

The Tale Of Two Wayward Sons (Part Two)

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Date: 22 February 2026

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[0:00] We have, last week we started this sermon, and normally when you start a sermon on one day, you end it on the same day.

That's not happened this time. We're continuing last week's sermon, so if you have your notes from last week, that would be helpful. There are more fresh ones back there. I'm sure you're all situated and got that all straightened out.

If you weren't here last week or you don't have the answers for the couple of blanks that we did get to, I will give you those too, so be aware of that.

We're looking at a very, very familiar passage of Scripture in Luke chapter 15, which is often referred to as the parable of the prodigal son.

We're going to talk a little bit. We mentioned it last week about how maybe that's not the best name for it, in that the prodigal son may not be the main character of that particular parable, but instead the older son is the main character.

[1:10] They both have interesting parts of the story, but let me kind of jump back in and catch us up to where we are at for today. The very first verse of the chapter, now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

So that's who was coming to hear Jesus. Tax collectors who were considered even worse than sinners, They were considered national traitors to the nation of Israel because they were collecting taxes for the government of Rome.

And then sinners. So it's all these people that were in their culture considered rejects or outcasts because of their sin.

And they were known as such. And the Pharisees and the scribes, verse 2, a second group of people. So you have two groups of people here, the tax collectors and sinners and the Pharisees and the scribes.

And each group may have had, I don't know, a group of fans. I don't know how that worked, but there was a large group of people there. Pharisees and scribes were grumbling. They were angry with Jesus, saying, This man receives and eats with them.

[2:25] Why would he do that? And we talked about a couple of questions, a couple of tough questions that we want to answer in this. The first question was this, and this would have been the question of the Pharisees or people who sympathized with them.

Why would Jesus hang out with and welcome and dine with sinners? Why would he do that? That's what was in their minds and the minds of the Pharisees and the scribes.

Why would Jesus do that? Now, we know 2,000 years later why Jesus did that. And so the scribes and the Pharisees, who would have been aligned with Jesus doctrinally, that's an interesting aspect of this whole situation between Jesus and these religious leaders, is that theologically, doctrinally, they probably would have been very much aligned, but not in terms of how they carried out or how they spread that message of what God wanted to do in people's lives.

And so that's an interesting question. And the parable that Jesus is going to teach is going to answer that question. But perhaps even the better question, and the question that we're going to spend some time with today as well, if the Pharisees found no joy at all in the repentance of sinners, and that was the case, they either didn't want them to be invited to trust the Lord, or they weren't welcome to hear the message at all in the first place.

This kind of mindset could go all the way back to Jonah, who when God called him to go to Nineveh, Jonah said, no, I don't want to go there and preach the gospel there, because I know what

kind of a God you are, that you're merciful, and that your loving kindness is great, and you will forgive them if they repent.

[4:23] And I don't want that to happen, so I'm running away to Tarshish. I'm running in the opposite direction to get away from that calling. And you see it even at the end of Jonah, when he does finally, after he gets vomited up by the fish and gets back to Nineveh, and he preaches in the streets of Nineveh, the people there do repent, and it's a genuine repentance, and God does forgive.

And Jonah is on the outskirts of town sitting up on a hill, and kind of crying and complaining to God. That, see, I told you this was what was going to happen.

He did not want to have it. He has the same mindset. The Pharisees and the scribes now have this same kind of mindset. So if they don't find any joy in the repentance of sinners at all, here's the question then.

What did give them joy? We talked about how the Pharisees were known as people who were lovers of money. We're going to see that explicitly in chapter 16.

But that they loved the best seats at the table. They loved to be recognized by people in the crowd. They wanted to wear their religion on their sleeve. They wanted people to know when they were fasting or how much they were giving when they went to the temple.

[5:42] They wanted to see them praying in public and wanted that recognition. This was the kind of hypocrisy. They cared about the things on the outside, but not what was going on on the inside.

And Jesus referred to them as whitewashed tombs, which is a depiction of that. It looks good on the outside, but on the inside it's dead, it's empty, it's void.

So what did make them happy? What did bring them joy? And then Jesus proceeds to tell two shorter parables that oftentimes people think are kind of same as the parable of the prodigal son. But we talked about how they are probably set in contrast to show the difference between how God views, what God values, what God loves, what God shows compassion for, versus the Pharisees and the scribes and what they cared about, what it was that brought them great joy.

And these two parables kind of teach us that. It's the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin. And this is the things that the Pharisees were compassionate about.

[7:03] These brief stories exposed the misplaced compassion of the Pharisees. They were concerned about things, about things that were going on, things that they cared about in their world around them, whereas the Lord cares about people.

We're going to see that front and center here with this. These two parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin were not primarily intended as a picture of God seeking after lost men.

They were seeking after lost things, not lost men. Now he does compare them at the end of each small parable. He talks about just how much you compare about these things, this lost coin, this lost sheep.

