

The Elder Brother

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[0 : 00] Go ahead and turn to Luke chapter 15, if you're not already there. I think this is a good picture of the older brother with his arms crossed. Last time we talked about the younger brother, and for sake of time we'll just do a really quick recap.

But the younger brother went and sowed his wild oats, and the Bible says that he'd wasted his substance of riotous living, and he ends up needing money, needing food, and he gets a job working with pigs, and he finds himself thinking, you know, my dad has servants that are treated better than this.

I just need to go make things right with dad, and at least I can have a job as a servant. And, of course, we know when he comes back, his dad says, forget the servant stuff.

You're my son. We've reconciled, and he has a place for him. And during this time, this all happened. The older brother is out in the field, and so the dad said, you know, we're going to have a party.

We dressed the younger son up with the robe. We gave him the ring. We put on the shoes and killed a fatted calf. We're going to have a party. And so this is going on, and this kind of starts us off here in verse 25 of our text.

[1 : 20] The older brother is starting to come up from the field. So verse 25, it says, Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

And he was angry and would not go in. Therefore came his father out and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee.

Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment. And yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad. For this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.

[2 : 25] Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you, Lord, for the stay you've given us. Lord, I thank you for the opportunity that we have to meet together. Lord, I just ask that you would be with the prayer requests that were mentioned earlier.

Lord, I pray that you especially be with the Manson family and just all that's going on. Lord, I ask that you would just speak to our hearts tonight and just ask that you would help us be in our place on Sunday and those that aren't here, that they'd be there as well.

I thank you and I love you in Jesus' name. Amen. So, just real quickly here, I noticed kind of three things about this older son.

Firstly, the vision, his vision was lost. He did not share the same vision that his father had. The father had been watching for his son's return and showed forgiveness when the younger son came.

The older brother, he'd been working in the field and all he showed was frustration. You would think that the older brother would have been excited to see his younger brother return, and I would think for a couple different reasons.

[3 : 33] First off, he probably wouldn't have to do so much work by himself. He'd have the younger brother helping. Secondly, you would think that having your younger brother who had gone wayward come back, you'd think that that would be a time of rejoicing, but for this older brother, it wasn't.

He instead chose to focus on himself. I have a verse here in Psalm 86, verse 15.

It says, But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and in truth. One thing I mentioned as I was kind of setting up the first lesson on the younger brother is these two boys, these two young men at this time, they were grown up in a house where this kind of stuff, they probably knew Psalms and Proverbs.

They'd been taught these things. So this is something that would have been familiar with this older brother. He should have been showing this compassion, but he didn't. The older son, his relationship, it was all works-based.

You know, he says that he'd been working, he'd been doing all this stuff. He believes that he should have a party, not his undeserving brother. He didn't understand grace, and he had no room for forgiveness in his heart.

[4 : 56] We even see here, he went as far to disown his brother. In verse 30, he says, But as soon as this thy son was come, he didn't even say, When my brother came back, he said, Your son.

He's disowning him. He's so frustrated with his younger brother. He didn't show the same compassion that his father showed. He also, he didn't hear the same confession.

In verse 21 of our text, it says, And the son, this is talking about the younger son, said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

The older brother wasn't there when this happened. I think it's interesting that the older brother, he claims to know his younger brother's sins. Not once did the younger brother mention anything about harlots.

But in Proverbs chapter 29, verse 3, it says, Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father, but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance. Again, this is a verse, this type of stuff he would have been familiar with, so he probably is just assuming, hey, because he wasted his inheritance, this is what he wasted it on.

[6 : 10] A side note, I think this is probably indicative of what his true heart was if he had been in that situation, what he would have spent the money on. 1 Samuel chapter 16, verse 7 says, For the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

We see here that the older brother, he had only developed a selfish attitude, but also a self-righteous one. He had a preconceived idea of what the younger son had spent his inheritance on, and he believes that the younger son is undeserving of his father's favor.

