

The Prodigal Son

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Date: 16 February 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everybody. I don't have any slides or anything for you today, but we can do without that. Go ahead and turn your Bibles over to Luke chapter 15. Many of us are familiar with this passage of the prodigal son. We're going to focus on him mainly, not the older brother. One thing I learned in school is when you're studying scripture, they taught us to look for the five C's is what they called it. And that's something that helps me, and I wanted to share it with you, maybe to be a blessing. But when you're looking through scripture, studying scripture, the first C that you want to look for and study out are the characters. Helps to know who has a part in that account. And obviously we have a father here with two sons. It's important to know the culture of the time. Sometimes there's things in the Bible that doesn't make sense to us in our American culture of today. And so it's interesting to look that up. It gives us a greater appreciation of what God has in his scripture. And then the content, knowing what's in the chapter that you're studying.

Luke chapter 15, there's three parables in the content here. And verses one through seven, we see a sheep gets lost by its own foolishness. And then that's a one in 100 kind of ratio.

And then verses eight through 10, we see a coin that was lost at no fault of its own. And that's a one to 10 ratio. And then the area that we'll be studying, verses 11 through 32, we see a son that was lost by deliberate disobedience. And it's interesting that God searches for all, and he rejoices, once they are found. The context, it's important to know that we're talking about a lost son, but we need to be very careful with our language because he's not unsaved. He's just separated. He rejected the father and he's gone his own way. So this verse in the context, this account is not about salvation, but reconciliation. And then the last C, the most important one, is finding Christ.

And obviously, in the scripture, the father represents Christ. So if you'll stand with me, we'll go ahead and just read Luke chapter 15, starting in verse 11. I know many of us are familiar with this passage. It says, And he said, A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth 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.

[2 : 5 9] 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 hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I 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.

Make me as one of thy hired servants. 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 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. Dear Holy Father, I just thank you, God, for this day you've given us. Thank you for the opportunity that we have to come to your house and worship together. Lord, I just ask that you would let our hearts be open to your word. Just pray that you would speak to us despite my shortcomings, Lord. I thank you for your goodness to us, and I ask that you would bless this time. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. You can go ahead and be seated.

We're just going to jump right in. Some of the culture of this time is this inheritance that the younger son asks for. This is a reasonable request, to ask for the inheritance. But the culture, you didn't receive that inheritance until after the father was dead. So he was basically saying, I wish you were dead. Give me my money. In this time, I really want to get through a lot of this, so we won't slow down for some of these verses. But in Deuteronomy chapter 21, it kind of explains how the inheritance would be broken up. The elder son, he would be getting two-thirds of what the father has, and then this younger son would be only getting a third of that. One thing with this family, even though it's a terrible, I believe that this was, as we see, a godly father. I believe that he had taught his children the right way. I believe that they had times of devotions, and the father was devout, and so his sons, they knew these things. But sometimes we can go wayward. We shouldn't be surprised by the selfish behavior. It breeds covetousness. And we live in the last days. Second Timothy chapter 3 talks about some of those sins. Covetousness, it talks about, it likens it onto idolatry in Colossians chapter 3 verse 5. One thing I noticed as I was studying for this, and then as you just see in the world that we live in, Christians who are wrapped up in themselves are ugly packages.

But it shows the graciousness of the father that he grants the request to his younger son. He grants that request, and if you turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 21, Deuteronomy chapter 21 and verse 17, it says, But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he hath, for he is the beginning of his strength. The right of his firstborn is his.

[6 : 57] Then Deuteronomy, that's kind of the inheritance. Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 19. I think this is the verse I wanted. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. Just like the father, as a picture of Christ, gave to the younger son a choice, God gives to the sinner a choice. We have two choices. You can receive God, or you can reject God. And this is a picture of the son. Again, this is not salvation, but reconciliation. He's choosing to reject God. He's choosing to live in his flesh, go his own way. We'll see in our text here in verse 13, just revelry.