Compare that to how God cares about a lost sinner. And then the capstone of what he's teaching is this parable of what we know as the prodigal son or as we're calling it, the tale of two wayward sons.

It's about both of them being lost. And so this next parable then is about a rebellious but repentant son, this is the prodigal son.

[8:22] This is what most of us tend to focus on in this parable. And that is true. He is rebellious at the beginning, very much so. But we also see his repentant heart, and the father in the story sees that as well.

And then the second son is self-righteous, and he doesn't repent. We don't see that happening in this story of the older son.

He's self-righteous and selfish, and he's struggling with what's going on. Actually, we see him angry. We read the story at the end last week.

We're going to look through it again in a little bit more detail today. We're going to see him get angry. We're going to see him basically grumbling, like the Pharisees and the scribes.

So that's what Jesus is after. These Pharisees and scribes are grumbling and complaining about who Jesus is hanging out with. And Jesus closes the story with the older son, the older brother, who

is also grumbling and angry and upset about what's happening and how the father is treating his younger and undeserving brother.

[9:45] So that's all a part of it as well. One son ends up rejoicing. Celebrating the other son remains as the story closes, grumbling and complaining and angry and upset with that.

And so here is now then the rest of this story, these three main characters in the story, the two sons and then the father. And we're going to start with the younger son, who represents the consequences of rebellion.

And that's absolutely true. Even though I think that the main focus of the story is on the older brother, it's still relevant that what's happening here with the younger son.

Don't mistake me to say that, well, what's happening with the younger brother doesn't matter. That's not the case at all. It does teach us about the compassion of God. And when we find ourselves caught up in sin, we ought to, as the younger son, come back to the Lord.

The Lord is waiting for us. And so we see that here in the text. And so the parable then, he said there was a man who had two sons.

[11:04] 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. We talked last week about how asking for your inheritance ahead of time is quite remarkable.

And quite, nobody's ever going to do that. Nobody's going to say basically what the younger son is saying here, dad, I wish you were dead. So go ahead and consider yourself that dead.

And let me have my portion of the inheritance, which would have been one third of the inheritance, one third of the property. The older son, because he is the oldest, in their culture and their economy, the oldest always got a double portion of any inheritance.

Ladies, you didn't get anything in the way that their economy worked. But so the younger son gets a third. And the father basically cashed out the value of a third of that property and gave it to his son. Again, crazy idea that this would even happen. I imagine the people that were listening to this story would have been, that's, you know, just standing there like shaking their heads like, that's nuts.

[12:19] Nobody's going to do that. We would even think that same kind of thing, that no father in their right mind would do that. But Jesus here is using exaggeration or an extreme outcome here as a way to really emphasize and drive home his point about the compassion of our heavenly father.

And so he takes his collected inheritance. And not many days later, the younger son gathered all that he had and took a journey into a far country. And we can read that here as a Gentile country outside of Israel, outside of their culture.

And that would have, of course, angered the Pharisees and the scribes. And even regular everyday Israelites would have been upset that he would go to a Gentile country and live in this way.

And there he squandered his property in reckless living. Now, this word reckless is where the word prodigal comes from.

That's what prodigal means. It means reckless or wasteful. The prodigal is actually the Latin translation of this Greek word here.

[13:43] So it doesn't even translate to the Greek of this in that sense. But we get our English word prodigal. And where the son is referred to as the prodigal son, you could say he is the reckless.

He's the wasteful son. That was the depiction of his type of sin. He was extravagant. He was wasteful. He just blew everything that he had in that kind of living.

And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. And so the timing of this story, remember, a parable is not a true story.

It's a story that's meant to sit alongside of or parallel to the point that Jesus is trying to make. And so in this parallel story, this parable that he's telling, he's using these extreme, everything about the story is extreme in terms of the circumstances around the inheritance, in terms of the circumstances of how he lived, in terms of the circumstances of how the famine came and how extreme the famine was.

Everything is in extremes to emphasize his point. And so because he's out of money, he's in need. And what's he going to do? He can't eat anything. So he went and he hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who, even worse and worse, he sent into his field to feed pigs.

[15:12] Again, to an Israelite group of people hearing this story, another offense. And we're thinking, hey, bacon. And Israelites, in their minds, they probably were too, but you don't tell anybody.

That would have been an offense. And certainly to the Pharisees, that would have been an offense. Again, so you went to a Gentile country, you sold yourself to a farmer, you're slopping pigs.

And this is, yes. And in one sense, I can see the Pharisees kind of cheering on. This guy deserved this. This is appropriate consequence for his behavior.

And certainly, if he ended up living and dying in this situation, that would have been appropriate for his outcome, for the behavior that he was displaying towards his father and his family and his nation, all of that.

He was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. All of his friends who were there, I'm sure, during the fun part of his time, not there any longer.

[16:33] But when he came to himself, that's the literal way of translating it. Other translations say when he came to his senses. We get that, right? You hit rock bottom.

