

The Prodigal Son

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again just for a little to the chapter we read, Luke chapter 15. And just considering the parable of the prodigal son from the beginning to the end.

And he said there was a man who had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me. And he divided his property between them. Now, if there is one message that Luke highlights over and over again in the life of Jesus, it is God's willingness to receive sinners.

And he shows that the Lord does not receive sinners reluctantly, but that he receives sinners willingly. And that's something we must never, ever lose sight of.

Indeed, God is the one who searches out the sinner. God is the one who draws the sinner to himself. And if you're here tonight as a believer, it is because the Lord searched you out.

[1 : 09] The Lord is the one who drew you to himself. And that is the most extraordinary thing that has ever happened in your experience, or ever will.

That the Lord will seek you out and draw you to himself. And again, we see, and last week we were looking at the lost sheep and the lost coin.

And we saw the reaction in heaven to a soul coming to Christ. And we see that there is, so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.

And last week we were posing the question, has there been rejoicing in heaven over you?

Remember this, that this is where the rejoicing is in heaven.

We're not told about this rejoicing about other things. And far too often we give too much emphasis to other things. It is the saving of a soul.

[2 : 16] And I cannot emphasize often enough or sufficiently the importance of having an evangelistic heart. Of having a desire that people will be saved.

This is why Jesus came into the world. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. And we must never ever tire of hearing the good news of Jesus Christ.

We must never tire of sitting under the gospel or tire of hearing evangelistic services. Because this, the result of this, and when a soul, one soul, comes to salvation, there is joy in heaven over that fact.

Let us never lose sight of that. Let us never tire of hearing that or understanding it. And that is why, remember last week we were looking at the effort, the urgency, the heart that goes in to these things.

How do we react when we hear of somebody being saved? You know, Jesus' stories are often kind of open-ended.

[3 : 25] And Jesus deliberately did this. Because he wanted to engage his hearers. So that they didn't just leave the story, as it were, there. But that the story had to be brought home to themselves.

We are all challenged by every parable of Jesus Christ. By all his teaching, all his truth. But the parables were deliberately set out to engage the hearers.

So that we are challenged by them and say to ourselves, What's my attitude? What's my response? Because it's all very well looking at the Pharisees.

And looking at the disciples. And looking at those who heard these parables. They are for us as well. So we have to ask ourselves, How do I react? How do I respond to these things?

Now, as we saw in these three stories, Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son, that these stories came, we saw that last week, In response to the Pharisees and the scribes complaining

That Jesus was receiving sinners and eating with them.

[4 : 37] Jesus didn't just tell a story for the sake of telling a story. He didn't just say, Well, I'm going to tell you a story. These parables normally came in response, As a reaction to something that had happened.

And what had happened there was, These people were sitting on the sidelines, Condemning, At other times ridiculing, At other times sneering at Christ, Because of his attitude to the lost, His attitude to sinners.

They were superior. They were so righteous within themselves, That they would never think of stooping down, And becoming defiled with these people. And they took objection, To Jesus involving himself, And engaging himself with them.

So we've always got to have this, At the back of our mind, When we look at these things, Because we must never forget, The setting, The context, Of the actual story.

Because Jesus wants us to remember these things. Now the words that make up this story, In a sense, Lost, Dead, Found, Alive, They are more than words.

[5 : 50] They're conditions. These are particular conditions. Somebody who is lost, Or somebody who is found. Somebody who is dead, Or somebody who is alive.

They are conditions. And they are conditions, That actually, Lead to a particular destiny. Because they are descriptive of destinies, As well as conditions.

Where people are either lost, Or they are found forever. They are either alive, Spiritually forever. Or else they are dead, Spiritually forever.

So the conditions, In life, Speak of conditions, In death, And throughout eternity. But the wonderful thing, That this particular parable highlights, Is God's compassion, Towards the sinner.