I can tell you, I'm first off an older son, but also, we'll get a little into this later, with this parable, the audience that it's geared toward is the Pharisees, and I'm telling you, I've been raised in church long enough where I was never like the younger son.

I didn't go out and sow my wild oats and have the big dramatic comeback. I was the older brother. I stayed. I did my duty, and I can tell you, it did frustrate me when I saw people who did leave.

I've been old enough. I've seen it so many times. It's usually teens. About the time that they get a job on their own is usually about the time that they split and want to do their own thing, and then sometimes, they would make things right, and they'd come back, and the whole church would be excited, which they should be, and they're congratulating, and they're excited.

[7 : 41] They're, oh, we've been praying for you. And I remember, I'm just being very transparent with you. I remember sitting in the pew, burning up, because it was like, man, they're getting a lot of attention, but they were the ones that went out and did things.

I've been here this whole time. I remember having to pick up slack because people left, and so I can totally understand where this older brother's coming from. He's not having it.

Frankly, he thinks his dad is stingy. He thinks his dad is unfair, and God is not either one of those things. So he didn't hear the same confession. He also, in verse 23, 27, we see he didn't sing at the same celebration.

The father is merry and glad. This should be an exciting time. The younger son came back. The Bible says he came to himself. He realized he had done wrong, and he went to the right person, who was the father.

He said the right things. I'm sorry. I've sinned. He made things right. This should be a joyous occasion. But the older brother was angry, and the Bible says he would not even go in. He had bought into his own self-righteousness and believed that he had not transgressed any commandment.

[8 : 56] Matthew 6, verse 1, says, Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven.

Again, this older son, his whole relationship with his father, it was works-based. He was doing these things to get notice of his dad. The Pharisees, they would give their alms.

We have that tithe and offering area back there. And can you imagine if someone was like, everybody, I need everybody's attention here real quick. Just want to let you know, the Mansons are needing some money, and I'm going to give them \$10,000.

So I just want you all to know, if you want to give more than that, that's great, but I'm giving the \$10,000. You know, that would be giving your alms, making applause to let everybody know.

And that's what these Pharisees would do. They'd want everybody to know. And God says, well, then that's your reward. There's nothing up in heaven for that. That's what this older son, he believed his works are what gained favor.

[10 : 04] God isn't concerned about our works. It doesn't really matter. The Bible says our good works are as filthy rags. God is more interested in just faithfulness.

He didn't even get a goat at his party, is what he's whining about when he talks to his dad there. And there in verse 29, he says, yet never thou gavest me a kid.

You know, you killed the fatted calf for the younger son, but I don't even get a goat for my party. But the rebel, he gets a party with the fatted calf. Everyone gets to come and celebrate.

He believes, again, his father's being stingy and unfair. Earlier in this chapter, in verse 10 of chapter 15, it says, Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

We know in this chapter, there's a parable about a lost sheep. There's a parable about a lost coin. And now there's this parable about this lost son who'd gone wayward.

[11 : 11] This should be a time of rejoicing. Even the angels rejoice with one sinner that repents. But then the older brother, we see him sulking outside. He doesn't even want to go in. It reminds me of Jonah.

You know, Jonah was given the opportunity to go and preach to Nineveh, which really should have been a great opportunity. The Bible says that the Ninevites turned around, and you would think that'd be something that Jonah would be excited for.

And we see him just sulking. He's angry. He believes that God should have just destroyed them, something. Just an interesting thought. If you look at the book of Jonah, it ends with a question mark.

That's how Jonah ends. And I think that's interesting about Jonah, because whatever did happen to him, you know, he really could have gone down as one of the greatest missionaries in the Bible.

But what do we remember at the end of his life? He was upset because of the Lord's work. I was the same way. You could say I was a Jonah. It's not for us to judge things, but I've been around long enough when I'd see someone come back.

[12 : 23] My thought, initial thought, should have been, praise the Lord, they're back. But this is what my thought was. How long are they going to stick around? Some of you are nodding your head, because you know, that's not necessarily a bad attitude.