And sometimes it takes a while for some of us to hit rock bottom. But when a person hits rock bottom and they come to their senses, they come to themselves, and they recognize, oh, no, I've made a mess of things, and I need to make it right.

And he realizes, how many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread? I'm sitting here staring at these pigs who are eating very well, and I'm starving.

And I remember that my dad took care of his servants better than the way that I'm existing right now. I'm going to die here with hunger.

What a situation for me to be in. And so he says, I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

[17:39] I am no longer worthy to be called your son. And treat me as one of your hired servants. Now, I want you to notice here this kind of prepared speech that he's got, right?

But I also want you to notice, is his repentance genuine? Is it sincere? Or, here's the other half of that question, is it just because he's hungry and he's recognizing, I'm going to be better fed as a servant in my father's household than I am in this circumstance?

And so rather than suffer and die here, I'm going to go back and do that. Not because I've done anything wrong, but just because I want to eat.

Is his repentance genuine? That would have been in the minds of the Pharisees and the scribes. It would have been in the minds of everyone listening to the story.

It would be in our minds as well, as we see people in our world who maybe you've seen someone, a certain family, a young person in that family goes off and lives terribly and lives rebelliously, and then seems like, oh, they're coming back home and they're getting right with mom and dad.

[18:59] But is it real? Is it repentance? Is it true? Is it genuine? And so in our minds, we're thinking, all right, I'm going to welcome you back, but I'm going to test you.

You know, I'm going to kind of put you on probation here, and I'm going to reserve my final judgment on whether this is sincere or not until after you've proven yourself.

Question, are we going to see that with his dad in this parable? Again, the extreme is no. We'll see that with the father.

But back to our younger brother, our younger son. Notice here with this young son that there's no attempt to minimize the seriousness or the folly of the sins of this younger son.

There's no just dismissing of it and saying it's not important. This kind of relates to me kind of into a certain situation that we see in our world today.

[20:08] We see in our world today there is a certain segment of a, and I'll use these air quotes, Christian culture or church culture in our world today where the leadership and the people in this culture would say, well, Jesus, don't you know that he hung around with sinners and

outcasts and all these different people and he welcomed them in and he accepted them fully.

Stop. And they leave it there. As if to say, well, Jesus, well, let me ask you, let me back up just a moment. Did Jesus do that?

Did Jesus hang out with sinners and tax collectors and people who lived horrible lives, made horrible choices in the way that they lived?

Did Jesus hang out with people like that? Yeah, you should be nodding your head. Absolutely. I mean, it says it plain as day right here. And they love to come and hang out with him.

So because they love to come and hang out with Jesus, it must mean that Jesus just fully accepted these people and their sinfulness and just let them continue on in the way that they were living.

[21:31] Didn't have anything to say about it. That he just accepted them the way that they were and didn't have anything to say about their sin or how they needed to repent or any of that.

That's basically what people in our world today are saying that Jesus is like. That Jesus, he just, oh, you know, doesn't matter what the issue is.

If you're living in adultery, if you're living an LGBTQ plus lifestyle, if you want to be a different gender, if you want to murder your baby in the womb, if you want to do any of these things, Jesus will love and accept you.

And he won't say anything about it. Matter of fact, Jesus probably would have approved of because he is love and compassionate.

Right? That's what you're going to hear if you're not already hearing that. But that's not the whole story.

[22:37] Yes, Jesus loved sinners. But he also would tell the woman caught up in adultery, go and sin no more.

When he hung around with the sinners, he talked about how that he came as a doctor for sick people. And I can imagine sitting at the table, if you're one of those sinners or tax collectors or people caught up in your sin, but you loved hearing Jesus and the mercy and the compassion in his voice and how he accepted us.

And yet at the same time, he just was telling a Pharisee, I'm not here for the people who are well. I'm here for the people who are sick. He just called me sick.

And I think they probably would have said, yeah, that's right. I am sick. I am in need. Yeah, I am caught up in my sin. Absolutely. People who are caught up in their sin, they know it.

And that's why they were wanting to gather around Jesus, because Jesus was offering them a different saying than what they got when they went to the synagogues and heard from the Pharisees and the scribes and the religion that they heard and about how they didn't measure up.

[23:59] And of course they knew they didn't measure up. And Jesus was saying, you can be forgiven. You can be loved and accepted.

You can be brought in as a full-on son or daughter of the king. And you can walk away from your sin. And you can leave that life behind and find a life that is full of forgiveness and living for Christ. That's not full of what you see on the outside, but on the inside it's dark and it's black and it's empty. None of that religion on the exterior, but on the inside.

It's life. It's truth. It's peace. It's joy. So we didn't minimize the sin of this prodigal son, this wasteful, this reckless son.

It was bad what he did. There's no questioning with that. But then the son's sincere repentance and asking this question, was his repentance really sincere?

[25:18] We're going to see the answer to that full on here in just a moment. It touched the heart of his loving father and paved the way for his restoration and rejoicing.