And we must never ever lose sight of that. And if we find ourselves with hard hearts, If we find ourselves with, Hearts that do not display compassion, Then we have a problem.

[6 : 58] Because if we want to be like Jesus Christ, And that is part of God's purpose, Is to make us Christ-like, Then one thing we need, Is a heart of compassion.

So often we read about Jesus, That it says to us, He was moved, With compassion. It wasn't just that he felt compassion, It actually moved him. Are we moved, By what we see, By what surrounds us?

Or do we just, Are our hearts like flint, And we're unmoved, And touched, And troubled? Well we've got to, Think about these things. Well anyway, Here's this father, And he had two sons.

And according to Hebrew law, The older son would get, If there were just two in the family, The older son would get two-thirds, And the younger son would get one-third. And so, The younger son, Who would just get a third, Of his father's estate and property, He, We can see very clearly here, Was a very, Very selfish, Self-centered young man, Who cared not one whit for his father.

And he came to his father, And he said, Look, When you die, I'm going to get a third, Of your estate, Of your property. Well I can't wait till you die, I want it now. I want it right now.

[8 : 15] So you can see, That this man, He had no, Regard for his father. It was just, What can I get out of life? I want it, And I want it now.

You know in a sense, Nothing changes. Because so often, We can see this, This kind of spirit, Even in the day, That we live in this society. And people say, Oh that's, That's only, This is a new phenomenon.

This selfishness, Where people only, They're only living for themselves, They can't see beyond their own nose. Well, Go back two thousand years, And here's Jesus, Talking about this family.

And here's this son, Who's just, Like so many, That we would even find today. So there's nothing new, Under the sun. This young man, He had no regard for his home, He had no regard for his father, He had no regard for his brother, He had no regard for anything, That was dear and precious, To what he had been brought up with.

He just wanted, His own way, His own lifestyle, And didn't care anything, For his father. Could I say one word, To those who are, Younger here, Please don't live, To have regrets, About what you have done, To your parents.

[9 : 37] If you're here tonight, And you, Are maybe pushing the boat out a bit, And hurting your parents, Please think again. Because many a person, In later life, Has so regretted, What they've done.

Some have broken, Their parents hearts. Don't you, Break your parents hearts. Some people, In God's mercy and grace, Have a time to, Sort these things out.

Some don't. So please, Be careful, With what you do. Anyway, We find here, That the father, Gave him what he wanted, And away he went, And the father, Obviously watched him go, With a sad, And a heavy heart.

Going away, From all the love, All the care, All the provision, All the safety, All the security, That was part of his life, Day in, Day out.

And the father, Saw him walk away, From it all. And you know, What a vivid picture, This is of so many people, Who are doing, The very same thing, Spiritually.

[10 : 46] Because God, Has given so many, Wonderful blessings, In life. He has filled our life, With so many provisions, But the greatest provision, Of all, Is his son, Jesus Christ.

And my friend, If we walk away, From Christ, And reject, Jesus Christ, We're doing the worst, Thing possible. Remember this morning, What we were looking at. If we reject, The Bible said this, If you reject, The testimony of God, Regarding his son.

In other words, If you reject Jesus, You make God a liar. Extraordinary words. That's what the Bible says. And that is why, It is such a serious thing, To reject Jesus Christ.

Because you're making God a liar. So it's no little thing, If you walk out of the church, And say no, I, I believe, The truth about Jesus, But I'm rejecting, The offer of salvation.

It's not the right time for me. As you live in that condition, And state you're making God, To be a liar. And it's a fearful thing. No wonder, It is such a sin.

[11 : 55] So think carefully, In rejecting Jesus. In walking away, From Jesus. But you see, So many people, The way they live life, Is just the way the son, Lived life.

God has given, All the provision in life. And so many people say, Well I'll take the provision, But I'll take all the gifts, But I don't want the giver. And that's what that young son, Was doing, Exactly the same thing.