That's just experience. But it should be our first, is praise the Lord that they're here. We're glad. So we've all, at one time, have been a Jonah. Secondly, not only was his vision lost, his viewpoint was lacking.

We see here, and let's start reading verse 28 of our text. And he was angry and would not go in. Therefore came his father out and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.

And yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

He was enraged by these circumstances. But one thing we learn as we read scripture, we are able to live above circumstances.

[13 : 30] One of my favorite instances of that is Joseph. Here he is. He's just supposed to go and tell his dad the report about his brothers. And one brother says, oh, here he comes.

Let's kill him. And the oldest one is like, hold on, guys. Let's at least make a profit, right? We can sell him. They sell him into slavery. They think that they're rid of him.

The Bible says that he gets to Potiphar again. He's kind of sold again. And he ends up having an encounter with Potiphar's wife. She lies about him. He's thrown into prison.

And you would think, this is rough, you know. But he was able to live above circumstances. You didn't see him complaining. He was just, whatever I need to do. He was really good at his job in the prison.

And the Lord exalted him for that. We can live above circumstances. He was exaggerating the truth in verse 29. I kind of touched on this earlier. He claims that he had never transgressed.

[14 : 30] You know, pride is a slippery slope. And if you don't want to slip, stay away from slippery places. Proverbs 16, 5 says, Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.

Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished. You know, this older brother is real bent out of shape. And the fact that he has to try and...

I believe he had to pick up extra slack because of his brother's absence. Frankly, seeing the dad watching for the younger son, that could have been frustrating. Thinking, I should have a little more attention because I'm here.

You know, I don't know everything that was going on in the heart of this older son. I also know he was being egotistical there in verse 29. It's all... He had an eye problem.

Colossians 3, 23 says, And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men. He was so wrapped up in himself. And he was so blinded by his self-righteousness.

[15 : 31] Frankly, his bitterness had crept in there. We don't know how long the younger son was gone, but this bitterness has definitely took a hold in the older brother's heart.

And he's upset. He's really angry about the situation that he's found his dad and his brother in.

And we see here he also entertained his imagination. Again, he said that his younger brother had wasted his substance with harlots.

I remember one of the first verses I learned as a kid. I'd get scared at night or something. And I'd go running to my mom, my dad.

Because my dad didn't. He was just like, go to bed. But my mom, she would say, Here's a verse. And it was 2 Corinthians 10, 5. So she said, When you would get scared and your mind would, you know, your imagination would run out of control and you think that there's a scary monster or something in your room, you need to bring those thoughts to the obedience of Christ.

[16 : 51] You need to be captive. And I remember even to this day, if there's times where I feel afraid, that's a verse that runs to my head now.

Side note, it's just interesting. Your fears change as you get older because no longer am I afraid of the boogeyman. But there's other things.

You know, sometimes financial stress bears on you. You know, stuff like that. And sometimes doing the tree work that we do. You know, there's just stuff.

It's like, ooh, it's a little hairy, but give it to the Lord. And that's what this older brother, he should have trusted his father's experience. He should have taken notes of his father's love, the grace and mercy that he was showing to the younger son.

Lastly here, we see that number three, that the older brother's, his value was learned. First off, his faithfulness was acknowledged. Verse 31 says, And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

[18 : 00] It's very important to know that God sees the work that we do, even when other people don't. I can tell you being a teen, when I'd see everybody else run off, this isn't tooting my horn.

I'm just telling you. I was 16, and I was in charge of our little bus ministry. We had a van that we drove around, and I'd pick people up. I'd sing in the choir.

I was an usher. I'd teach the kids' classes. You know, I was busy doing things, and a lot of times, you wouldn't have anybody to do that with if that were your peers.

And I remember that would upset me. It would frustrate me. And then they would come back, and it seemed like people would just not give it up. They're just like, oh, we're so thankful that, you know, this person is back, and we've been praying for them.