And so this also then becomes a key part of the story. The father's full acceptance and recognition that the son's repentance is real, is genuine.

And so here's the second character of this three-character story, the father himself. His love and compassion pictured the heart of our own heavenly father.

So this earthly father in the story is meant to be a picture of our heavenly father. And that's a correct understanding there in that sense.

So verse 20, he arose, the younger son then arose and came to his father. But while he's still a long way off, he's still a long way off, his father sees, which means his father's looking for him.

[26:25] His father's not going after him, but his father is looking for him. And when he sees his son a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion.

And he ran and he embraced him and kissed him. This extravagant form of welcoming him back in is rare in our world today.

It was certainly rare in their world as well because the father, at least in our minds, would have been wiser, right? This is how we would term this, how we would call this, that he would be wise to be more reserved in the way that he's accepting his son.

And let him prove it first. But no, that's not what his father does at all. It's not what he does with us. When we come to faith in Christ, when we recognize our own sinfulness and our own need, he doesn't come and says, prove it to me first.

No, he welcomes us in with open arms and with expressions of love and grace and mercy. We see that here. The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

[27:47] And that's a key part. We saw that earlier when he's rehearsing his speech. I've sinned against you and I've sinned against heaven. And that's a proper understanding of sin.

And that's a key part of repentance because we can't properly repent if we're going to continue to blame other people.

That's one of the key things about if someone's repentance is sincere. If I'm repenting, but yet at the same time, I'm choosing to say, well, it wasn't really my fault, right?

Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. What would you do here? And Adam basically points at Eve and say, it was this woman that you gave me.

So God, you're at fault. And the woman says, oh, it was the serpent. We're blaming other people. That's not repentance. Repentance. That's still struggling with maybe remorse because you got caught.

[28:46] But it's not repentance. Repentance is a full-on acceptance and recognition of, yeah, I did this. By the way, confession is a part of that too.

When I confess my sins, what it means to confess my sins is to basically agree with God about my sin. So it's not me trying to define my sin on my terms.

That's not confession. Confession is saying to God, yeah, what you have said about my sin is right. And that's where I'm at. And we see that with this younger son.

He's coming and he's confessing. He's repenting of his sin. The father sees that. I've sinned against heaven and before you.

I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Which reminds me of another story that we're going to hear that Jesus is going to tell here in a couple chapters of the Pharisee and the sinner, the publican, who comes to the temple to pray and the Pharisee's like, yeah, I'm so glad I'm not like this other lousy guy.

[29:58] Right? That has nothing to do with confession or repentance. But the sinner, the publican who's coming to do, he's beaten his chest and I'm not worthy. We recognize we're not worthy to receive God's grace and forgiveness.

We recognize that. I didn't do anything to deserve it. But that's the kind of grace, the kind of mercy that he gives, that he offers.

He offers. No longer worthy to be called your son. And again, the father interrupts that speech. He's not able to get through it. The father says to his servants, bring quickly the best robe, put it on him, put a ring on his hand, shoes on his feet.

All of these things then are identifying that he's welcoming him back into the family. None of this stuff about you being a servant.

Now you're coming back as, again, my son. And you'll be recognized as such, as part of the family. The best robe, the ring on his finger, shoes on his feet, the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate.

[31:13] It was going to be time to celebrate with the family. For this, my son was dead and is alive again. And he was lost and is found and they began to celebrate.

And so this, this becomes a big, a big part then of what's going on. And we see this in another aspect here. This idea of, my son was, his son wasn't, wasn't physically dead.

But he was dead in the sense of being lost. He was dead in the sense of his relationship to his father. And it reminds me of a passage in John chapter 5 where Jesus is teaching here, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

He does not come into judgment but is passed from death into life. That when you trust Christ as your savior, there's a sense where you are passing from death, from spiritual death to spiritual life. that happens the moment that you place your faith, your trust in Christ to save you. There is a transaction that takes place there.

[32:27] And I want to spell this out for you. Some of you, if you've been around for a while, you've seen me do this with this verse before. This is a key verse for me in terms of sharing it with people who've come to faith in Christ to help them to see what God has done for them.

Again, Jesus says, truly, truly, verily, verily. In other words, this is something that I want you to hang on to. It's important. Whoever hears my word, in other words, you've heard the gospel being preached.

You've heard it. And believes him who sent me. In other words, you've placed your faith, you've placed your trust in Jesus Christ to save you.

Believes him who sent me. I want you to notice what he says next. And I'm going to take you back to freshman year English grammar class. This is important now, okay?

He who believes in me, or believes him who sent me, has eternal life. Is that past tense, present tense, future tense?

[33:40] It's present tense. Eternal life is not something that you get when you die. It's something that you get. You get eternal life. You receive eternal life the moment that you place your faith in Christ.

That's why we talk about it in a sense as crossing a line. You cross a line from what you once were dead to now being alive in Christ.

It's something that you get when you die. He goes on, He does not come into judgment. Again, let me, is that might not come into judgment?

