

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Out of all the parables of Jesus, one of the most well-known is the story of a son who broke his father's heart by demanding an early inheritance and running away from home. Finally realizing the folly of his ways and the emptiness of the life he had chosen, the young man returned home and was welcomed by his father with joyous celebration. This is a powerful story in its own right, but it also illustrates profound spiritual truths. As we turn our attention to this parable, we will be reminded of both the gravity of human sin and God's joy every time a sinner seeks forgiveness and refuge in His fatherly arms.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To present and exegete the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32.
2. To describe the tragic consequences of human rebellion against God.
3. To celebrate the unconditional and forgiving love of God.
4. To promote a deep sense of joy for the salvation of each sinner who turns to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and newness of life.

QUOTATIONS

If men, who are by nature prone to revenge, and too tenacious of their own rights, are moved by fatherly love kindly to forgive their children, and freely to bring them back, when they are sunk in wretchedness, God, whose boundless goodness exceeds all the affection of parents, will not treat us more harshly. And certainly nothing is here attributed to an earthly father which God does not promise with respect to himself. "Before they call," says he, "I will answer." –John Calvin

Nowhere have the concepts of sin, repentance, and divine grace been depicted more vividly and impressively than in the parable of the prodigal son; sin—as leaving the fellowship of the father, in living far away from the father, in the wasting of the father's goods; repentance—in the discovery of his own distress, in his consciousness of having sinned against the father and having lost all the rights of a child, in his return to the father; grace—in the father's awaiting of the son, in his pity for him, and in the joyful reception of the lost son into the father's house. –Herman Ridderbos

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the background information in Luke 15:1-3 help us understand the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son?
2. Dr. Sproul observed that, just as the prodigal son wasted his father's inheritance, we often waste or misuse the good gifts that God has given us. What are some ways that you have done this? When we waste these gifts, what does this indicate about our relationship with God?
3. What did it take to bring the young man to his senses? How has God acted in your life to get your attention and draw you toward Him?
4. How did the older brother respond to the celebration when the younger brother returned? How was his attitude like that of the scribes and the Pharisees? In what ways do Christians continue to behave like the older brother today?