

## **Sermon 84: The Parable of the Lost Sons: Luke 15:11-32**

**Text: Luke 15:11-32** "And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found..."

**Summary:** Christ taught three parables, to celebrate God's immense grace extended toward sinners, warning the self-righteous and comforting the spiritually broken.

**Proposition:** He wants us to be humbled so we can properly rejoice in that grace!

**Part 1: Some important details:**

- **The audience: 15:1-3** “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them...”
  - **Publicans:** National traitors and thieves
  - **Sinners:** Notoriously sinful people
  - **Pharisees:** Strictest religious observers
  - **Scribes:** Religious scholars
- **The circumstances:**
  - **Hard teachings:** Be willing to forsake everything to follow me.
  - **The humbling response of Publicans and sinners:** They came.
  - **The condescending response of the scribes and the Pharisees:** They complained.
- **The progression of Christ’s teaching:**
  - **The Parable of the Lost Sheep:**
    - It is natural to search for lost things.
    - It is natural to rejoice when lost things are found.
    - Since it is natural to rejoice over found things, how much more image bearers who are found.
    - God’s grace is celebrated every time a soul is saved.
  - **The Parable of the Lost Coin:** Same focus.
  - **The Parable of the Lost Sons:** An expansion and personalization of the first two parables.
    - God’s grace is incomprehensibly good.
    - It defies our most noble natural inclinations.
    - It is so far more lavish than our normal expressions of kindness.
    - It sometimes makes us uncomfortable to observe.

## **Part 2: The story:**

- **Section 1: The setting of the story: 15:11** “A certain man had two sons...”
  - The younger son was restless and wild.
  - The older son was hardworking, and duty bound.
- **Section 2: The scandalous behavior of the younger son: 15:12-13** “The younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living...”
  - **His actions:**
    - He disrespected his father.
    - He abandoned his community.

- He lived recklessly.
  - He wasted his inheritance.
- **The harsh consequences of his behavior:**
  - He was left with nothing.
  - He was left with no one.
  - He was forced to beg to survive.
  - He was forced to feed pigs to survive.
- **His repentance: 15:17-20** "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father..."
  - **His circumstances humbled his heart:**
  - **He began to think clearly for the first time in the story:**
    - He saw his father as a good man.
    - He saw himself as deserving nothing good.
    - He saw that his offenses were directed to God first.
    - He came without expectations.
  - **He humbled himself and went home:**
- **Section 3: The shocking response of the Father: 15:20-24** "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry..."
  - **His father went to him as soon as he saw him.**
  - **He lovingly embraced his son.**
  - **He immediately treated him as his son.**
  - **He called for a feast to celebrate the son's return.**

**Section 4: The hardened response of the older son: 15:25-32** "Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment:

and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found..."

- **When he heard he was angry and refused to go into the feast.**
- **His father came out to him to reason with him.**
- **He argued with his father and proclaimed his own virtues.**
- **He treated his father as if the father had wronged him by extending immense kindness.**
- **He refused to be associated with his brother.**

### **Part 3: Christ's point to His audience**

- These parables comfort the spiritually broken and rebuke the self-righteous.
- They remind us that God's grace is incomprehensible good.
- This grace is extended to rebels who have committed unconscionable offenses.
- God graciously allows people to experience the weight of their sinful choices to bring them to their senses
- He holds back His anger to permit opportunity for restoration.
- These parables celebrate the glory of redemption.
- They celebrate God's goodness.

### **Part 4: Applying Christ's teaching**

- **Two important scriptures:**
  - **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God..."
  - **1 Corinthians 15:9-10** "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me..."
- **Six practical applications:**
  - We need to feel the weight of our sin more deeply.

- We need to stop creating categories of excusable and inexcusable sins.
- We need to be more patient with people and stop projecting ourselves into the place of God.
- We need to learn to patiently allow matters to play out.
- We need to be ready to engage when God opens that opportunity.
- We need to celebrate the miracle of redemption and rejoice in the depths of God's goodness.