Maybe won't come into judgment. Is that what it says? No. It says you won't. That person who has crossed that line of faith, the person who believes in him who sent me, has eternal life, not right now, not when you die, but right now you have eternal life.

And here's the promise. Straight from the words, the mouth of Jesus, that person does not, will not, not ever not, come into judgment.

[34:53] Condemnation. Whoa, wait a minute. Well, what if I, what if I, what if I cross that line of faith and I, I've trusted Jesus as my savior and, and now I'm, I'm living for him and I'm reading the word and I'm, I'm studying and I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm participating in church and I'm, I'm living for the Lord and I'm growing in my walk with him.

But then one day, I, this is just, this is just me telling a parable. So it's extreme. Okay. Oh, one day I had a fight with my wife and I cursed her out and then I got in my car and I stormed out of there and as I pulled out onto the road, a semi came across and hit me and boom, I'm dead.

What's going to happen to me when I come before the Lord, when I stand before the Lord? Is the Lord going to say to me, oh, well, Rich, I recognize that, that you had trusted Christ, but man, you know, here just lately, you really blew it.

You just cussed out your wife and, and you treated her really poorly and that's not acceptable behavior. That's sin. For someone who's a believer, it's just wrong for you to do that.

So I, I'm going to have to send you to hell now. Is that how it works? What, what if my sin was more prolonged? What if my sin went for weeks or months?

[36:32] Let's say I, I just quit going to church and I quit reading my Bible and I just started doing things that I know are wrong and I'm telling lies and I'm stealing from my company and what's then?

Hmm. He does not come into judgment, condemnation.

Tricky, tricky, tricky question, right? Because you do it long enough and then it's like, okay, well, did he really trust him at all in the first place? And it's my behavior at that point that causes people to have questions.

It's my behavior that, that even causes me to say, well, I don't know. I'm really struggling with whether I'm saved or not because I haven't really been living for the Lord.

And so I'm going to struggle with that. Well, the reason that I'm struggling is because I'm not living in a way that, that honors him, but it has nothing to do with my standing before God.

[37:35] I'm still his. I still have eternal, eternal life, not conditional life.

It's not, it's not eternal, eternal and conditional can't go together. It's not eternal based on whether or not I've lived for him. It's still all up to him.

I didn't do anything to deserve it. I don't do anything to, to deserve it, to keep it. It's not up to me to keep my salvation. He does all of it from beginning to end.

Now, am I going to question whether my faith is sincere or not? Yes, you may question that as well. And the way that I'm living brings that into question. But again, he says, has passed from death to life.

Let me ask you a question there. Is that past tense, present tense, or future tense? Where's my grammar students?

[38:45] Is that past tense? It's, it's actually, it's past participle.

Meaning, it happened in my past with ongoing consequences. It continues forward into my present life.

So I've, I've passed from death to life. Now, if I could lose my salvation, I'm going back into death then.

this eternal life that I've given, oh, now it's been taken away from me and it's conditional again. It can't, it doesn't work that way.

It can't work that way. So with this younger son, was he saved before he went on his rebellious trip?

[39:42] we don't know. We don't know. We don't know the answer to that.

Was he coming back to salvation? What, was he coming to be saved the first time? Or was he coming back to a right relationship with his father?

We don't know the answer to that. And sometimes it's going to look that way to people who live in rebellion. Whether they were saved or, or, or lost to begin with, we, we, we may not know.

But the question is, where are you today? Are you living for him today? That's what matters. God's not so much concerned about your yesterday as he is your today.

Where you're going to be tomorrow and the day after. God cares about your, from this day forward. And he'll forgive you for what you've done in your past.

Whatever that might be. So, the, the, the father then, he longs for the return of the sinner, his son.

[40:43] He willingly grants forgiveness and he rejoices at the, at the return of his wayward son. Absolutely. And that's how God relates to us. That's a part of this, this parable.

And, we don't see this yet, but we'll see it in the next part of the story. He was as gracious to the older brother as he was to the younger. And some people might question, well, why did he need to be as gracious to the older brother as to the younger?

And let's find that out right now. So, the older son represents the self-righteousness and the selfishness of the Pharisees.

Okay? remember, this is, this is what, this is what the story is in a sense about. It's the Pharisees who are grumbling and are angry and why are Jesus, are you hanging out with these people?

And, he's comparing now the Pharisees and the scribes to the older son. The, the tax collectors and the sinners, who are they represented by in the story?

[41:49] The younger son. But the older son represents these Pharisees and scribes. Now, his older son was in the field and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing and he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

Hey, what's going on? He, he didn't know what had happened with his younger brother, with the return of his younger brother. He's wanting to know what's happening. And the servant said to him, your brother has come and your father has killed the fattened calf because he received him back safe and sound.

To which, at this point, the older brother should have, what? Rejoiced. Because what makes our heavenly father happy, what brings him joy, ought to bring us joy as well.