We look at the story, And we say, What a selfish, Hard-hearted Roscoe. He had, Took everything, That the father had, But he didn't want the father. He's kind of trampling, The father out of the way. Not interested in you. Not interested in your love. Not interested in anything. Oh, I want the things you have. But I don't want you. And that's exactly, What people are doing, With the Lord.

They're saying, We'll take all the things of life. All the good things. I'll take my health, And I'll take my strength, And I'll take my work, And I'll take the money, And I'll take, All the abilities, That you've given me, To do things, And to prosper, And to get on.

[13 : 02] But I don't want you. It's exactly, The same thing, As the prodigal did. No different. And that's why, These parables are so powerful, And so personal, Because they're coming right in, Right into our own heart, And seeing where we stand, In relation to these things.

Remember, One day, We're going to have to give an account, Of all that we have done here, With all that God has given to us. Every one of us. The Christian, And the non-Christian. What have we done, With what God has given us?

Have we used, What he's given us, For himself, Or have we used it, Exclusively on ourselves?

Have we put up, Barriers, And saying, Well Lord, I know there's this, And I know there's that, But listen, This is my life, And I just want to get on with it.

Do we just give the minimum to God, And the maximum to ourselves, Well one day, That will be required of us. The Bible makes that, Absolutely clear.

Do you know, I think the worst thing is, If we're spared into our old age, And look back. And as a Christian, To look back, On wasted years, And you're going to go in, Have to give an account, To your father, Your heavenly father, And say, I wasted all the years, I wasted all the talents, I wasted all the abilities, I wasted all the resources, You gave me, On myself.

[14 : 29] It's a sobering, And a solemn thought. And that is why, The Lord is always, You go through the Bible, And he's saying, Look, Use, The gifts, The abilities, All, Use them to the glory of God.

We have to be serious, In these things. But if you're without, The Lord Jesus Christ tonight, Whatever you do in life, Or whatever you have done in life, Remember this, That if you have rejected Jesus, Whatever other good decisions you have made, You've made one momentous wrong decision.

Because rejecting Jesus, Is the worst decision that any person can make. Irrespective of what you achieve in life, Or what you do in life, However noble or good it is, Turning your back upon the Lord, Is the worst decision that any person can ever make.

Well the prodigal here, He couldn't wait to get away, And he went into the, Went away to a far country, He went away as far as he could, Out of reach, Out of touch from home. Talking of the far country means, Trying to get away, It's blotting everything, Out of his thinking.

Don't want to think about it, Don't want to be in touch, Obviously no phones, No texting, None of that, You know, Thing in these days, He wasn't going to send any message, No letter, No communication, Not going to send a messenger, No intention of ever returning home, Went away as far as he could, And blotted home, Right out of his mind.

[16:09] And he had, And then we're told, He squandered his property, In reckless living, That's what he did, Let me read that in verse 13, And he, No doubt he had, Any amount of friends, While he was there, Not friends of himself, But friends of his money, And he lived the most extravagant, Lifestyle that he could, Whatever he wanted, He did, So many people live like that, Whatever he wanted, He did, And, We can just imagine, How his life was lived, But these fleeting highs, Soon give way, Into despairing lows, Because one day, The money ran out, And his friends ran out, And the food ran out, And famine hit the land, And he was in big trouble, And the only job he could get, Was feeding pigs, And he was in such a low,

At such a low ebb, That he actually envied, The slops, That the pigs were eating, And he says, You know, I could share their meal, You can see how low, He had become, He was virtually a down and out, And while he was in this condition, He began to reflect, Over life, On Wednesday night, Remember, We were looking, In the day of adversity, Consider, The Lord wants us, To consider, It's one of the important things, In life, Consider, Do you give time, To considering, To reflecting, It's essential, To stop, And to think, We live in a day, Where actually, This is becoming, Increasingly difficult, It's movement, It's noise, It's frenzied activity, There's something happening, All the time, The Lord says to us, You've got to stop, And consider, Well that's exactly, What this man did, While he was living, In the fast lane,