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 righteous living. It's important to note that the younger son removed himself from the presence of the father. And then he tragically wasted his inheritance that the father had invested time and effort into. He wasted it. Galatians chapter 6. We'll be looking at a lot of verses, because frankly, I know you don't care what I have to say. It's what scripture says that's important. Galatians chapter 6, verse 7. Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. So many times I think we forget about that law of sowing and reaping. We see, and if you're familiar with this passage, you know that the father forgives the younger son, but that doesn't execute that law of sowing and reaping. Whatever you sow, you will reap, regardless if God forgives you or not. It's just, it will happen. It's clear by the younger son's actions that he had already made this long journey in his heart ever before he took his first steps from his father. The Bible says in Matthew chapter 6, verse 21, for where your heart, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Obviously, they don't have magazines or TVs back in this time, but that's what that younger son, he had already looked at that far country. He desired to be there regardless of the cost, regardless of the hours that his father put into having an inheritance.

That inheritance was supposed to sustain him when the father was gone, and he wasted it. In our text, verses 14 and 15, we see the reaping of his foolish choice. Not only does the younger son have empty pockets, but probably more importantly, he has an empty stomach. He's hungry. 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 10 says, for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. He's starting to regret the decision of leaving his dad behind. Leviticus 11, verse 7, it kind of tells us that pigs are unclean animals. For this young Jew to be feeding swine and even really be around them, it was insulting. It was something that was really beneath a Jew. And here he is feeding pigs.

The Bible says that nobody gave to him. I can't imagine being that hungry to be jealous of what a pig is eating. But that's what happens when we get so far into sin. It makes us do things that we wouldn't normally do. We see verse 16 says in our text, and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.

[11 : 01] Sin damns us, it degrades us, it demeans us, and eventually it can destroy us. Turn with me, if you will, to Proverbs chapter 19, verse 4. I believe this is probably stuff that these boys would have known, but it says, wealth maketh many friends, but the poor is separated from his neighbor. This is a perfect example of where this kid is. I'm sure he had a bunch of pals hanging around him when he had the money, when things were going good before the famine hit.

I bet he was a pretty popular person. But now the money's gone, the food is gone. The Bible says that no man gives unto him. Turn with me to Proverbs chapter 1. I remember listening, it's an old song, but the chorus goes, nobody knows you when you're down and out. Proverbs chapter 1, verse 10.

My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. I'm sure that's something that his father had told him. When people are trying to tempt you to do the wrong thing, tell him no. And he didn't listen. He didn't heed that advice. Turn with me to Proverbs chapter 13, verse 20. It says, he that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. I would say that that's where he's at right now. I'm sitting in a pig pen. I have no doubt in my mind that he's frustrated. He probably just wrestled a pig, and he's dirty, he's grody, and he's hungry. He's defeated. Verse 17 of our text, we see reflection. It says, and when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I literally think he's sitting in the mud like, my dad has servants that work for him, and they don't even have to go through this.

I need to get up and go home. Sin is likened to moral insanity. Keep trying to do the same things, and you get these poor results. My heart breaks for people like this, people who have been raised to no good. Maybe they're raised in the same household, and they choose to reject what you were taught.

And you see this life of heartache. I have a cousin. We used to be pretty close. I'd call her at least once a week when I was in college. And even though she wasn't raised in a Christian home, there was a time where she went to church with us, and it got to the point where she was getting older, and she was starting to get attention from boys, and she was starting to give attention.

[13 : 53] And she would call me and ask me advice, and I'd tell her, this is what you need to do. She wouldn't do it. She would have problems. She would call me upset, tell me what her problems were, and I'd tell her, well, this is what you need to do. She would do the opposite, and this went back and forth, back and forth. And things got pretty bad, and I finally had to tell her, quit calling me, because you don't listen to any of my advice. And then you whine, and you complain about the situation that you're in, and I just can't take it. I don't want to hear it, because you're not listening. And I can see, I'm sure this younger son is having some reflection, having some time. The Bible says he comes to himself. Things are getting pretty clear. Sometimes God has to break us before we can listen. I remember my dad told me, I was set in my younger years to be in the military, and he said, they're going to break you, because they need you to be someone that they can form. Well, that's how God is with us.

