

Luke 15

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Preacher: Rev Robert Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] I'd like us to turn once again to the Gospel of Luke and chapter 15.

Reading once again at the last verses of that chapter. Verse 31.

And he said to him, Son, you are always with me. All that is mine is yours.

It is fitting to celebrate and be glad. For this, your brother was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.

Amen. Amen. This parable is one of the best-loved stories that we have in the Gospel.

[1 : 1 0] it's a parable that is directed towards the scribes and the Pharisees who seem to have difficulty with understanding the mercy of God toward the children of men they thought that somehow they had to earn in God's love that their life was to be one long round of keeping the law fulfilling duties tithing engaging in all the difficult aspects of their religion and when the Lord Jesus Christ came along and proclaimed a gospel of love and forgiveness there was a great controversy that arose between them and so we see here that this particular parable is particularly directed towards them and we find in the parable that there are two ways of knowing God's displeasure towards us one is obvious it is engaging in sin and departing from the revealed word of God the other is legalism so we find both these aspects described to us very clearly in the younger son and and the older sometimes we speak about one lost son but really there are two lost sons and so in regard to the younger son we have here this very minute disclosure of what he's like and what he is doing the younger son lived with his brother in a good family home a loving family home a home where the father was kind and considerate he wasn't someone who laid down the law he wasn't somebody who browbeat his children but someone who loved them and someone whose only desire for them was their good and so it was a secure family home a home in which he lacked nothing there was a house there were servants there is great wealth yet he himself is heartless and so he goes to his father and

he says to him father and give me the share of the property that is coming to me this man wasn't only asking for his father to give him some money so he could go and live life the way he wanted to he was in a way he was in a way saying i wish you were dead and i could go and do what i want with your money and so he comes to this decision to go to his father to ask for this money and the remarkable thing about the story is the father doesn't argue with him doesn't he doesn't prevaricate at all he simply divides the money two-thirds to the oldest one-third to the youngest and we're told immediately the young brother starts making plans to do what he wants to do and what he's wanted to do for some time no doubt he makes plans to go away into a far country and there to spend his father's money in riotous living to go somewhere where he won't be known to go somewhere where there are no stories about his life and his his habits will get back to his family somewhere where he'll be anonymous and where he can engage in and all the things he's wanted to engage in and so he goes but providence plays a very great part in this parable god's providence while he's in the far country it's all wine women and song as long as he's got money he's got lots of friends they all gather around him they all help him spend his money they all engage in the the worst of activities that mankind can engage in until eventually all the money is gone he's penniless and in the providence of god that's when the famine strikes it comes at a time when he's got nothing left can't help himself he's totally at the mercy of those who were his friends when he goes to them they don't want to know him when he looks at them they don't want to look at him and so he begins to be in extreme want although this particular version doesn't bring out the full importance of what the lord is saying here we're told that he clave to a man of that country the impression there is given that he pestered a man of that country to give him a job he didn't want to give it to him but he kept on pestering him until he gave him that job and so he gave him the job the worst job he could think of sent him into the pigsty to feed the swine didn't pay him well hardly gave him any food and he is an absolute desperate state no money no friends no food and that's when the turning point comes when he came to himself

when he's in this desperate situation when he's lived out all his fantasies when he spent all the money they had to live them out with the madness subsides that's what it really means he came to himself he came into his right mind he came to understand what he'd been doing and he says how many of my father's hired servants of more than enough bread and i perish with hunger there is a glimpse of hope suddenly appears into his befuddled brain what the catechism calls a glimpse of the mercy of the apprehension of the mercy of his father hope that just perhaps his father won't turn him away that as he makes his way home his father will take him in even just other servants he realizes he comes to realize what he's done as he comes to his senses he realizes his heartlessness the cruelty to his father when he takes his money and and goes away and and wastes his father's money in the life that he lived and so he makes this plan says i will go home and i will say to my father i have sinned against heaven and in thy sight and i am no more worthy to be called your son make me as one of your hired servants and no doubt on the long journey back he rehearsed that statement many times imagined himself meeting with his father perhaps a stern father and rehearsing what he was going to say and how he was going to say it with all the intonations that he could he could make to make himself more acceptable to the father he had he had so hurt and so we're told he arose and he went isn't that the first step on the way back to god for ourselves we have to decide to arise and go arise and go back to our father to know him to worship him to love him and to fall before him in wonder and love and in praise and so he makes his way step by step and then this magical response of the father the father has been waiting and longing and looking for his son no doubt when he was in the far country the father had heard many tales about his son he'd heard many stories of what he was doing and the activities he was engaged in but even for those scraps of news that he was receiving he was thankful for because it