He never considered, For a moment, Well he had all the money, And all the friends, And all the lights, Were bright, And he was going, At 90 mile an hour, He never thought, For one moment, Or considered, Till it had all run out, And then he was forced, To consider, Because there was nothing to do, And in that state, In that condition, He began, As we say, To think, And he began, To look back, Over a life, That was wasted, Absolutely wasted, My dear friend, As I said, I hope, When you reach, The end of your days, That you won't look back, Over a life wasted, But you know, I'll say also this, That, For the believer, And it's quite, An interesting thing, I have often heard, Christians, Who have lived, The most active, Christian life, Christians, Who have, Given their life, To the Lord, And serving the Lord, And when they've come, To the end of their days, They're saying, I don't think,

I ever did anything, Really worthwhile, And it makes you realize, What the word, How true, The word is, Because the word of God, Says this, When we have done, All, We are, But unprofitable servants, And there is, This sense, Of our own, Failure, Against the light, Of, Who God is, But, For those, For those, Who have lived, A life, Even if that is, How they feel, It is not, How they will be, Received home, They will be, Received home, With a well done, Good and faithful servant, That's how, The homecoming, Will be, But anyway, This man, He, He reflected over, What had been, And what had happened, And he said, Oh, If only I could get home, The home he despised, The father he cared nothing for, All these things, That he despised, And trampled into the dust, All of a sudden, They appeared sweet, And inviting, And he began to think, Oh, If only there was, Some, Way, Back, But it looked impossible, He couldn't go back, His father would disown him, What am I going to do, I'm too ashamed to go back, And then, He had this thought, I can't go back as a son, That's out of the question, There is no way, My father will ever take me, I took, As the younger son, I took everything, That was owed to me, And I have, Blown a lot, I have disqualified myself, As a son, But my father is always looking, For hired laborers, I can go back as a hired hand, I'll offer myself, Just as a worker, As just, I'll do anything, Just to get back there, And so he resolves, That he will confess, To his father, And ask, For a position,

[21:16] No more really, Than almost a slave, And here, Jesus pictures, The soul, That comes in repentance, And you know, That soul, That comes in repentance, To the Lord, Doesn't come with any demands, My dear friend, Tonight, If you come to the Lord, As a repentant sinner, You won't be coming to the Lord, With any demands, Saying, Make me this, Or make me that, You will come, And the only demand, You will have, Is that the Lord, Will pour his mercy, And his grace upon you, That's all you're looking for, And that's how this man came, Wasn't looking for any great, Wasn't

looking for any position, Any status, He wasn't looking for any money, All he was looking for, Was just the lowest, Thing, But just to get in, To get back in some way, And that's how the repentant sinner comes, Casting themselves, Upon the Lord's mercy, And so he says, I'll arise, And I'll go to my father, And I will say,

