

This morning will be an opportunity for testimonies about what you learned or what God did in your life through the recently completed sermon series through Luke's gospel. The summary of each sermon is printed in the bulletin insert, and if you want to listen to any of them at some future time, you can visit our website or app or YouTube page. If you do come up to share, please introduce yourself, and please try to be succinct, so that others would also have the opportunity to share. I'll let you know if it's time to wrap it up.

There are certainly a lot of words in the insert, and a lot of words that have been spoken over the past 8 months about Jesus, and let me take 5 minutes this morning just to share one of the parts that continues to be most meaningful to me. In Luke 15, which I preached about back on June 21st, Jesus is surrounded by a crowd of religious and irreligious types and tells them the parable of the prodigal son, a story that highlights the scandalous love of God. Jesus says that God is like a Father, sitting on the front porch, waiting for a glimpse of His child, a child who has told his father that he is dead to him and has gone off to spend all that his father has given him in wild living. And when that child finally comes to his senses, wakes up in the pig sty and realizes that life was much better in his father's house, and starts to come home, the Father runs to him, hugs him, dresses him in his best robe, kills the fattened calf, throws a party, and celebrates because his child is home.

Luke 15:20-24 - "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

And that Father tells the angry elder brothers, the religious types, to celebrate with Him, to join Him in welcoming the wayward one home.

I just want to thank Jesus for this image of God, and thank Him for His mercy, which is new every morning. There is a line in 2 Samuel 24:14 where David has sinned, God has presented David with options for consequences, and in response, David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into human hands." The truth is that although God is holier and more just than any human, and although His wrath is

greater, His mercy and willingness to forgive is also so much greater than any human being. As John put it:

1 John 1:8–9 - If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

This story of repentance and God's grace is not just for new believers, but is for believers every day. Every day I wander, every day I fall short, every day I essentially tell my Father that He is as good as dead to me, and I want to go do what I want with the time, money and resources that He has given me. But I thank Jesus for His picture of the Father, that every time I turn back to Him, He is not sitting on the porch, disappointed and waiting to give me a lecture, but running out to welcome me home, reminding me once again that life to the fullest is found with Him.

John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

The Father loves you and offers you life to the full, but it requires repentance, turning from our rebellion and delusion of self-sufficiency and coming home to Him. I pray that the Psalmist's words would be true of me and of you:

Psalm 84:10 - Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

Let me end with a reading from *The Valley of Vision*, a book of Puritan prayers, from a prayer entitled "Continual Repentance."

I have no robe to bring to cover my sins,
 No loom to weave my own righteousness;
 I am always standing clothed in filthy garments,
 And by grace am always receiving change of raiment,
 For thou dost always justify the ungodly;
 I am always going into the far country,
 And always returning home as a prodigal,
 Always saying, Father, forgive me,
 And thou art always bringing forth the best robe.
 Every morning let me wear it,

Every evening return in it,
Go out to the day's work in it,
Be married in it,
Be wound in death in it,
Stand before the great white throne in it,
Enter heaven in it shining as the sun.
Grant me never to lose sight of
The exceeding sinfulness of sin,
The exceeding righteousness of salvation,
The exceeding glory of Christ,
The exceeding beauty of holiness,
The exceeding wonder of grace.