

[23 : 19] As far as the east is from the west, so far have he removed our transgressions for us. Then David discusses the riches of his grace and compassion and he expresses that in these terms, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

The Old Testament records for us many instances where God's grace and compassion is shown forth to our people who were disobedient and rebellious.

For instance, Nehemiah in chapter 9 briefly summarizes for us the history of Israel. He brings before us what the Lord did for them and then he brings before us how they rebelled against the Lord.

But how does he conclude the whole matter? He says, But thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness and forsookest them not.

Even when his people were unfaithful, even rebellious, the Lord remained a God of graciousness and compassion.

[24 : 40] A few months ago we studied the book of Jonah and we saw how displeased Jonah was with the fact that God had spared the Ninevites.

And in chapter 4 of Jonah we read, But he displeased Jonah exceedingly and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country?

Therefore I fled before thee into Tarshish. Listen, for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness and repentest thee of the evil.

And when we come to the New Testament it also records for us many instances of the grace and compassion of God. On one occasion, and contrary to the custom of the day, Jesus responded to the plea of a leper who begged for healing.

And having been moved with compassion we are told that Jesus stretched forth his hand and touched the leper and healed him. Again, regarding one of the most well-known miracles, the feeding of the great multitude when they had nothing to eat, we are told there that Jesus had compassion upon them and miraculously he provided food for them.

[26 : 11] And as we read the Gospels, we find that compassion was a distinctive mark that belonged to the character of Jesus. what the story that we are focusing upon today teaches us is that as the father in their story had a concern and compassion for his son, likewise God has a concern and compassion for a lost world.

He reveals himself to a lost world as a God who is full of grace, as a God who is full of mercy, as a God who is compassionate.

Despite how deep we may be in sin or how far back slidden we have gone, however unfaithful we have been, he stands ready to forgive and he stands ready to receive any person who will repent.

repent. The Bible also teaches us that we should follow Jesus as our great example. John wrote in his first letter in chapter 3, verse 3, hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

But whoso hath this was good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his spowls of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

[27 : 48] My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him. As believers, we are to strive to be like Jesus, full of grace, full of mercy, and full of compassion towards the needs of others.

Paul wrote in Colossians chapter 3, put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another.

If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

In our story, we are told when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck.

And kissed him. Now in the ancient world of the east, it was considered to be very undignified for a man, especially one who had become elderly, to run.

[29 : 07] Aristotle writes that great men never run in public. And the word that we have here for run was usually a word that was reserved for those who to place in a running race.

So why are we told that the father ran to meet his son? Well, Jewish scholars tell us that among the Jewish community there was a custom which developed that was called Kesa.

Kesa. It was Kesa ceremony, or simply the cutting off ceremony to which we referred earlier. Any Jewish boy who lost his inheritance among Gentiles faced this ceremony.

ceremony. He faced this ceremony if he dared to return to his home village. And the ceremony was quite simple. The villagers would fill a large pot with burnt nuts and burnt corn and they would break it in front of the guilty individual, thus symbolising the broken relationship that now existed between the community and this individual.

And while doing this they would shout out, so and so is cut off from his people. And from that point onwards the village would have nothing to do with that person.

[30 : 42] The villagers would separate him from his family, from his community, and from his faith. So when we are told that the father runs, it is because he wants to reach the son before the rest of the village can get to him and perform this cutting-off ceremony.

He is literally running to save him. Instead of subjecting him to the utter shame of this cutting-off ceremony, the father embraces him.

Now, this is an amazing scene that is set before us. As we noted, the father ran, and he ran in order to get to the son before the villagers, before the villagers would perform this cutting-off ceremony.

Now, in a sense, the father was double- shamed. Because, as we noted, an elderly person to run was looked upon, and that culture has been shameful.

But not only that, but in order to run, he would have to gather up his garment, and therefore his legs would be shone. He would be bare-legged running, and that also was seen in that culture as being shameful for any man to show his bare legs.

[32 : 24] It was shameful in that culture. So, the father was double- shamed. He was running, and he was showing his bare leg. And that was in order to save the son.

In order to save him from this cutting off ceremony, that which would separate him from his family, his community, and his faith.

What an amazing scene that is set before us. I think we can now have a better understanding of those words that the father saw him a great way of.

The father waged day after day, scanning the horizon, staring down the road which his son took the day he left home.

And he's doing so with concern and hope that one day his son would return. But the father also knew of the Kesa ceremony, and how the villagers would treat his son on his return.

[33 : 34] So he scans the horizon, and he sees a figure appearing, and he knew that it was his son. And the father, full of compassion towards the son, gathered up his robes and began to run towards the son.

He took the shame that the son deserved. He did not wait for the son to come to him. Instead, he took the initiative. He went to where the son was.

It mattered little to his father how undignified the scene might look. He loved his son, and he was ready to grant him mercy and forgiveness.

He was ready to be reconciled to his son before the villagers would even think of cutting him off. Such was his concern, such was his compassion, his grace, and his love.

love towards his son. Yeah, the Jewish law says the son should be cut off, but the father's grace comes to the fore.