So there should have been this multi-generational celebration that was going on, right? That's what should have been happening.

It's not what happened. But he was angry. Angry. Why would, why would he be angry?

[43:07] And I, I, I want us, here's, here's where I want to, want us to focus on this morning is, do I fit, do I myself, do I fit anywhere in the story of the older brother?

Is this ever my point of view? As I see circumstances around in my life, when someone who was living a terrible life repents and, and, and comes to faith or comes back to faith in Christ and, and, and there's rejoicing that's happening, is that where my heart is?

Or am I caught up in something else? Maybe even a touch of anger. But his father came out and, and treated him.

So his father now has to leave the house for two occasions. One, because the younger son came home. So he sees him from a distance and goes and, and, and runs him down and, and hugs him and welcomes him home.

Now he's going out again. Should be celebrating. He's going out again to entreat, to, to basically to beg the older brother.

[44:27] But the older brother answered the father, look, these many years I have served you. Oh, I've, I've, I've been a good Christian for a long time, Lord.

I've been coming to church all this time and, and, I've been giving money to the church and I've been praying and I've been doing all this stuff and, man, these new people come in and, oh, they shouldn't have any say around here.

They, they, I mean, why is everybody paying attention to them? What's going on with that? I've been, I've been faithful all these years. I have never, look at, look at, look at the audacity of the older brother.

I never disobeyed your command. You're doing it right now. Your father's telling you to come in and rejoice and you're, and right now you're living in disobedience, blatant to his face and at the same time saying, I've never disobeyed you.

I've always been good. Always been good. Yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends.

[45:47] What's up with that? Father, I'm sorry, but when the, the son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes.

Now, did the story tell us that before? So what's, what's he doing here? Two things possible here. One, he's guessing.

He's saying, well, this is probably what his son was doing when he went to a far country. Or two, he went after his younger brother to confirm what the younger brother was doing. We, we don't know. It's not an important part of the story. But he perhaps traveled and wanted to maybe bring a report back to dear old dad of what the younger son was up to.

And you've killed the fatted calf for him. What, what is that about? But the father replies back to the son, son, you are always with me.

[46:50] All that is mine is yours. Remember, he divided the inheritance up between the two sons. Everything that he had was already belonging to the son.

He got the rest of the inheritance, the two-thirds portion of the inheritance. Everything that I have, it's already yours. It's yours. But it was fitting to celebrate and be glad.

For this, your brother was dead and is alive and he was lost and is found. That's, that's what matters in this story.

What's interesting is that this story is, this is the end. But there's no conclusion. Are you wondering what happened next?

What'd the older brother do? Maybe the better question is, how would I respond? How, how would you respond in this circumstance, in this situation?

[48:17] It's left kind of open-ended. Was it, was it intentional for Jesus to leave it open-ended? I believe so. How would we respond?

Look, look at how, look at the, the, the danger here, here, the, the, the way the, the older brother is responding. I worked hard. Lord, you didn't give me a banquet. What's up with that?

You gave your other son a banquet and all he did was sin. What's the fascination with banquets, by the way? You guys getting all fired up about a banquet?

Maybe the fattened calf part. I don't know. I mean, that might be good. Good barbecue. I've never neglected a command of yours.

Wow. The audacity to say that straight in his face. you can see on your notes that we're going to do some comparing and contrasting between the older brother and the younger brother, the older son, the younger son.

[49:39] And I want you to see the differences to start with between them. Because most of us would probably, it's probably easier to recognize the differences between them.

And there are some here. The younger brother, for instance, he stayed home. I'm sorry, he left home, whereas the older brother stayed home.

Right? One left, one stayed. One lived in open rebellion. The other lived in hidden.

Stayed home, but it was hidden rebellion. one was wasteful, the definition of prodigal.

The other was productive. I mean, right, even on the day the younger brother came home, he was out in the field working. He's working hard. Probably doing good things for the farm, making the farm work.

[50:47] Okay? Can that person who is staying and who's working hard still be lost?

The person who is always in church and who seems to be productive, can that person be lost? In the same way, can a Pharisee look very religious and yet on the inside be rotten to the core?

Is that what's happening here with the older brother? On the exterior it looks good, sounds good, but on the interior it's rotten.

The younger brother lost his inheritance and by the way, he wasn't going to get that back. That's another part of the consequence for the younger brother. The father wasn't going to restore that out of the older brother's already given out inheritance.

So that consequence, he was still full on son of the owner, son of the master, right? He still got all the privileges that came with being a son, but his wealth was gone at that point.

[52:07] The older brother did not. He still had a hold of his inheritance. The younger brother recognized his sin, right? That was different, but the older brother, he felt he was righteous.

Ooh. Is that a dangerous place to be? To feel like, man, I'm all that. I'm righteous. I've never done you wrong.

Lord, that is not a good place to be. And then the younger brother, he repented.

The older brother, he resented. very different.