Father, I have sinned against heaven, And before you, I'm no longer worthy, To be called your son, Treat me, As one of your higher, Servants, I have sinned, That's, Part of the key, To this man's recovery, It was his awareness, Of what he had done, And it's still the same tonight, This is the key, To your recovery, If you are in the far country, Is this acknowledgement, That you have sinned, We have all sinned, And you know, As we go on, One of the things we discover, If you're here as a Christian, One of the things you'll discover, Is that you're sinning, In ways that you never realized, Areas and aspects of your life, That you thought were, That you were adhering, And that you were fulfilling, In fact, They weren't even areas, That you ever thought about at all, And all of a sudden, There are new, Areas opening up, Where you see, That you're sinning, And you're saying, I didn't realize, My sin, And it just shows us that, We are so, Far away, From God's perfect law, We are so, Under condemnation, If we don't have Christ, Because we have no knowledge, Of the totality, Of our depravity, In the sight of God, I, Have, Sinned, That's the way, We come to the Lord, Confessing our sin, Acknowledging, That we are sinners, And so this young man, He made his way back, And may I say to anybody, In here tonight, Who might be saying, You know, I don't think, I can go back, You might be here, As a Christian, Who's gone into a far country, And you say, Oh, It's going to be too painful, To go back, Well let me tell you, It was painful, For this young man, Stepping out, Going back, And I believe, That he had the, I'm sure there were, Few footsteps, That were heavier, Than his, As he was making his way back, How can I face my father, The pain, That would be in his heart, But you know, It was going to be so different, When he got there, Didn't realize that at the time, But maybe that's the way, You're feeling tonight, And you're saying, I know what I should do, I know what I've got to do, But I'm, Oh, It's going to be too painful, The cost is going to be too much, And sometimes we can continue, To bury our heads in the sand, And say, Oh some other day, Sort it out, No, Sort it out now, Pray for the spirit, Of the prodigal, That you would go back, Repenting to the Lord, And if you're here, Without Jesus Christ, As savior, I would say the very same thing, It's high time, To deal with these issues, High time to say, Look, I've got to go, Doesn't matter if you're here, And you've been under the gospel,

For years, And years, And years, And maybe you've said to yourself, You know, I've heard people say this, I feel I've missed the boat, I've heard people say that, With that kind of despair, I feel I've missed the boat, My friend, You're under the word tonight, You are in the place, Of God's mercy and grace, We haven't even, Begun to understand, How lavish, He is in pouring out, His mercy and grace, And how welcoming, He is to sinners, Of any age, You go to it tonight, And say, Here I am, Oh, I've been a long time coming, But I'm coming tonight, Will you do that?

[26 : 04] And anyway, Here's the prodigal, And he makes his way back, But long before he reaches, His father sees him, Scanning the horizon, And before the prodigal sees the father, The father sees the prodigal, And what does the father do?

It's wonderful, He, And when he was, But while he was still a long way off, His father saw him, And felt compassion, And ran, And embraced him, And you know, When Jesus would have told this story, We probably don't have an idea, But it wasn't the done thing, In the Middle East, In those days, For an older person to run, They didn't, You didn't see older people running along, So, This was all part of just how, Extraordinary, How wonderful, The response, Of the father is, He's running, To meet the son, It's kind of almost unheard of, At that particular time, Jesus is here displaying, The reaction again of heaven, How different it all was, To what the son thought it would be, And you see again, The celebration, The best robe, The ring, Probably a family, Seal on that ring, There were the shoes, The fattened calf, Kept for special occasions, It's joy, It's celebration, It's thanksgiving, And that's been the pattern, In all the stories, A hundred sheep, One lost, One found, Celebration, Ten coins, One lost, One found, Celebration, Now two sons, One lost, One found, Celebration, Always celebrating, And everybody was celebrating, It was a wonderful location, Apart from one, And that's why we've got to, At the beginning, Remember I said, We've got to keep in our mind, The scribes, The Pharisees, They were the ones, Who were finding fault, With Jesus, For receiving sinners, And eating with them, And I don't think, There need any stretch, Of the imagination, To see what Jesus,

Is talking about here, Because the older brother, When he finds out, What has happened, There's no joy, Whatever, In his heart, He's full of, A sense of injustice, His nose, Has been put out, A joint, And he's in a right, Stomp outside, And he will not, Go in, And he's asked to come in, He's saying, No way, Very interesting, Turn around here, This son, You see, Was so full, Of his own goodness, And his own rightness, And the thing is, He had been good, You, The father acknowledges that, And the son, Tells the father, And he says, Look, These many years, I have served you, And I have never, Disobeyed, Your command, The son is telling the father, Look at how good I have been, And Jesus,