I think about Jonah. I think most of us would say to ourselves, we wouldn't never find ourselves in the belly of a fish. Jonah found himself there. He had to be broken. There's so many times in Scripture, we see Moses on the backside of the desert. We have to be broken, broken down, so there's only thing we can do is look up to God. In verse 18, we see the resolution. He says, I will arise and go to my father.

It's probably the first smart thing this guy has done since we've been reading. I will arise and go to my father. It's a pretty solid plan, because he's got the right person, his father. He has the right thing to say. I have sinned. With that comes repentance, regret, realization, and it's going to be all wrapped up in this resolution. First John 1.9 says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Again, that's not salvation, but reconciliation. It's us who separate ourselves from God. He's always there. He's fixed, and we're the ones that leave. I think this instance, this parable, is encouraging, because there could be some here who have children who've kind of gone wayward, and the Bible tells us that if we train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it. That doesn't mean he'll never leave, but he'll come back, and that's an example of this younger son. He had his time. Sometimes that happens, but he's coming back. We should not give up on those individuals. We should pray for them and ask God to soften their heart. Verse 20, let's see. 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.

Now, I mentioned earlier those five C's, and one of those was culture. The culture of the time, someone like this father, it would be below him to run. That's why he has servants. They do all of his running around, running his errands. This father would not do that. It was kind of undignified, maybe a little shameful, but we see that he runs, and I kind of studied into that a little bit.

Why did the father run? Obviously, I believe he had already forgiven his son, and he was just out there waiting to see if his prayers were being answered, but I came across this ceremony that the Jews would do, you'll have to forgive me if I don't pronounce it correctly, Keziah or Kezaza.

[17 : 37] And when in the village, if the Lord or the master had been disgraced, the villagers would run out and they would beat this person. It was kind of a shameful thing, and then they would kick him out and be like, you're not a part of us. Get out of here. I think some of that, if they were grown up with that ritual, the father was running past everybody else to say, hey, I've forgiven him. There's no need for this.

The Bible says that he kissed him. Again, with culture back in this time, a kiss in the east was kind of a token of two things. First off, there was peace. You can see even in Old Testament scripture, kings kissing one another, letting them know, we're not at war, we're together. Peace with this case resulted in forgiveness. Forgiveness is to bind together that which has been separated.

Isaiah chapter 59, verse 2, says, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. That's all on us. When we sin, we're the one that separates ourselves from God, not God leaving us. A lot of times we, in our sin, in that moral insanity, while we're in the mire of the pig pen, we think, God left me here. No.

You need to have a moment where you come to yourself and realize, I was the one that rejected God. I was the one that went my own way, and things aren't gone the way that I thought they would. I need to get right and go back to God. Not only was it a token of peace, but it was also a pledge that there had been a permanent change between the parties involved. Between God and man, that pledge was the cross. Turn with me, if you will, to Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1, and we'll look at verses 20 and 22. Starting verse 20.

And having made peace through the blood of his cross by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven, and you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of the flesh through death to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight. That's what God did on the cross for us. It's humbling, really, that God would lower himself to someone like me. We see this reception here in verse 21. It's exciting. Verse 21, it says, 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. Romans chapter 8, verse 1 is very familiar. It says, There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Then Ephesians chapter 2, starting in verse 1.

[20 : 45] And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past he walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace, you are saved.

There was a time, if you are a Christian, there was a time where you were dead in your sins, and Christ forgave you. He brought you into his family. Again, I have to make it clear, in this context, we're talking about reconciliation, not salvation. But now he comes to the Father, he's been forgiven, and he's a member of the family. Again, if we remember, the younger son's plan was just to be a hired servant. He was good with that. And the father said, no, you're my son.

You've come back. I've forgiven you. And so what does he do? We see restoration in verse 22. 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. This father had to put a robe on him. He came back in rags, I bet.