But let's take a look at how they were similar. How these two sons, these two brothers, were similar to each other.

[53:18] They both wanted a banquet. here's where we get caught off track. Because when we hear the word banquet, what are we thinking?

What were they thinking? Yeah. That's probably what's better in view here, is a party. That's a party.

Matter of fact, in the Old Testament, in that culture, a banquet meant a drinking party. Oh, yeah, there was food involved too, but the food was there to help you hold your alcohol.

It was all about the alcohol. I don't know if the context remains true here. He's telling it in an Old Testament context. But the idea here is, this is more than just, oh, let's go stand in line and see how much food I can put on my plate.

And I'm going to go back to my table and sit there and eat it. And then I'm going to go back and put some more food on it. Because that's how we think of banquet, right? This formal thing?

[54:27] No, that's not. Well, Rich, what else is similar here? They both wanted that. Now, both wanted to be with their friends.

The younger one took off, made new friends, and partied there. And when the party was all done, he came back home, and then there was a different kind of a party.

Celebration, a righteous celebration. The older brother, I want you to notice, he wanted the same thing. He wanted, would it be a fatted, fattened goat?

I don't know if I'm interested in eating a fattened, how many have you had goat? Fattened goat? A few of you. Is it yummy?

I'm not picturing a goat meat as being like, oh, give me a T-bone off of a goat. Is that even a thing? I mean, how does that work?

[55:33] I don't know. But, I want you to notice the devastating aspect of their celebrations that they had in mind.

Neither of them mentioned this celebration, this party, including their father. Neither of them were interested in their father, being around their father.

We get that with the rebellious one because it was obvious, right? He took off for a far country. He took off for Gentile land. He was an affront to his father in the way that he asked for his inheritance. The timing of it, all of it was just an affront. I'm getting away. I'm going to go party hardy. I'm... The older brother had the same mindset.

You've never given me a fattened goat for me and my friends, was his comment. He's not interested in celebrating with his father at all.

[56:41] Both sons, even though they were sons, were slaves. Slaves to their sin.

Absolutely. The rebellious one, that's obvious. Again, he was a slave to his sin. We get that, right? That's who we understand that part of the story.

We understand that with ourselves, right? If you've ever felt like part of your story was the prodigal son's story, if you can relate to that at all, a time where you ran from God, and then you came back, you get that.

Being a slave to your sin. sin. But the older brother was just as much a slave to his sin. It just wasn't out in the open.

It was all inside, just like the Pharisees. The older son was also a whitewashed tomb.

[57:51] any dad would have pointed to the older son and said, oh, boy, your son is such a good son.

Look how hard he works for you in the fields. Look how he honors you with the way that he stays at home and does all that he's told. Man, I wish I had a son like him.

That's the outside. the inside there's something rotten there. And it gets exposed, that rottenness gets exposed when the younger son comes home.

And the rottenness of the Pharisees is getting exposed now. Because when Jesus is hanging out with the sinners and the tax collectors, the Pharisees and the scribes are upset.

How could you do such a thing? And they don't have a clue about who their heavenly father is or what he is like.

[58:57] They don't get it at all. They think I'm the favored one. I'm the righteous one. I've been the good boy.

I've done all the right things. I'm the one who is deserving. both were materialistic.

Yeah. The younger son, you see that again, it's front and center, it's obvious, because he's just running off and spending it all and getting what he can.

The older son, the materialism that he has is more expressed in how he would save it than how he would spend it.

But make no mistake, saving up a bankroll for yourself, for your own security, is also a form of materialism that can be just as dangerous as the materialism of the younger son.

[60:14] Be careful with that. Yes, we are taught in scriptures to be people who save. There's something admirable, there's something wise about saving.

But if your mindset is saving for me, if your security is found in what you're saving, oh, that's a dangerous place to be.

Your security is not in how much money you have, or the home that you live in, or the possessions that you have. All of our security is found not in what, but in whom?

In Christ. So yes, you can have great wealth, and have security in Christ, but the temptation for those of you who have wealth, and savings, and security, and retirement built up, is that you can start to rely on and have a sense of security in that wealth, what you've built up for yourself.

Be careful with that. That can be just as dangerous, maybe even more so, an even more dangerous form of materialism, because we don't recognize it as materialism.

[61:37] Be careful with that. The older son was just as materialistic as the younger, and both were sinners. Both were in need of a savior.

You might look at the older son, and the older son might look at himself and not think of himself in that way. I don't need to be redeemed. Redeemed from what? I'm perfect.

I've done everything right. I've never disobeyed you. What do I need to be redeemed from? No. And so, do you think the Pharisees and the scribes would have recognized that this is what Jesus was saying about them?

Do you think the Pharisees and the scribes would have recognized that Jesus was looking at them and saying, you're just as lost as these sinners and tax collectors you're grumbling about.

And you need to be saved from that. And I want to close, and we'll do this really quickly, and you don't have this on your notes, whether you want to write this down or not is up to you, but here's some warning signs.