[34 : 47] Here we can see a picture of law and grace. Both are here, but we can see in the action of the father that grace super abounded.

You know, when I was looking at this, that verse that we find in Paul's letter to the Romans came before my mind. The law entered that the offense might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, or grace super abounded.

And that's what we have here. Grace super abounding, sinned, the father running and embracing his son.

The villagers may have been totally surprised as the scene unfolded before their very eyes. An old man running through the streets to meet his rebellious son, and seeing him falling upon his son's neck and kissing him.

And the word kiss here means that he kept kissing him. The father did not speak to him with scorn. The father did not say to him, I told you so.

[35 : 59] The father did not humiliate the son. Instead, the father humbled himself. The father took the shame that belonged to the son.

He ran and railed on his neck and kissed him. And if it was a surprise for the villagers, what about the son?

What thoughts must have raced through his mind as he saw his father running towards him? He was probably quite scared. But almost before he knew what was happening, he found himself in his father's arms with his father repeatedly kissing him.

You know today that God the father is ready and willing to receive you. He speaks to us in the most gracious words in the overtures and offers of the gospel.

He is waiting, he is scanning, he is looking with concern for your soul in the hope that you will return before you are cut off. Such is his concern, such is his compassion, such is his grace and mercy towards you.

[37 : 21] The Lord is not out to humiliate you, but instead he humbled himself, a fact that we recently studied together.

He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Why? So that I and you could be reconciled to God, so that I and you could know peace with God, that we would be reconciled to him and that we would know his peace.

Because as sinners we are out of fellowship with God. The Bible says that we are the enemies of God. The Bible says that we are ungodly. But God humbled himself in the person of his son, Jesus Christ, to restore us back into fellowship, with himself, to reconcile to him and to be at peace with him.

The son must have been overwhelmed by his father's work. Charles Spurgeon preached many sermons on the prodigal son which can still be found in print or on various websites.

However, in March 1891 he preached a seven-point sermon on the text and kissed him. Illustrating what it means to be restored to God the father, he summarized, I'm going to summarize the seven points that Spurgeon gave, which I think is the best summary of what is taking place here outside the village.

[39 : 03] Seven-point sermon. Spurgeon said that the kisses revealed much love, much forgiveness, a full restoration, exceeding joy, overflowing comfort, strong assurance of salvation, and intimate communion with his beloved son.

Spurgeon goes on and says, it means much love truly felt, for God never gives an expression of love without feeling it in his infinite heart.

God will never give a Judas kiss and betray those whom he embraces. There is no hypocrisy with God. He never kisses those for whom he has no love.

When his father kissed him much, the poor prodigal knew if never before that his father loved him. He had no doubt about it. He had a clear perception of it.

No wonder then that the judge in the Song of Solomon pleads, let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine.

- [40 : 23] She wanted not merely one discovery and manifestation of his love and grace, but a repeated discovery, one after another. Nothing is sweeter or more precious to our souls than the kisses of mercy, love and grace.

A kiss from his mouth is evidence of complete pardon, complete forgiveness, complete acceptance. How does the church receive those kisses?

May I suggest that she receives those kisses in his surety engagements in the covenant of redemption? The covenant in which he became her surety, her mediator and her saviour.

He showed it in his assumption of human nature and time, and he gave a full display of it and laid down his life for her. In offering himself as a sacrifice for her sins, he loved her and died for her.

He shed his precious blood so that in that blood her sins would be washed away. And now he shows that he still loves her by appearing in the presence of God for her, acting as her advocate with the Father, and in preparing glory for her.

- [41 : 42] And he will come again to take her to himself that where he is, she may be also. To have more knowledge of his love that is without beginning, that is without change, that is without measure, that is without end.

We love him because he first loved us. That is a true testimony of every true believer. His love for us preceded our love for him.

His love for us causes our love for him. may I suggest that the church knows his kisses when she makes a fresh discovery of it and the various effects of his love and all the blessings of grace that flow from it such as calling, justification, sanctification, adoption, and ultimately glorification.

All these blessings flow from this muchless and boundless love of Christ. And may I suggest that the church makes a discovery of it and that she finds it to be immeasurable and inconceivable.

It passes the perfect knowledge, it passes the perfect knowledge of man and angels. A love that has heights, a love that has depths, a love that has lengths, and a love that has breadth.

- [43 : 03] Amazing love. Well, as the father kissed him, the son tried to speak out his rehearsed speech.

father, father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and I'm no more worthy to be called thy son. But then the father gives him another kiss.

You can almost hear the son saying, father, what about the past? Oh, the past, if only I could obliterate it, those wasted years, the manner in which I wasted the inheritance that you gave me.

But then the father would kiss him again, as if to say, son, never mind the past. I have forgotten it.

I forgive you. Today the past may be a burden to you. You see, the devil has a way of always bringing the past before you. But let's hear what the Lord says through Micah.

- [44 : 11] To all those who have trusted in Jesus Christ, in Micah chapter 7, the prophet wrote, Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?

He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and they will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea, into the depths of the atoning blood of his Son, Jesus Christ.