And God cannot be concerned with our filthy rags. The Bible says in Isaiah 64 verse 6, that all the good that we can do in ourselves, they're as filthy rags to God. Those filthy rags that are mentioned are the rags that they would put on someone who has leprosy. Just think about these open sores and oozing wounds. If someone would bring something like that in here today, we would be repulsed by it. We'd say, get it out of here. That belongs in the trash.

That's what our good deeds are to God. It's nothing impressive. He had to put a robe of righteousness on this son. Turn with me to Romans chapter 3 verse 22. Romans chapter 3 verse 22. It says, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe, for there is no difference. We cannot come into the father's presence or be acceptable in his sight without that robe. Then we also see the ring. It says, bring forth the best robe and put it on him and put forth a ring on his hand. The ring is a picture of authority. Many times the father would be busy maybe doing something and he would send one of his kids with a ring that would say, hey, my father's not here to transact this business deal maybe, but I have his ring. I'm his walking authority. And that's what we have in Christ. This is a picture of sonship. The ring is an unbroken symbol of an unbroken relationship, just like when you were born into God's family. Turn with me, if you will, to John chapter 10. John chapter 10, we'll start in verse 27. It says, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish.

[24 : 02] Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my father's hand. That's encouraging to know that once we're saved, we're always saved. The Bible says we're placed in his hand. No power, no man, nothing can take us out of that. The Bible says that Jesus Christ died on the cross one time. I think it's foolish and I understand people aren't believing correctly, but think that they can lose their salvation.

That would literally mean Jesus would have to come and die on the cross every single time we sin. It doesn't make any sense to me. Jesus died one time. Let's look at Ephesians chapter 1, start in verse 13. 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 unto the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory. Seal means guarantee of deliverance. Earnest means a down payment with more to follow. As sons of God, there's so much more that we have than this life can offer us.

Then lastly, in verse 22, it said put a robe on him, put a ring on him. Now it says put shoes on his feet. He came back without shoes. Shoes is significant of freedom. In the service to himself and the world, the son lost all including his shoes, but now he has them. And as Christians, we know that shoes are important, not only for just walking through this life, but we also see warfare. So we'll start with warfare. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5. It's a pretty familiar passage. Chapter 5, verse 15.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. So walking. But then in warfare, chapter 6, verse 15 says, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Turn back to Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10. The Bible says, for we are as workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

[26 : 28] Again, walking. It's interesting to note this word workmanship is literally masterpiece. When God is working on us, he's working a masterpiece. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 1 says, I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. Are shoes walking for life? I think we'll pass it for now, but Psalm chapter 23 mentions the shoes for walking for when we are that time of death. In our text here, we see the restoration. But then beyond that in verses 23 and 24, we see rejoicing. 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 represents the very best as Christ. Just like the calf was slain for the son, Christ was slain for us. What a satisfaction we have when we are restored to fellowship with the Father. And there's two things here I'd like to just focus on quickly.

First off, the food. Our food is this book. Sometimes I hear people say, I keep praying to God and he never answers any of my prayers. And it's like, well, that's where you're failing. Because when we talk to God, that's our prayers. But how God answers and talks to us is through his word.

And so many times we are selfish. We pray, we treat God as maybe a genie in a bottle. And we pray that he'll give, give, give. And we need to be searching out and seeing what he has for us through his word.

Jeremiah 15, 16 says, Thy words were found, and I did eat them. And thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart, for I'm called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts. We should be reading, memorizing, and meditating upon his word. Reading is kind of what we've been doing right now. Just we see the scripture, we read it. Memorizing, we even have the children doing that. Take that scripture and memorize it so you can say it. But then meditating is even more intense than both of those. It's taking what you've learned and applying that to your heart and to your life and live out what you read through scripture. Not only do we see the food, but we see the fellowship to be merry. Again, 1 John 1, 9 says, if we are faithful, or if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It has to be us that takes that initiative.

Just like the younger son, we have to come to ourself. We have to be the ones to go to God because we were the ones that left.