[62:57] Am I becoming pharisaical? Am I becoming like the older brother? Because that's a danger that anyone who's been around church and Christianity for any length of time, this is something that we can slide back into.

Sliding back into religion is very easy to do. It's a natural thing for us to slide back into a religious mindset of looks good on the outside, but what's going on in the heart?

And so some warning signs, some ways to catch that, because it's possible to resent what God does for someone else that he hasn't done for you. Look what you did for my brother.

He didn't deserve it. He was a sinner. You killed the fatted calf for him. What did I get? Nothing. Wait a minute. He had everything. He had everything. Are you a son or daughter of the king?

Have you accepted Christ as your savior? You're already promised everything. All the rights and privileges and inheritance that come from being a son or daughter of the king belong to you from day one, from the moment that you trust him.

[64:12] It's already yours. What are you complaining about? Someone who comes to faith in the last moments of their life. Someone who lived a terrible, sinful life and they've repented and oh, why is everybody paying attention to them?

That mindset. It's possible to see sin in someone else's life without recognizing it in your own. Oh, the Pharisees were good at this. And the older brother was guilty too. We can see someone else's sin, but not my own.

Boy, it's tough. It's tough. And greed might be the biggest one. This older brother suffered from greed. The Pharisees too. Jesus said it about them.

And it's tough for us to see greed in the mirror. We can see it in other people, but we struggle with greed in our own lives. Other things as well, but it's easy to see sin in someone else's life, not so much in our own.

And if someone wants to remind us of our sin, if someone wants to point out our sin, how do we do with that? How good are we with accepting that kind of rebuke?

[65:28] Usually not very well. It's possible to complain that God owes us something more in life while ignoring all that he's already given us. Again, Pharisees and this older brother are guilty of that.

Can we be guilty of that? And it's possible to be unmoved by the restoration, reconciliation of someone else to Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that these not be what mark our lives. That we not become like that older brother.

The temptation is real, it's there. you can go to a lot of different places, you see a lot of people that wear the label of Christian, and they look good on the outside, but what's on the inside?

And I think that we have to ask ourselves that question, what's on the inside of me? when you peel back what's on the outside, what's on the exterior?

[66:49] Is what's left behind, is it real, is it sincere, does it honor God? Am I willing to be up front and honest with what's really happening in my own heart?

do I sense any kind of this inner rebellion? It's easy to see in the younger son, it's easy to see that kind of rebellion, that outward rebellion, it's easy to see that, not so easy to see the pharisaical, the hypocritical, the wanting to look good on the outside, but on the inside, what's what's really there? Let's not play games with this, let's not play act with our faith, let's not settle for being hypocritical, let's honor God, and desire, we're still going to struggle with this, but let's have the desire to want to walk in a way that's honoring to him, when I'm behind closed doors at my house, when no one can see me, what am I really like, or am I just good at playing the game, the game of religion, warning, a dangerous game to play?

Let's pray. Lord, thank you so much again, that your word teaches us so much about what's on the inside.

We know from your word that you really don't care what we look like on the outside, that what you're looking at is the heart. That's what matters. It seems like that's what this story is about, at least for the older brother.

[68:52] it's true, there may be some people who are here in the room or watching online or listening and maybe you find yourself in the shoes of the prodigal, the one who is living in open rebellion.

You hear a story like this and you recognize it's time to come home, it's time to come to Christ, it's time to repent, to put my faith in Christ.

as Lord and Savior. Lord meaning he's in charge, he calls the shots, he decides how I live my life. And I pray for those today Lord that they would recognize that need and like the younger son fully admit and declare it's time to come home.

It's time to repent. But Lord I also wonder how many people might be struggling with some of what the older brother was displaying, which represented the Pharisees and the scribes.

[70:11] that bitterness and resentment the faith of others, the questioning, the challenging of your mercy and your grace.

The sickening and poisonous view that I really am righteous. I really am. I've got this together. I've been doing church long enough that I know what a good church person looks like, what a Christian looks like, and I can pull that off. But is it real?

genuine? Is it what's on the inside? That's what matters. I pray that we would repent of any of that kind of thinking.

That we would be willing to say of ourselves, no, I am not all that. and that we would reject the kind of condemnation and judgment that comes from looking around at other people and thinking, I am better than.

[71:44] And how dare they? And God, how could you forgive, show mercy, demonstrate your grace?

May we firmly, completely reject that kind of thinking. To accepting just going through the motions in our walk with you.

To thinking that, all right, I can look the part, I can play the game, I can pull this off, and people can think that I'm, I've got it together, when really you don't.

When really what's needed is full-on repentance, forgiveness, and a recognition of your sin, accountability, and a return to your first love, that simple and humble faith.

Lord, we need that all the days of our lives. We need that. So, Lord, we love you. Pray that we would be honest with ourselves in this, and that we would seek to live for you and honor you in every aspect of our lives, inside and out.

[73:36] We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.