proved to him he was still alive whatever he was engaged in he was still alive and there was still the hope that he would come home perhaps his neighbors were relating to them these stories relating to the father these stories perhaps they were saying that if this was my son he would never enter my door ever again he would show them the door and turn to go back where he came from but not this father he was waiting he was preparing the fat calf all the time hoping and waiting for him to come back and making the feast ready even before he came and then he told when he was yet a far way off his father saw him and he had compassion on him and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him all the longing all the heartbreak all endured for such a long time now over the son who had gone away was back home again and he tells his servants take that tattered rag of a coat off him and give him a new cloak put a ring on his finger and so show him that he is once again son in this house and put shoes on his feet and then go and kill the fatten calf for this my son was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found what a homecoming no doubt the son tried to make a speech that he had rehearsed all along the way but his father cut him off didn't let him finish what he was going to say simply embraced him and covered him with kisses we'd almost left there at the end of this parable and saying what next but there is something else there's the older son the elder brother he hears what is happening and he's absolutely furious he spent all his life serving his father and yet it appears it's not because of the love of his father he stayed where he is the property is now his the two-thirds of the money is now his his and he's working for it all for himself he says to his father these many years i have served you i never disobeyed your command and you never gave me even a young goat and so he insults his father he calls him for being for being unfair to him for being a sop and a fool towards his young brother this is his younger son who spent your property with the prostitutes and and riotous living and drunkenness and you take him back

no distribution no discrimination nothing you just take him back no i was looking at no i was looking at the end of this chapter i it suddenly came to me the father says son you're always with me all that is mine is yours i i often looked at this parable and and cast the elder brother in a very different light but here is the father's love calling him back the father's love softening that hard heart the father's love drawing him back into the family which he seems to want to distance himself from and the love of the fathers it not just portrayed here towards the younger son but also to the elder brother it was fitting to celebrate and be glad for this your brother was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found so we have this wonderful ending to the story you know phil yancy talks about an incident with a young girl who was totally fed up with the sort of life she was having to live with her parents she was fed up being told what to do where to go who to mix with her father's love so she makes plans to leave home and so one night after they're all asleep she gets her belongings together and her savings and she takes a bus and she makes her way to detroit and there she's met by a man of the world a young man who picks her up and takes her home shows her a good time sets her up in a flat and shows her how to do things that men like and so for a year or two everything is fine for her you're thinking these are the this is what my parents have stopped me from doing i knew there was another life outside of that small village in which i lived a small town and now found it and life is great and i'm having a great time and she began to double in drugs and she was being used by more and more men until eventually the first cough appears and the skin she's so fresh and young looking began to take on the pallor of old age and illness as long before her keeper throws her out onto the street and there she's left to find for herself phrase yancey uses she would do a few tricks a night just to keep her

[21 : 27] drug habit in order and so she tries to sleep on the streets but she knows she can't really sleep because detroit is no place for a young girl to be out alone at night and to be asleep is the last thing that she would think of doing and so she feels in her pockets and finds a few coins a few dimes to make a phone call she like the prodigal thinking of home the place she's so despised and now looks so attractive to her and so she makes a phone call and there's only the answer machine and nothing she tries again and the same thing happens and she just hung up she comes to her last coin and so she says to her father her mother and her mother and her mother and she's going to catch a particular bus out of detroit and to catch a greyhound bus and that she'll be back in her own hometown at some early hour of the morning says if you're not there i'll just get back on the bus and go home or carry on on that bus who knows where and so she catches the bus what few belongings she has in a bag and she travels fitfully all the way and the bus traveled to the darkened lanes and streets near the town where she's going and she eventually enters into the bus station and she gets off not knowing what she's going to find but as she goes in to the unaccustomed bright light of the bus station there's her father her brothers sisters cousins grandmother and the huge welcome banner welcome home party poppers and she begins to apologize to her father and he just says hush your home and that's all that matters all in the spiritual sense that's exactly what the our heavenly father wants us to do he wants us to go home wants us to leave the broken cisterns of this life and to drink at that cistern where the water of life bubbles up endlessly to that place where he will feed us and lead us to the very fountains of that water of life never again to let us go never again to allow us to escape out of his hands for the lord's love towards us is intense his grace is immense

and his joy is indescribable there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents is there one here this night who will repent and find their way back home amen and the lord will bless his word to us we shall conclude our worship singing to god's praise