Oh, God has answered our prayers. And I would stew. I'd sit there, and they would just gnaw at me because I had done what was right. I'd done my duty. And we have to realize serving the Lord isn't, it shouldn't be a duty.

[19 : 14] It should be something that we want to do. It shouldn't be a task, a chore. But frankly, you get jaded. You're serving, and there's sometimes, if you're not careful, if you're not putting on that armor of God, man, that's when those darks come flying from Satan, and he can see that complacency.

And then you start thinking, well, no one's even noticed that I've done this. Well, I guess I won't do it anymore. And then they'll notice, that's the wrong attitude. You know, we should be one to serve Lord regardless.

Sometimes I think to myself, regardless of if anybody else was here, what would I do? His faithfulness was acknowledged. Also, in verse 31, we see his inheritance was promised. He says, all that I have is thine.

Man, that's awesome. You know, the younger brother, he had wasted his substance. It's gone. You can't get that back. So everything now that the father has, that's the older sons.

It's his. He doesn't have to compete with his brother anymore. It's all his. First off, that's a huge blessing. But what a responsibility. You know, God has given us a responsibility to take care of what's his.

[20 : 31] I think we need to be reflections of Christ and show the grace and mercy that he shows us to others, whether or not we like them. Thirdly here, we see his pride was checked.

Verse 32, you know, the older son, he's pouting. The father comes out and it says, it was meat that we should make merry. That means we're going to have a party because that's the right thing to do.

Your brother's back. It's a necessity. He needed to accept his younger brother as a part of the family. You know, it's interesting to me so many times, just like the older brother, we don't take advantage of what God has because the older brother could have gone to his dad at any time and said, hey, can I have a party?

This father loved his son. He would have said, yeah. But so many times we let that bitterness get into our heart and we like to think, oh, you know, the father's unfair.

God is just. And there's times where things happen in your life and it's easy to say, why? Why did you let that happen to me?

[21 : 48] But God is just. We need to take advantage of his blessings and resources. Grace and mercy was necessary and appropriate and it was meet that we should make merry and be glad.

Romans 9, chapter 16, so then, if it is not of him that willeth nor him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. That's an attribute that this father had.

This parable was kind of geared toward the Pharisees. I believe we see that in our text verse there. In the beginning, it says in verse 1, then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

And then verse 2, and the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them. I mean, you can put the younger brother and the older brother right in that spot. The younger brother would represent the sinners and the older brother the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were likened to that older brother on the outside. They lived lives that were pious. They lived lives that seemingly on the outside were holy.

[23 : 00] But inside, the Bible says that it was just iniquity and hypocrisy. In Matthew chapter 23, starting in verse 25, it says, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead man's bones and all uncleanness.

It says, Verse 28, Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. They were focused on performance and appearance, and they couldn't understand how God would accept sinners into his family.

I've been around Christians who are only focused on the outward, only focused on performance and appearance, and frankly, my observation is that they've squandered what the Lord has given them.

They've had people who are willing, who have a servant's heart, and they haven't used that individual because they don't look the right way or they don't say the right things. And I think that's a shame.

[24 : 24] That'd be like the older brother just wasting the substance that he's now been given. God has given us an opportunity and we need to not squander it. I believe that this parable is one of the Bible's greatest pictures of God's grace.

Romans 3.23 says, For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. I would say that all of us in our own time have probably been a prodigal son.

Say we've all had our time wallowing in the pit of sin with those pigs. We've been guilty of squandering God's blessings and resources.

but God can forgive by grace through faith. Ephesians chapter 2 says in verse 8, For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. I'm thankful that it's not based on works because I look at my own life and I think, man, there's been people who've done much more than I have that I ever could and when we get to heaven we don't have to try and boast of ourselves.

[25 : 37] When we're in heaven we just get to thank God for what he's done in our lives and how good he's been to us and that's something I know I'm looking forward to. So, I appreciate your attentiveness and we'll go ahead and have a closing prayer and then I'll just turn it over.

Thank you.