The Lord says by his servant Jeremiah chapter 50, In those days and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

But then we can almost hear the Son say, but what about the present? Look at my clothes, they are filthy rags, the husks from the pigsty are still hanging on to them, and the father would kiss him again, and he would say, I am content to have you as you are, filthy rags and all, because I love you, I am willing to take your rags and your husks and all, and this is always the way that the Lord wants me and you, just as we are.

Then the son might say, oh father, what about the future? Then the father would give him another kiss, and he would say, son, I will take care of the future.

[46 : 04] We may ask how is it possible to stop from being anxious regarding the future. Well, on another occasion, Jesus said, take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor yet of your body, what you shall put on, is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment.

Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

In other words, your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Paul wrote, but my God shall supply all your need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

You see, the Lord has given us the greatest gift of all. Writing to the church at Rome in chapter 8, Paul says, what shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? we notice here that the father did not say to the son, son, you smell.

[47 : 22] The father did not say, you need to make yourself more respectable. The father did not say, you must go and be washed first. No, instead, the father says to the servants, bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.

The returning son has nothing to give. He comes empty handed, and that is the way that we must come to Jesus, as it were, empty handed.

As the hymn writer puts it, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling, naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to thee for grace.

The son has nothing to give his father but his need, and this is the way that I and you must come to Jesus, bring nothing but our need for his grace.

The significance of the gifts that the father gave the son speaks of sonship. The son stands before the father in his rags, but the father called for the best robe to put on him, and what the father was doing was placing the mantle on his son.

[48 : 39] While the son wore the rags with which he came to the father, he would still be looked upon as a slave. But having put on him the finest robe from his father's house, he would be recognized as a son.

So it is with us when we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, we are given the best robe from the father's house. We are robed with the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, the garment of our salvation, no longer looked upon as a slave to sin, but reckoned before God as his own son, wearing the robe of Christ's righteousness.

But he was not simply given a robe, but a ring. Now this would have been a signet ring, and for the son that meant an emblem of authority, the family signet ring, meant for him an emblem of authority and restoration of his inheritance.

And we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit who serves as the signet ring of God for his people. As Paul writes to the Ephesians chapter 1, he says, in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, and to the praise of his glory, the signet ring of the family.

Along with the robe and ring, he was given shoes for his feet. Servants did not wear shoes in those days, but sons did wear shoes as those who belonged to the household.

[50 : 35] this boy was not received as a servant, but he was received as a son. Paul says in Ephesians chapter 6, that our feet are shod with the gospel of peace.

Then the father says, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found, and they began to be merry.

The fatted calf, which the family would have been saving for a special occasion, was now killed. This was the feast of fellowship.

And now it is something perhaps you can reflect upon yourself, as those who were gathered to this feast. You know, earlier on we spoke of the cutting off ceremony, the villagers wanted to cut him off, but where do we find them now?

Well, they are invited to this feast, this feast that the father has set up for his son, the son that was lost. And there are not in that, but time is going, and we cannot say any more about it just now.

[51 : 45] Again, we have the theme of joy, just as he saw in the case of the lost, sheep. The shepherd called together his friends and neighbours, and in the case of the lost coin, the woman called her neighbours together.

So in this case, others are called to share in a joy that chiefly belongs to the father. For this, my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found, and it began to be merry.

But my dear friend, what an encouragement there is here for the sinner today. The joy of the Lord should give every sinner confidence in coming to God by Jesus Christ.

Like the son in the story, you might be saying today, I have sinned. But listen to what the father is saying, listen to what the Lord is saying, I forgive you freely.

the father rejoices, the son rejoices, and the servant rejoices, and they began to be very merry.

[52 : 54] Well, do you know the joy of the Lord in your heart today? The Bible tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. Do you know that joy?

The son here came to know that joy. The joy of the Lord. The joy of reconciliation. The joy of forgiveness.

The joy of sharing the blessings of the father's house. Do you know anything of that today? And if you do, then you cannot but break forth in your heart with praise to God for his compassion, for his love, for his mercy.

And if you don't, my friend, today is the day. Today is the day that the father who is so concerned for your soul is calling you and saying, come unto me and I will forgive you and I will give you joy that fadeth not away, that does not pass, but that increases more and more and more, even in the glorified state.

It will increase more and more and more as the believer comes to know God more and more and more.

[54 : 20] May the Lord bless our thoughts, let us pray. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we give thanks for the revelation that thou hast given of thyself God, as a God who cares and as a God who is concerned for the souls of sinners, as a God who is concerned for the lost world.

And we give thee thanks for the provision that thou hast made in and through thy Son, so that sinners such as we are can draw near to thee and receive reconciliation and receive forgiveness.

May we be assured today, O Lord, within our hearts, through thy spirit, that we are of that number who knows the joy of the Lord, who knows the joy of reconciliation and forgiveness, who knows the joy of the blessings that belong to the Father's house.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would watch over us and that thou would keep us from the evil that is in the world, that thou would keep us, O Lord, in the paths that brings glory and honour to thy name.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.