I believe, Here is highlighting, Just how it was, For the Pharisees, Because, Their righteousness, Remember how Jesus said elsewhere, That unless you exceed, The righteousness, Of the Pharisees, You, They, They were, So determined, To keep the law, Exactly, They were, They spent all, They were really rigid, And really, Trying to keep the law, All the time, But they were, So full of, Their own self-righteousness, And I believe, That we have here, A picture, Of them, Because, The Pharisees, Who had been, Complained, They were complaining, They were, Incensed, At Christ, For receiving sinners, Wasters, People who were, Just no good, People who had, Spent a life, Indulging in sin, How could Jesus, Be receiving them, Here's the, Here's the older brother, Exactly what he's saying,

[30 : 25] And he's saying to the father, How can you take that son back, Who has wasted, All your money, Everything that belonged to you, And, He's taken it, And blown it, How, Can you, Take him back, I don't know, If any of these Pharisees, Actually got, What Jesus was saying, I hope they did, You know, It's possible, To have the spirit, Of the Pharisee, It's possible, For somebody here, To have the spirit, Of the Pharisee, And you could have it, In this way, You might be here tonight, And you might be, Somebody who has been, Brought up, In, The Christian faith, Brought up in a good home, And over the years, You've attended the church, Diligently, You have lived, A good life, An upstanding life, Well thought of, In the community, And yet,

Throughout the years, You've seen people, Come in, To the church, And you knew, About them, People who were, In this town, Known, We could say, As sinners, Everybody's sinners, But people who lived, A particular lifestyle, A kind of lifestyle, That were living, Far away from God, Rebels, People who were always, Drinking, And fighting, And getting into trouble, And all of a sudden, You've seen them, Come into church, You've seen a change, You've seen them converted, You've seen them growing, And getting on, And you're still, In the same place, And it's possible, To be saying, It's not fair, How come?

How's this happening? It's not right, Well you know, If we're like that, We've got the same spirit, As of the Pharisee, Same sort of thing, That's exactly, What he was saying, The older brother, Have been doing everything, In the right way, How come?

My dear friends, Remember this, That our own goodness, Is never sufficient, To get us into heaven, We just, Cannot, Do it, And until, We learn, That it is by, Grace and grace alone, We're not going to get anywhere, And we've got to come down, Off our pedestals, And we've got to humble ourselves, Before the Lord, Self-righteousness, Is a great curse, And I knew it, It's a period in my own life, Where I was convinced, I was good enough, Oh no, We are never, Doesn't matter, What upbringing we've had, Doesn't matter, What privileges we've had, We are never, Ever, Ever, Good enough, It is only, God's grace, It is only, Accepting, What God has done,

In Christ, It is only, Receiving, By receiving, Jesus Christ, As Lord and Savior, This is the only way, That we can be taken, From death, To life, Remember my friend, That this Jesus, Has come to seek, And to save, Those who were lost, He has come to, Bring life, To those who were dead, And that's what happened, In the experience of this son, Your brother who was dead, Is alive, He was lost, And is found, Wouldn't that be wonderful, If that was said, Over you tonight, That you came in here, Lost, And you went out, In the state of being found, That you came in here, Tonight, Dead, And you went out, Alive, There's nothing, I would pray for more, Than that that, Is what would happen, For you, Let's pray, Oh Lord,

[34 : 29] Oh God, We pray to bless us, Here tonight, Enrich our lives, With gospel blessings, We pray that, This word, May indeed, Reach into our heart, Deliver us, From the spirit, Of the Pharisee, Deliver us, Oh Lord, From self, Exaltation, And help us, To look to Jesus, And to believe in him, And to trust in him, Oh Lord, We pray to, Watch over all, Who preach tonight, Keep them, We pray, We pray thy blessing, Upon, And Ivor Martin, Down in New Zealand, And the other ministers, Who are at that conference, Bring them back safely, We pray, We pray that the word of God, That is

preached, Throughout this world, May indeed, Produce tonight, Much rejoicing in heaven, Watch over us, We pray, Taking us all home safely, In Jesus name we ask all, Amen.