

Homecoming: Returning Home Pastor James Bell

Luke 15:11–12 NLT

11 To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. 12 The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

You may already be asking the question...what was the point that Jesus was illustrating? But I would like to preface your question with a fact about Jesus. Do you remember when He fed the 5,000? He fed them with 5 loaves and two fish, right. How much was left over? There was 12 baskets of leftovers. This tells us 2 things. Jesus supplies more than what it takes and He doesn't waste anything. And this is what we will find in this parable. Jesus has so much more to say than what the Pharisee's could take understand. And by the time this sermon is over you will have the understanding that the Holy Spirit has intended for you.

But today we get some of these leftovers cause Jesus doesn't waste anything. As we look back at verse 12 we cannot help but notice this very important detail. This detail will be the setup for the point that Jesus has been highlighting to me. “The younger son told his father”. If we stop there we must notice that it was a son and the father and their communication alludes to them having a relationship. And this is the case for anyone who has received what Jesus has done for them at Calvary. You have a relationship but if we can be blunt enough to say this morning that some of us once had a relationship. And within this relationship you communed with the father. You encountered Him with words but then something happened.

So if we could re-read from the beginning of verse 12 again. Luke 15:12 “12 The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ There are two important details that need to be addressed here.

1. The younger son: This addresses his immaturity. He was not a child. He was a man. Well at least a man in his own eyes. How many times can you count on your hands and feet and probably someone else's hands how many time you did immature things as a young adult? When we are not mature we are prone to make rash decisions and say foolish things. This is exactly what happened with this young man.

2. He asked for his inheritance while his father was still alive. In our vernacular what he was really saying was, “I wish you were dead”. He had lost respect, and that translate to this fact. The son lost sight of who his father was. The fathers position was no longer vital to the son because now he was thinking about himself. He knew that if he stuck around until his father died to receive his inheritance, that most likely he would not be able to live life to the fullest.

Lets’ keep reading:

Luke 15:13 NLT

13 “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living.

A few days later the younger immature son packed his belongings and left. This wasn’t a sudden change of heart. It was the manifestation of what was in his heart. Let’s break this down. The turning of his heart was the first thing that took place. How do we know this? Because he lost sight of who his father was. This is the first thing that happens when backsliding takes place. Let me ask you a question. When a married man finds himself in bed with another woman, is that when the affair started? No! It started when it entered his heart. Jesus address this in the sermon on the mount.

Matthew 5:27–28 NLT

27 “You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

His rebellion begin in his heart and his words soon followed.

Matthew 12:34 NLT

34 ...For whatever is in your heart determines what you say.

And then his actions manifested the rebellion that was in his heart. Backsliding isn’t a moment of rebellion; its a trajectory. The trajectory of spiritual declining that begins internally before manifesting outwardly. It happens when we have lost sight of who God is and who we are without Him.

Luke 15:14–16 NLT

14 About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. 15 He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his

fields to feed the pigs. 16 The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

His resources had sustained him but eventually ran out. So now he had resorted to hanging out with the pigs. And pigs are described in the old testament as ceremonial unclean. He was now associated with what Jewish culture would have called degrading. The son had descended from heir to servant, from the father's household to a foreign field, from covenant identity to ceremonial defilement. There is an old saying that is so true. Sin will take you further than you had intended to go and keep you longer than you had anticipated to stay.

Luke 15:17–19 NLT

17 "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, 19 and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant." '

Imagine with me for a moment. You waking up in the morning and not realizing what day it is or what time it is. You wake up to confusion because you have been unconscious or oblivious to what you are waking up to. And then you come to your senses and now you can make heads or tails of what is now in the present. This is exactly what became of this young man. I love how this translations spells it out for us..."When he finally came to his senses". When we walk away from the Father only to fulfill our own desires we become unconscious to the Heart of God. We have been enticed by what satisfies us and negated our obligations to the Kingdom of God. It's not until we have a reckoning that we now realize how far we have drifted from God. Image being in a boat out there on the Cape Fear River. You begin to fish but forget to set your anchor. And while you are distracted with fishing your focus has not been on your surroundings. When you come to your senses you now realize that you have drifted. You are in a different place that what you had intended because you did not anchor.

Once we realize that we have drifted away from God through our self seeking desires, we can now see things for what they really are. As the song says, I can see clearly now that the rain is gone. I can see all obstacles in my way. What was hidden has now came to light. He knew that restoration was in repentance. Neither can we be restored without repenting. What is repentance? It is a change of heart that is manifested by the way we live. His repentance reflected this because his heart position had changed to be a servant and not an heir. We cannot be an heir if we are not willing to serve. Serving tells the position of our hearts. Serving is putting the needs of others before yourself. His desire was now to put the Fathers needs above his own.

Luke 15:20–24 NLT

20 “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ 22 “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.

The son did not remain in the pigsty. He abandoned what he was affiliated with and what defined him. The only way to return home is to abandon where you are. You must forsake the unclean things that has labeled you as a sinner. And as you walk away from who you were the Father sees you coming. Matter of fact the scripture reads that he saw his son from afar off. Although the son may have been gone for some time, the Father never stopped seeking him because the Father never stopped loving him. Jesus said that He came to seek and to save those that are lost. The Father ran towards the son but who took the first step? James 4:8

James 4:8 NLT

8 Come close to God, and God will come close to you.

What the Father meets you with is more than you brought to the table. The father broken tradition. Elders traditionally waited to be approached rather than approaching others and running was considered a child's act - making it totally inappropriate for an adult, let alone an elderly man of stature. The father's action violates every social expectation of his position and dignity. This father defies all such social codes and etiquettes. The act of running itself was laden with profound meaning—a visual proclamation that his love for his son outweighed his concern for societal norms or personal dignity. The Father's love supersedes in ways that you could never expect. The Younger son had disgraced his father and his name and yet the father defied traditions and embraced his son with a love that kept no record of wrong. When we return to our fathers business and have the heart of serving we become restored to what we willingly walked away from.

Remember the son was the one who walked away from the father. I want to get personal with you this morning. Could your name easily be replaced with the younger son? Did you once have a relationship with God but your heart began to drift from His Kingdom? Did what you want become more important than what God wanted? Have you lost focus of who the Father is? It doesn't matter how long or close you have fellowshiped with God, we can be misled by the very things that entice us.

James 1:14–15 NLT

14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

Isn't this what happened to the Prodigal Son? If it happened to him it can happen to us. Today we have to opportunity to come to our senses and repent. When we repent we can be restored. Will you adjust your heart back to a servant this morning? Will you return home to the Father today. He will seeking you out and will meet you as you return home.

Let me pray with you!